

# Contents

<b>Overview</b>	4
Background	4
Part One	5
Introduction	5
Enhancing Ireland's competitive advantage in a changing world economy and building sustainable and economic development	5
The Lifecycle Framework	6
Implementation Arrangements	6
Part Two	7
<b>I. Introduction</b>	8
1.1 The Agreed Objective of the Agreement	8
1.2 North/South Co-operation and Reconciliation	8
<b>II. Enhancing Ireland's Competitive Advantage in a Changing World Economy</b>	10
1 Macroeconomic Policy	10
2 Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity	11
3 Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation	12
4 Better Regulation	14
5 Knowledge Society	17
6 Public Enterprise	18
7 Manufacturing Sector	18
8 Food and Drink Sector	21
9 Infrastructure and Planning	23
9.1 National Development Plan (NDP 2007-2013)	25
10 Public Private Partnerships	27
11 Transport 21 (2006-2015)	27
12 Road Safety	36
13 Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities	37
14 Construction	42
15 Energy Policy	43
16 Telecommunications	45
17 Education and Training	47
18 Environmental Sustainability	49
19 Rural Development	51
19.1 Rural Development (D/CRGA)	51
20 A Competitive and Profitable Agri-Food Sector	54
Maximising Farm Incomes	54
WTO	55
Financial Perspectives	55
Rural Development Programme 2007-2013: Supporting Competitiveness, Sustainability and Diversification	56

	Building Competitive Capacity in the Sectors	57
	Strengthening Competitiveness, Innovation and Consumer-Focus in the Food Industry	69
	Protecting Animal Health	76
	Providing Quality Service and Supporting Farm Income	78
	Encouraging the Production of Renewable Energy	82
	Enhancing the Environment	84
	Measures to Encourage Structural Change	86
21	Art and Culture	89
22	Sport	93
23	Tourism	94
24	Recreation	96
25	Ireland's National Reform Programme (NRP) under the EU Lisbon Agenda	98
26	External Relations - EU and the Wider World	99
27	Official Development Assistance (ODA)	100
28	Irish Abroad	102
<b>III.</b>	<b>The Lifecycle Framework</b>	<b>103</b>
29	Introduction	103
<b>30</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>104</b>
	30.2.1 Early Childhood Development and Care	104
	30.2.2 Improving Education Outcomes for Children	106
	30.2.3 Improving Health Outcomes for Children	114
	30.2.4 Promoting Recreation, Sport, Arts and Culture in the Lives of our Children	117
	30.2.5 Income Support	119
	30.2.6 Children and their Families	121
	30.3 Innovative Measures	124
	30.3.1 Establishment of the New Irish Youth Justice Service	124
	30.3.2 Integrated Services and Interventions for Children at Local Level	125
	30.3.3 Children's and Young People's Participation	125
	30.4 Governance Framework	126
<b>31</b>	<b>People of Working Age</b>	<b>128</b>
	31.2 Priority Actions	128
	31.2.1 Employability	128
	31.2.2 Access to Employment	131
	31.2.3 Income	133
	31.2.4 Improving Health Outcomes for People of Working Age	136
	31.2.5 Caring Responsibilities	140
	31.2.6 Housing and Sustainable Communities	143
	31.2.7 Equality/Equal Opportunities	145
	31.3 Young Adults (18-29)	148
	31.3.1 Education, Training and Employment	148

	31.3.2 Health and Social Services	150
	31.3.3 Housing and Accommodation	151
	31.3.4 Motor Insurance for Young People	152
	31.4 Innovative Measures	152
	31.4.1 Integration of Migrant Communities	152
	31.4.2 Social and Economic Participation	154
	31.4.3 Exploitation of Information and Communications Technology	155
	31.4.4 Travellers	156
	31.5 Governance Framework	156
<b>32</b>	<b>Older People</b>	159
	32.2.1 Pensions/Income Supports	159
	32.2.2 Long-Term Care Services for Older People	161
	32.2.3 Housing and Accommodation	166
	32.2.4 Ensuring Mobility for Older People	167
	32.2.5 Ensuring Quality Health Services for Older People	168
	32.2.6 Promoting Education and Employment Opportunities for Older People	169
	32.3 Innovative Measures	170
	32.3.1 Pilot Programmes of Care for Older People/Home Support Packages	170
	32.3.2 Community Intervention Teams	171
	32.4 Governance Framework	171
<b>33</b>	<b>People with Disabilities</b>	172
	33.2 The National Disability Strategy	172
	33.3 Priority Actions	173
	33.3 Priority Actions D/ETE	175
	33.3 Priority Actions D/H&C	176
	33.3 Priority Actions D/S&FA	176
	33.3 Priority Actions D/EH&LG	177
	33.3 Priority Actions D/S&FA	177
	33.3 Priority Actions D/Transport	178
	33.4 Governance Framework	179
	<b>34 Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach</b>	181
	34.1 Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector	181
	34.2 Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector	183
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Implementation Arrangements</b>	187
	Mechanisms for Implementation	187
	Developing the Lifecycle Approach	188
	Data/Information	189
	Integrating Delivery at Local Level	191
	Monitoring and Review Arrangements	192
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Part Two - Public Service Modernisation</b>	193
	OECD Review of the Irish Public Service	193

## Overview

### Background

Negotiations on this agreement, the successor to *Sustaining Progress*, were formally launched in Dublin Castle on 2 February 2006.

As with previous negotiations, the current NESC Strategy, (*NESC Strategy 2006: People Productivity and Purpose*), has provided the background for the negotiations.

The negotiating parties included the Government, trade unions, employers, farming organisations and the community and voluntary sector, as follows: Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC), Construction Industry Federation (CIF), Small Firms' Association (SFA), Irish Exporters' Association (IEA), Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC) and Chambers Ireland, Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA), Irish Co-Operative Organisation Society Ltd. (ICOS), Macra na Feirme, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE), Congress Centres Network, CORI Justice Commission, National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), National Association of Building Co-Operatives (NABCO), Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH), Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Age Action Ireland, The Carers Association, The Wheel, The Disability Federation of Ireland, Irish Rural Link, The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament, The Children's Rights Alliance, and Protestant Aid.

These negotiations have delivered *Towards 2016*, the 10-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, 2006-2015.

The Social Partners subscribe to the NESC vision of Ireland in the future, the key foundations of which are: a dynamic, internationalised, and participatory society and economy, with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic development is environmentally sustainable, and internationally competitive.

The shared overall goal of *Towards 2016* is to realise this vision by:

- ▶ Nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity;
- ▶ Developing a vibrant, knowledge-based economy;
- ▶ Re-inventing and repositioning Ireland's social policies;
- ▶ Integrating an island-of-Ireland economy, and;
- ▶ Deepening capabilities, achieving higher participation rates and more successfully handling diversity, including immigration.

*Towards 2016* is divided into two main parts:

## *Part One*

Part One sets out the overall objective of the Agreement, the rationale for the longer-term perspective being adopted in this agreement, and outlines other key national and sectoral policy instruments and strategies in place to meet the challenges ahead. It considers the wider policy framework, including macroeconomic policy, and building a new social policy perspective, founded on the lifecycle approach. It also outlines the role of social partnership, and the implementation arrangements for the Agreement, including an agreed protocol for engagement between Government and the Social Partners.

## *Introduction*

The introductory text (Chapter 1) sets out the overall goal of the Agreement, which is to achieve the NESC vision of a dynamic, internationalised and participatory Irish society and economy, founded on a commitment to social justice, and economic development that is both environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive. Government and the Social Partners are agreed that realisation of this vision requires a longer-term framework, and development of a new social policy perspective, based on the lifecycle of the citizen.

## *Enhancing Ireland's competitive advantage in a changing world economy and building sustainable social and economic development*

The key macroeconomic policy focus over the lifetime of the Agreement will be the continuation of a supportive policy framework, which mitigates the identified national and international risks, while enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and facilitating the development of an inclusive and sustainable economy and society. Chapter 2 details the key principles informing that policy, including promoting sustainable growth and a socially inclusive and environmentally friendly society, and maintaining a sound budgetary position that supports stable economic growth and ensures our ability to meet future expenditure needs, even in times of lower economic growth. It also outlines the key strategies to be pursued to maintain and develop that framework.

Maintaining and enhancing our competitiveness will require increased investment in human resources and innovation, and improving competition within the economy. The chapter identifies the key principles underpinning our approach in this area, and details key actions planned or already in place in relation to specific sectors, i.e., science, technology and innovation, better regulation, public enterprise, the manufacturing sector, and the food and drink sector.

Investment in physical and social infrastructure will be critical to the achievement of the identified economic and social goals. This investment will be prioritised in the context of a strategic and long-term framework, which enables planning for accelerating regional population and employment growth. Government and the Social Partners are agreed on the need to continue the major infrastructure programme underway. Chapter 2 also sets out the key strategies that inform that investment, including the NSS and NDP, together with the specific sectoral strategies being pursued in key areas, i.e. transport, housing, energy, telecommunications, education and training, the environment, rural development, the agri-food sector, arts, sport, and tourism.

The chapter also details an agreed approach to our relations with the EU and the wider world, to our commitments under the National Reform Programme under the EU Lisbon Agenda, and in relation to official development assistance.

### *The Lifecycle Framework*

The adoption of the lifecycle framework, as set out by NESC in its report, *The Developmental Welfare State*, is a key innovative feature of the Agreement. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery, by assessing the risks facing him/her, and the supports available to him/her to address those risks, at key stages in his/her life. The key lifecycle stages are identified as: Children, People of Working Age, Older People, and People with Disabilities. The Chapter outlines a new framework within which to address key social challenges for each lifecycle stage. An agreed vision and key long-term goals for each stage of the lifecycle, together with agreed priority actions for the initial phase of the Agreement, are identified. The chapter also outlines relevant governance frameworks and monitoring mechanisms.

Key areas to be addressed in relation to children include early childhood development and care, improving education outcomes, improving health outcomes, promoting recreation, sports, arts and culture, income support, and children and their families.

Employability, access to employment and income, improving health outcomes, caring responsibilities, and housing, will be the key focus in relation to people of working age. The particular needs of young adults in respect of education, training and employment, health and social services, housing and motor insurance, are also considered.

Priority areas identified for attention for older people include pensions/income supports, long-term care services, housing and accommodation, ensuring mobility, ensuring quality health services, and promoting education and employment opportunities.

In respect of people with disabilities, Government and the Social Partners have agreed that the National Disability Strategy provides a comprehensive strategy for this lifecycle cohort and are agreed that its implementation should be the focus of policy over the lifetime of the Agreement. Key issues highlighted include health and education services, income, measures to promote employment opportunities, accessible housing and public transport services and information and advocacy services.

The Agreement includes a range of proposals designed to support the role of the Community and Voluntary sector in responding to the particular challenges associated with the implementation of the lifecycle approach. These include the provision of enhanced funding for the Sector and commitments to promote social finance and philanthropic activity.

### *Implementation Arrangements*

Government has committed to involving the Social Partners in the development of policy, to ensure meaningful input by the Partners into the shaping of appropriate individual policy issues, on the design of implementation arrangements,

and to provide the Partners with sufficient notice, information and appropriate process for engagement. The Steering Group established under Sustaining Progress will be reconvened and will assume overall responsibility for managing the implementation of this ten-year framework Agreement. As heretofore, there will be ongoing quarterly meetings to review, monitor and report on progress, and an annual formal meeting of all parties to the framework Agreement. In addition, the Agreement provides for a streamlined outcomes-focused approach to monitoring and reporting of progress on social inclusion matters under the lifecycle framework. A formal review will be conducted during 2008.

### *Part Two*

Part Two sets out the terms of the Draft Pay Agreement for the private sector (pages 80 to 83) and the public service (pages 110 to 112), and addresses a number of related issues, including statutory minimum pay; employee financial involvement; partnership at the workplace; workplace learning and upskilling; pensions; equal opportunities; and work-life balance. It also provides for a range of measures to protect employment standards in the context of a rapidly changing labour market. Part Two also sets out the agenda for modernisation of the public service. Payment of the general round increases for the public service is dependent on verification of satisfactory implementation of this agenda.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Agreed Objective of the Agreement

The shared overall goal for this new ten-year framework agreement covering the period 2006-2015 is to realise the NESC vision for Irish society by:

- ▶ Nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity;
- ▶ Developing a vibrant, knowledge-based economy and stimulating enterprise and productivity;
- ▶ Re-inventing and repositioning Ireland's social policies;
- ▶ Integrating an island-of-Ireland economy, and;
- ▶ Deepening capabilities, achieving higher social and economic participation rates and more successfully handling diversity, including immigration.

The Partners subscribe to the Vision of Ireland in the Future articulated by NESC. The key foundations of which are:

- ▶ a dynamic, internationalised, and
- ▶ a participatory society and economy with a strong commitment to social justice, where
- ▶ economic development is environmentally sustainable and is internationally competitive.

### 1.2 North/South Co-operation and Reconciliation

FA

The Government and the Social Partners remain committed to full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the early establishment of the North/South Consultative Forum with the participation of the social partners. North/South co-operation needs to be at the heart of strategic planning on the island. The focus must be on mutual gains to demonstrate that the economic and social success of each part of Ireland is advantageous to the other. Conversely, economic and social failure in one part is damaging to the other. There is also a historic task of completing the process of reconciliation between the two traditions on the island of Ireland.

There is a clear role for social partners and the social partnership process in energising the peace process and addressing crucial issues for the island of Ireland over the next ten years, so that a new-shared future can be built and sustained.

#### PROGRESS

At the Plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council held in Armagh on 17 July 2007, the Council noted that "the Irish Government will consult the social partners on the North South Consultative Forum. It also noted the review of arrangements for consulting civic society in Northern Ireland and agreed to consider this matter once that review is complete". A preliminary consultation between the Government and social partners took place at the Steering Committee on Social Partnership on 8 October. Arising from that discussion, it is proposed that a dedicated discussion on the Consultative Forum involving the Government and Social Partners generally will take place in the near future. When these discussions have concluded, the Government

would then return to the discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive, once its review of arrangements for consulting civic society in Northern Ireland has been completed.

The Plenary meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council was very positive, with an open discussion on many issues of common interest, North and South, including economic challenges. The Council also considered how the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive might work together for our mutual benefit. The Council took a number of important decisions, including reaching agreement on two major infrastructure projects: an investment of €580m/£400m to upgrade the road in the North serving Derry and Letterkenny; and the restoration of the Ulster Canal from Clones to Lough Erne.

## II. Enhancing Ireland's Competitive Advantage in a Changing World Econom and Building Sustainable Social and Economic Development

### 1. Macroeconomic Policy

FIN

The overriding policy focus and priority, in pursuit of the overall objectives as indicated in chapter 1 of *Towards 2016*, is to build a strong economy and society by maintaining a supportive macroeconomic policy framework in order to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

#### *Actions to be taken*

With monetary policy set by the European Central Bank, macroeconomic policy is now essentially concerned with management of the public finances, incomes policy and structural reform. The key principles referred to, particularly sustainability and prudent fiscal policy, will guide the management of the public finances.

The following strategies will be pursued within the Government's budgetary and economic framework:

- ▶ A Fiscal Policy which will provide sufficient room for manoeuvre to meet our obligations in the event of an economic downturn;
- ▶ Government capital investment ratio in the order of 5% of GNP, to provide the level of investment required to tackle the economy's infrastructural deficit;
- ▶ Taxation Policy designed to maintain and strengthen the competitive position of the economy, foster improvements in productive capacity, economic and social development, and equity, while maintaining a sound fiscal stance. The Government will seek to maintain a tax policy at EU level that fosters economic growth and employment, without the requirement of tax harmonisation at all levels;
- ▶ A Public expenditure profile that reflects the growth in the economy, provides for investment in a sustainable way in public services, and a public expenditure allocation and management system that optimises value for money, including implementation of public procurement reforms.

#### PROGRESS

In September 2007, the Tánaiste announced a further step in his ongoing process of budgetary reform, with the introduction of a Unified Budget from this year. Under this streamlined approach, all expenditure additions are announced together with tax measures on Budget day. The old Abridged Estimates are discontinued, and Pre-Budget Estimates are produced in October as part of the Pre-Budget Outlook. The Pre-Budget Estimates show the estimated cost of providing in the year ahead for the level of public services that exist at present. The reformed process will facilitate the Tánaiste and the Government in managing the public finances in a more transparent and effective manner, ensuring that the programme of national development and improved public services can be delivered within a planned, progressive and sustainable framework.

**The Pre-Budget Outlook was published on 18 October 2007 and Budget 2008 will be published on 5 December 2007.**

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 will accelerate the provision of essential economic and social infrastructure. It provides for public capital investment of €76.2 billion over the period of the Plan, comprising €65 billion Exchequer capital and €11.2 billion PPP capital to be funded by annual payments from the Exchequer. Public capital investment is projected to average 5.4% of GNP for the period of the Plan.

A robust Value for Money (VFM) Framework will apply to NDP expenditure. The Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit which was established in the Department of Finance as part of the Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative will also (a) oversee evaluation of the NDP, (b) promote best practice in relation to evaluation and project appraisal and (c) promote compliance by Departments and Agencies with the conditions of capital sanctions, in particular the capital appraisal guidelines. The NDP implementation and monitoring arrangements which are being established will further strengthen this VFM framework through the Monitoring Committee and annual reporting of progress on the NDP to the Oireachtas.

**Work on establishing the monitoring system for the NDP is now nearing completion. The Central Monitoring Committee will have its inaugural meeting towards the end of the year. Membership of the Committee comprises representatives of the Government Departments involved in the implementation of the Plan, Regional Assemblies and Authorities, the Social Partners and Environmental Interests.**

## **2. Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity**

**ETE**

While Ireland has one of the most globalised economies in the world, global competition generates the necessity to innovate and add value across all aspects of business. Thus, with the objective of building a knowledge economy, greater investment in human resources and in innovation, particularly around ICT application and use, are critical areas for investment to enhance Ireland's competitiveness.

### ***Actions to be taken***

The parties to this ten-year framework agreement endorse the approach set out in the NESC Strategy which articulated three strategic directions of enterprise and innovation policy. This involves deepening and widening Ireland's innovation policy, developing the network approach, and regulation in the service of competitive advantage and other goals.

### 3. Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation

ETE

Government has published a comprehensive Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation for the period 2006-2013. The strategy provides for the continued development of a world-class research system underpinned by the essential physical and human infrastructure, doubling the number of PhD graduates over its lifespan. Top-level researchers will also be drawn from both home-grown talent and the brightest who can be drawn from overseas. The strategy also proposes mechanisms to 1) ensure that the investment in research is turned into commercial value to the greatest extent possible and 2) in regard to enterprise, the strategy will set out structures and mechanisms to enhance supports to industry and encourage firms to become more engaged in R&D activity.

#### *Actions to be taken*

The strategy will be judged over the ten-year framework agreement in terms of the achievement of the following outcomes:

- ▶ Increased participation in the sciences by young people;
- ▶ Significant increases in the numbers of people with advanced qualifications in science and engineering;
- ▶ Enhanced contribution of research to economic, social and environmental development;
- ▶ Transformational change in the quality and quantity of research undertaken by companies – both directly and in cooperation with third level institutions;
- ▶ Increased participation in international S&T cooperation and trans-national research activity;
- ▶ An established international profile for Ireland as a premier location for carrying out world class research and development in key sectors.

#### **PROGRESS**

The strategic importance of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) has been reflected in increased allocations made in the NDP 2007-2013. Over the lifetime of the NDP the State will invest €6.1 billion in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as detailed in the programme areas below. This will bring Ireland into line with R&D performance in leading countries.

▶ World Class Research STI	€3,462 million
▶ Enterprise STI	€1,292 million
▶ Agri-Food Research	€641 million
▶ Energy Research	€149 million
▶ Marine Research	€141 million
▶ Geo-science	€33 million
▶ Health Research	€301 million
▶ Environment Research	€93 million

The investment in human capital, physical infrastructure and commercialisation of research outlined above is complemented by investment in initiatives set out in the NDP allocations for Higher Education and the IDA. Taking account of

these amounts, the global NDP investment in STI amounts to €8.2 billion. **Overall policy continues to be directed by the Cabinet Committee on STI and its supporting high-level Inter Departmental Committee (IDC).**

**The Cabinet Sub Committee met on 21 March 2007 and is expected to next meet at end November. At the March meeting it noted the progress to date on the implementation of SSTI, approved the role and remit of the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) and approved terms of reference for a newly constituted Health Research Group which will operate under the aegis of the Interdepartmental Committee on STI. Work is in progress under the direction of the IDC on developing an indicator framework to track implementation of and progress on SSTI targets.**

The Strategy provides for the establishment of new cross-cutting structures at operational level, to take forward its implementation in a whole of Government manner.

#### **Higher Education Research Group**

The Higher Education Research Group (HERG) is chaired by the Department of Education and Science, with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment as Deputy Chair. The Group **is implementing its work programme for 2007 which aims to tackle** the objectives in the Strategy for the Higher Education Sector, including the expansion of PhD numbers.

#### **Technology Ireland (TI)**

In line with the recommendation of the Strategy, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has established Technology Ireland (TI) with participation from Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation of Ireland and Forfás. TI will bring coherence to the enterprise dimension of the Strategy and will have particular responsibility for overseeing the implementation of required actions to achieve the BERD targets set out in the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013 (SSTI). Among the SSTI initiatives currently being driven by TI are:

#### **Simplifying the R&D Grants Schemes**

**The revised schemes have been drawn up and submitted to the European Commission for state aids approval.**

#### **Strengthening the Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) in the Universities**

**A full time Technology Liaison Officer has been put in place in Enterprise Ireland to promote this activity.**

#### **Developing and implementing a Competence Centre programme to increase industry-academia collaborative activity**

**Following a call for proposals, a number of candidate projects for Competence Centres have now been selected and work has commenced to establish facilities which will deliver the research goals of the projects.**

### Advisory Science Council

The Advisory Science Council (**ASC**) published a major report on Health Research, which was launched by Minister Martin and Minister Harney on 23 November 2006, reflecting the cross-Departmental nature of this issue and addressing the potential for Health Research highlighted in the SSTI.

**The ASC has identified the Absorptive Capacity of Industry for 4 level graduates as the priority item for its 2008 work programme.**

### Health Research Group (HRG)

Following on from the report of the Advisory Science Council, the HRG was established and met for the first time on 29 May, 2007.

**The Group has met on two subsequent occasions. The Group is working to produce a set of priority recommendations to develop coherence and synergy in the health research area.**

### Chief Scientific Advisor

Prof Patrick Cunningham **was appointed as** Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government in January 2007. **His role and remit were approved by the Cabinet Sub Committee on STI in March 2007.**

### Awareness Programmes - Discover Science and Engineering

Discover Science & Engineering, the integrated awareness programme which was launched in October 2003, aims to further the attractiveness of science as a career and raise public awareness of science. The initiatives supported by the programme include National Science Week, programmes for primary and secondary school pupils and teachers, TV programmes and an ambitious sponsorship programme of science awareness activities throughout the country.

Specifically, the programme is working to address the continuing declining numbers of students choosing science subjects at second and third level, a trend, which if left unchecked, will have a substantial impact on Ireland's ability to make the transition to a knowledge-based economy. The programme, which is the main vehicle for delivering science awareness activities, has a budget allocation for 2007 of €5m.

## 4. Better Regulation

TAO

Ireland's regulatory infrastructure is an important factor that has contributed to our economic growth and competitive advantage. Ireland's flexible regulatory framework, has been a key factor in encouraging a number of foreign companies to invest here, and has allowed indigenous companies to flourish and expand. Good quality regulation is essential to prevent market failures, to ensure the health and welfare of the citizen, the worker, the consumer and of business. It is important that our regulatory framework remains flexible, proportionate and up to date.

### *Actions to be taken*

The parties to this agreement recognise that much has been achieved in the area of regulatory reform, particularly the introduction of Regulatory Impact Analysis in 2005. Building upon the progress made, Government will advance the following priority areas:

- ▶ Continue to monitor levels of compliance with requirements in relation to Regulatory Impact Analysis. Government Departments will publish within their Annual Reports details of legislation and regulations published during the relevant year and how RIA was applied in such cases.
- ▶ The Department of the Taoiseach to review the operation of RIA by the end of 2007 and use the findings of this review, to refine and amend RIA requirements and processes. This will help to ensure that RIA continues to support the development of proportionate, effective and targeted regulation.
- ▶ Publish a database of the key public and private sector bodies that currently have regulatory functions in Ireland.
- ▶ Conduct a wide-ranging survey to ascertain business attitudes to regulation. This will better inform Government of those regulatory areas causing most concern to business, either in terms of their impacts on the effective operation of markets and/or their imposition of administrative burdens. Based on the findings of this survey, Government will consider proposals from the Social Partners, the Better Regulation Group and the Business Regulation Forum to address any negative impacts of regulation on business, competitiveness and the consumer.
- ▶ As part of increased efforts to improve accessibility of legislation, the tools of restatement, consolidation, repeal and reform will be used to ensure the Irish Statute Book is more readily accessible. In developing this programme, particular attention will be paid to those legislative areas that have most impact on the citizen and on business, and to areas where restatement would be most useful.
- ▶ The programme to remove all obsolete and redundant Acts that predate the foundation of the State will continue. Repealing redundant or obsolete Acts will assist in ensuring that there is greater clarity regarding the legislation that remains in force in Ireland, and that this is more coherent and easily accessible to all citizens. Work will also progress on making secondary legislation available electronically at an earlier stage.
- ▶ It is essential that regulators' decisions are open to scrutiny and challenge by affected parties who consider that they have not been properly treated in accordance with the law. Government will publish a consultation document in 2006 seeking views of the Social Partners, representative groups and other interested stakeholders on the most appropriate appeals mechanisms for the key economic regulators, reflecting best international practice, as well as the specific regulatory arrangements and market structures operating in individual sectors.

## **PROGRESS**

### *Monitor levels of compliance with requirements in relation to Regulatory Impact Analysis*

The Better Regulation Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach continues to provide support and guidance to Departments and Offices in relation to RIA. Examples of supports offered by the Unit are the *RIA Guidelines*, the RIA Network and the dedicated RIA training course. Further details are available on the Better Regulation website [www.betterregulation.ie](http://www.betterregulation.ie). **This year the Better Regulation Unit has worked closely with the RIA Network to ensure compliance with the above commitment.**

### Review the operation of RIA by the end of 2007

Tenders for an independent review of RIA have been received and the Review is expected to commence shortly. This review will be informed by the views and experiences of Departments and Offices, including through the RIA Network.

### Publish a database of the key public and private sector bodies

The *“Report on the Number of Bodies in Ireland with a Regulatory Role”* was published in February 2007 and is available to download on the Better Regulation website [www.betterregulation.ie](http://www.betterregulation.ie).

### Conduct a wide-ranging survey to ascertain business attitudes to regulation.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Survey of Business Attitudes to Regulation was published in March 2007, and is available to download on the Better Regulation website. **The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has established a cross-Department and Agency effort, under the chairmanship of the Secretary General of that Department, to look at ways of reducing the burdens arising from regulation. The Group comprises senior officials, business representatives and representatives of ICTU. The High-level Group is focusing initially on ways to reduce, simplify and eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens and associated costs in the priority areas identified, inter alia, in the ESRI Survey while ensuring that necessary legislative protections are maintained.**

### Accessibility of legislation

**The Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Bill 2006 providing for a comprehensive reform and modernisation of land law and conveyancing law is currently at second stage in the Dáil.** One of the purposes of this Bill is to simplify the law in this area. A programme of consolidation and modernisation of financial services legislation is also currently being undertaken by the Department of Finance and the General Scheme of a Companies Consolidation and Reform Bill which brings together the existing thirteen Companies Acts, dating from 1963 to 2006, into one streamlined, comprehensive Bill.

**The Law Reform Commission has recently published a comprehensive consultation paper on the issue of statute law restatement as part of the timely development of an appropriate programme of restatement.**

### Scrutiny and challenge of Regulators' decisions

The Statute Law Revision Act 2007 repealed 3,225 obsolete statutes enacted before 6 December, 1922 and retained, through a “white list”, 1,364 statutes. **A public consultation on the next phase of Statute Law Revision was launched in September, focusing on Local, Personal and Private Acts enacted prior to 6 December 1922. This phase of the project has the potential to be bigger again than the May 2007 Act and will probably be the largest Statute Law Revision Act ever enacted any where in the world.**

With regard to secondary legislation, a new electronic system for making Statutory Instruments is now in place and is managed by the Government Supplies Agency. This new system is now the sole process by which all future SI's will be made, and should facilitate electronic production of SI's.

### *It is essential that regulators' decisions are open to scrutiny and challenge*

A consultation process on this issue has been completed and the 35 submissions received are available on the Better Regulation website [www.betterregulation.ie](http://www.betterregulation.ie). **The outcome of this process will feed into the review of the regulatory environment which is committed to in the Programme for Government. An Inter-Departmental Group is currently considering this issue.**

## **5. Knowledge Society**

TAO

### *Actions to be taken*

The Government will publish a Knowledge Society Action Plan during 2006. This will build upon the advances made and the outcomes achieved by the two previous National Action Plans while recognising the ubiquity of technology, the need to use technology as a tool in the drive towards Knowledge Economy activities and the need to provide for greater inclusiveness. It will be in line with the EU i2010 Initiative, 'An European Information Society for Growth and Employment', and will provide for the continued exploitation of ICTs by all; including government, businesses, public sector and the community and voluntary sector. It will include specific actions on awareness of, access to, and application and greater exploitation of ICTs with a view to stimulating and encouraging greater engagement with and participation in the Knowledge Society. Its commitments to addressing the digital divide, eInclusion, are set out under the key life cycle phases in Chapter 3 of *Towards 2016*.

Following on from the work of the Information Society Commission, the Knowledge Society Foresight Initiative, focusing on Ireland's advancement to the innovation-driven stage of socio-economic development, will be pursued by the National Economic and Social Development Office.

### **PROGRESS**

The new Knowledge Society Action Plan - **"Future Inclusive"** is at an advanced stage and will be published in 2007 following its approval by Government.

The Futures Ireland project, previously called the Learning Society Foresight Project, being pursued by the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), commenced in April 2007. A National Advisory Panel (NAP) has been formed to support the work of the project. **A report for the National Advisory Panel (NAP), *Exploration and Leadership in a Changing Context*, which was launched in September 2007, specifies how the project will support practitioners and policy-makers and its relationship with existing futures work. The report sets out the motivation and logic of the project, describing the main focus and themes emerging and outlines the steps to be taken. A number of Working Groups and an International Expert Panel will now be established.**

The Futures Ireland project is due for completion in June 2008.

## 6. Public Enterprise

FIN

The Government is committed to active engagement with the social partners on the future of the commercial semi-State sector on the basis of the Government's commitment to its role in providing services of world-class quality at a competitive price to the consumer with a viable long-term future for individual companies based on the most appropriate form of ownership or structure for its particular needs.

### *Actions to be taken*

The Government's approach will be grounded on a number of principles:

- ▶ we should have a strategy for sharing information and analysis about issues and options facing each major State company and the sector in which it operates;
- ▶ this should include systematic learning from the experience of other countries as a guide to dealing with issues that may arise;
- ▶ the engagement should be such that the Government's thinking is shared at the earliest appropriate time;
- ▶ our policy will, in all cases, be based on serving the public interest, in particular that of meeting the needs of people to best effect without any ideological assumption as to what corporate structure or strategy best meets that objective;
- ▶ all of this engagement should be based on a recognition that the public interest is best served by a culture of innovation, flexibility and cost effectiveness in the operations of our State companies; and
- ▶ where a commercial public enterprise makes a good business case for further investment, the government will consider the project and respond rapidly.

### PROGRESS

The Department of Finance has written to the relevant Departments highlighting this section. It requested them to ensure that all commercial state bodies are made aware of this section, to ensure that there is appropriate consultation with staff on major issues facing the body, and that there is a sharing of information and analysis about issues affecting the body, and any future plans relation to the body.

## 7. Manufacturing Sector

ETE

The Government, employers and trade unions acknowledge the critical role played by manufacturing in the development of the Irish economy and, recognising the challenges facing the sector at present and that all three parties have a role to play in meeting those challenges, commit to taking the measures required to ensure that manufacturing continues to play a central role in the Irish economy in the future. To that end the following measures are agreed:

### *Actions to be taken*

- ▶ Provide a proportion within the overall provision of additional resources for upskilling those in employment (as provided for in section 7 of Part Two of the agreement relating to Pay, the Workplace and Employment Rights

and Compliance), to which projects to up-skill workers in manufacturing would have priority access, with priority also being given to the low-skilled;

- ▶ Appoint a Director for the Framework R&D Programme Support Structures to support manufacturing companies to maximise their involvement with these programmes;
- ▶ Undertake a dedicated promotional campaign to increase awareness within the manufacturing sector of the Export Orientation Programme, the Diploma in International Trade and EI's key sales and marketing personnel grants and review the operation of these programmes with a view to identifying further measures by which the take-up by manufacturing companies can be increased.

## PROGRESS

### **Provide a proportion within the overall provision of additional resources for upskilling those in employment**

In 2007 €43m and €23.5m will be made available to FÁS and Skillnets respectively. This will facilitate a significant expansion of development programmes for managers and workers. Many in the manufacturing sector have already participated in these programmes.

FÁS in-training programme contains specific training initiatives to support the Food, Clothing, Engineering, Print and Packaging, Construction industries. It is planned to continue to further expand these. In 2007 FÁS will be giving priority to training initiatives in the manufacturing sector.

FÁS have also arranged 'strategic alliances' with IBEC/SFA, ISME, Chambers Ireland, ICTU and DIT. These are delivering high volume training to indigenous small and medium sized companies, of which approximately 25% are in the manufacturing sector.

**In September, the FÁS Board approved six more strategic alliances to support employment prospects through raising skill levels, particularly through training those with low level skills and workers in vulnerable employment. The cost of this training is €8.8 million and it is expected that it will provide for the delivery of 21,870 training days to a total of 3,470 employed people.**

### **Appoint a Director for the Framework R&D Programme Support Structures**

The Seventh Framework Programme commenced on 1st January 2007. A new national support structure has been put in place to give practical effect to the stated Government priority on Framework Programme seven (FP7). A key feature of the strengthened support structure was the appointment of a National Director for FP7, Dr Imelda Lambkin, who heads up a dedicated FP7 Office based in Enterprise Ireland. The National Director will ensure that a co-ordinated approach is adopted in the provision of support to researchers and companies across all of the components of FP7.

### Undertake a dedicated promotional campaign to increase awareness within the manufacturing sector of the Export Orientation Programme

The Export Orientation Programme (EOP) is run by IBEC and is partially funded by Enterprise Ireland. Earlier this year Tansey Webster Stewart & Company undertook an evaluation review. The review was broadly positive of the EOP and made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the manner in which the EOP is run and its overall impact. Enterprise Ireland will seek to progress these recommendations over the coming months in conjunction with IBEC. A key finding was that participants need training to enable them to make a contribution to the organisations where they are placed. The programme was initially targeted at the food and drink sector and the indications are that there is room to expand it to other manufacturing industries. Discussions are underway to determine how best to market this initiative to attract a wider cross-section of industry. Enterprise Ireland funding and supports are available for clients participating in the EOP.

Enterprise Ireland and Dublin Institute of Technology developed the Diploma in International Selling. The response to this programme has been positive and already it is being expanded to the South-West region.

Sales Star, a sectoral selling programme dealing with software and ICT, is now being expanded to cover other manufacturing sectors.

A new programme to place high-level sales professionals in overseas markets to enable selected companies to scale and grow their enterprise is currently being explored by Enterprise Ireland.

In addition, it is agreed that a High Level Manufacturing Group will be established to review the challenges facing the manufacturing sector and identify further measures to meet those challenges. This Group will be chaired by an industry figure with significant experience of the manufacturing sector, and will report periodically to the partnership process. Having regard to the initiatives underway following the reports of the Enterprise Strategy Group and the Small Business Forum, the Group will consider the full range of issues affecting the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector including the following:

- ▶ Managing change to sustain competitiveness, in particular measures to:
  - Create an awareness of the critical importance of a flexible and positive attitude to change in technology, systems and processes. This embraces investing in enabling technologies and organisational restructuring with a view to addressing imbalances in productivity performance;
  - Assist smaller manufacturing firms to realise the potential of information technology;
  - Support upskilling of low-skilled workers in the manufacturing sector;
  - Support the change process in companies through advice and assistance;
- ▶ Enhancing the contribution of research, development and innovation, in particular measures to:
  - Support the establishment of R&D units in manufacturing companies;
  - Support companies applying for R&D grants under EU Framework Programmes;

- ▶ Improving the environment for manufacturing, in particular measures to:
  - Ensure good quality regulation;
  - Ensure that there are no unreasonable increases and impacts in local charges;
  - Increase knowledge and awareness of the changing conditions in the sector, including exploring the possibility of creating a post of Chief Manufacturing Advisor;
- ▶ Better exploitation of domestic opportunities, in particular measures to:
  - Encourage greater linkages between MNCs and indigenous manufacturers to support innovation, research and marketing;
  - Facilitate companies in applying for public sector contracts;
- ▶ Growing sales in export markets, in particular measures to:
  - Provide access to market information and opportunities;
  - Enhance the sales and marketing capability within manufacturing companies;
  - Enhance the effectiveness of the Export Orientation Programme and the Diploma in International Trade in the manufacturing sector.

#### Establishment of High Level Group on Manufacturing

The High Level Group on Manufacturing, established in February 2007 has met on **8** occasions. The Chairman of the Group, Mr. Joseph Harford **made a** presentation to the Steering Group meeting on 12th July 2007. **It is anticipated that the Group will complete its deliberations by the end of 2007.**

## 8. Food and Drink Sector

**AFF**

The Government recognises the key importance of the food and drink industry to the economy and acknowledges the significant challenges and opportunities it faces in the light of changing national, EU and international trade policies and major market developments. The Agri-Vision 2015 Action Plan set out a vision for the development of sector and a wide range of actions to meet these challenges.

### *Action 8-1*

In the context of above, a Committee, chaired at Ministerial level and comprised of senior representatives of the industry will be established to identify issues impeding the development of the sector and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with them in a holistic manner.

While recognising that many of the challenges facing the sector are international in scale, an important issue to be addressed by the Committee is the changing relationship between the retail and processing sectors in Ireland. This will include establishing the nature of demand and the structure of the market. Challenges to be addressed will include issues such as competition in both national and international retail sectors, costs and cost recovery, the increasing focus on improving consumer welfare, reform of CAP, WTO. Trends in their characteristics and their implications will be assessed having regard to international practice with a view to supporting the development of the overall strategy.

## PROGRESS

The Food Industry Committee was established to identify issues impeding the development of the food and drinks sector and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with them in a holistic manner. To facilitate deliberations, it comprises separate groupings dealing with issues affecting large industry, small/medium enterprises and artisan enterprises.

Issues discussed to date include:

- ▶ The FDII “End-to-End Strategy for the Irish Food and Drinks Sector”.
- ▶ The importance of the food industry to the economy and a greater recognition of its direct and indirect contribution to Irish Economic Expenditure.
- ▶ The need for a “whole Government” approach to the sector.
- ▶ The relationship between the retail and processing sectors.
- ▶ The role of energy costs.
- ▶ Minimising regulatory and compliance costs.

The group also emphasised the need for commercialisation of research to ensure direct benefit to the industry.

**Minister Coughlan announced the establishment of the new Agri-Food Research sub-Group on 21 September, to be chaired by Mr. Dan Browne of the Dawn Meats Group. This Group has the two-fold objective of acting as the national platform for the EU technology platform while also identifying high-level research priorities. The first meeting of the Group took place in October 2007.**

### *Action 8-2*

As part of its separate review of the structure and operation of the grocery trade, the Competition Authority will be asked to assess, over time, the impact of the new regulatory environment in the context of abuse of a dominant position including both excessive and predatory pricing. As part of this process the Authority will be asked to report to the Government periodically and to make any recommendations it considers appropriate having regard to its findings.

## PROGRESS

Following the enactment of the Competition (Amendment) Act 2006 which revoked the Restrictive Practices (Groceries) Order 1987, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment asked the Competition Authority to review and monitor developments in the grocery sector in light of the new regulatory environment. Since removal of the Order, the Competition Authority has received a small number of complaints of potential anti-competitive behaviour in the sector. These complaints are currently under consideration.

Work is continuing on the Grocery Monitor Project. Since April 2007 one year’s worth of post Groceries Order data has been available for analysis. Later this year the Authority intends to publish an analysis of developments in the sector focusing on pricing trends, market structures and barriers to entry.

## 9. Infrastructure and Planning

EHLG

The overall policy focus is to prioritise investment in public and social infrastructure within a strategic and long-term framework which plans for accelerating regional population and employment growth.

### *Actions to be taken*

An ongoing challenge is to provide for more effective and timely planning decisions and better coordination across policy, regulatory and implementation agencies while also ensuring robust analysis of proposals, with due regard paid to environmental and other issues and the views of the public. In this context, the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Bill 2006 which, among other things will provide a mechanism to accelerate planning decisions on relevant infrastructure, is expected to be passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas before the summer 2006 recess. The legislation will facilitate An Bord Pleanála, in essence, becoming a one-stop shop for planning decisions on strategic infrastructure developments. A parallel initiative is underway by the President of the High Court to provide greater efficiencies in the handling of such cases by the High Court.

### PROGRESS

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 came fully into force on 31st January 2007. **There are currently over 50 notifications of requests for pre-application consultations, and several have been cleared to go forward to formal application stage. The fee for applications under the new consent process will come into force on 10 December 2007, and has been set at €100,000. This will be offset against any costs charged by the Board for determining the case.**

The Tánaiste and Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has recently secured the approval of the Government for an additional 14 judges, including four additional judges of the High Court. It is hoped that the necessary legislation will be enacted shortly. This will, inter alia, permit the President of the High Court to make further resources available for the hearing of planning and infrastructural cases and generally speed up the judicial process.

### *National Spatial Strategy*

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) provides the strategic and long-term framework within which to plan for balanced regional development. Within the first phase (during 2008) of this ten-year framework agreement the following outcomes will have been achieved:

- ▶ The new NDP will have prioritised capital investment in line with the NSS;
- ▶ All City and County Development Plans will have incorporated the policies and aims of the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines;
- ▶ Each Gateway will have in place an overall framework for strategic development and investment adopted by its constituent local authorities;
- ▶ The agreed framework will be in place to enable greater collaboration and cooperation in relation to spatial planning issues on the island of Ireland;

- ▶ Research programmes will be underway delivering information on the economic potential and performance of the Gateways and their more rural hinterlands.

The high level outcomes sought within the longer-term ten-year framework agreement are as follows:

- ▶ Substantial and faster growth evident in all of the Gateways;
- ▶ Gateways both individually and collectively providing alternative locations for investment and economic activity complementing Dublin;
- ▶ Hub Towns extending the impact of Gateways more widely within their regions;
- ▶ Enhanced quality of life through more balanced development of the Gateways and their wider regions, the co-ordinated delivery of infrastructure and amenities and improved connectivity between urban and rural areas.
- ▶ The effectiveness of the NSS Strategy itself in meeting its objectives and the medium and longer-term outcomes identified over the duration of this agreement will be the subject of periodic review with the partners.

## PROGRESS

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with a particular focus on investment in the NSS Gateway centres. Key projects and programmes for implementation over the Plan period in each NSS Gateway area are set out in Chapter 3 of the NDP itself.

The NDP also included the creation of a competitively based Gateway Innovation Fund (€300 million over the period 2008-2010, i.e. €100m per annum, this will be reviewed at **NDP** mid-term stage) to support distinctive and innovative projects at Gateway level to unlock and accelerate their development. A formal call for Proposals issued to lead local authorities in each Gateway on 8 June, 2007, with a closing date for proposals of 15 November, 2007.

**All City and County Development Plans have incorporated the policies of the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) either through variations to existing plans or in the addition of new development plans post-publication of the NSS in 2002 and the RPGs in 2004.**

The Department is pursuing measures to enhance co-operation on spatial planning and infrastructural investment across the island of Ireland in conjunction with the Department of Regional Development in Northern Ireland.

A joint framework for collaborative action between the NSS and the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland **is currently being discussed** and, subject to Government agreement, implementation **will follow**. **A Consultancy report has been produced and is being studied regarding** the development of a spatial planning and development framework to support the Northwest Gateway Initiative in the Letterkenny/Derry area.

## 9.1 National Development Plan (NDP 2007-2013)

FIN

The NDP will set out the strategic framework for investment in infrastructure and enterprise development over the period 2007-2013. It will also address in a substantive way social inclusion, regional development and environmental sustainability. An elaborate consultation process on the Plan has been commenced by the Department of Finance involving inter alia the Social Partners. The Plan will particularly focus on priorities in investment in public and social infrastructure in the research and development, transport, telecommunications, energy, the productive sector, environmental services, housing, education, health, and childcare areas, and on investment in human resources in the education and training fields. The Plan will take account of the high level framework set out in this ten-year framework agreement in relevant areas.

### *Principles underlying the NDP*

Investment in public and social infrastructure within a strategic and long-term framework will be informed by the following principles:

- ▶ Operating within a sustainable economic and budgetary framework;
- ▶ Allocation of investment resources at programme and project levels which best promote competitiveness and sustainable economic development;
- ▶ Investment programmes that will support the Gateways strategy set out in the NSS and thereby promote balanced regional development;
- ▶ Optimisation of North/South and all-island economic cooperation;
- ▶ Continuing to address the physical and social Infrastructure deficits, particularly in the transport, waste, energy, and communications sectors. Housing, healthcare, eldercare, childcare and people with disabilities (accessibility) are also areas which will receive particular attention;
- ▶ Education will be a priority, with an emphasis on building the knowledge economy;
- ▶ The NDP will invest in human capital with a focus on upskilling, early school leavers, literacy, lifelong learning and with particular emphasis on retraining those with least educational attainment;
- ▶ Ensuring best value for money in infrastructure projects and ensuring investment and policy initiatives are targeted as a priority towards infrastructure deficits;
- ▶ Best practice in the appraisal and management of capital programmes and projects to ensure best value for money, proper targeting of investment, and timely completion.

### **PROGRESS**

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 was published on the 23rd January last. **The Plan is a new integrated and coherent 7 year investment strategy. It sets out a blueprint and accompanying quantified investment programmes to achieve high level objectives in the following areas:**

- ▶ **Maintenance of a framework of macroeconomic and budgetary stability;**
- ▶ **Addressing economic and social infrastructure deficits;**
- ▶ **Supporting enterprise, innovation and productivity;**
- ▶ **Promotion of Social Inclusion;**

- ▶ Balanced regional development;
- ▶ All-island economic and sectoral co-operation;
- ▶ Environmental sustainability; and
- ▶ Value for Money on delivery of programmes

Within this framework the key new elements in the Plan are:

- ▶ An additional €11bn of central Government capital investment over 2006 current levels underpinning in an integrated way Government commitments to greatly enhance our public services in areas such as Transport, Social and Affordable Housing and Research and Development.
- ▶ A strong commitment to implement Regional Development and the National Spatial Strategy through necessary investment and commitment to land use/planning strategy that will maximise the value of investment and help to promote a better quality of life for all. The Regional Development strategy will be assisted by the establishment of the new Gateways Innovation Fund; this will have an initial Exchequer contribution of €300m and is designed to lever significant matching investment from the private/other public sectors.
- ▶ An historic new commitment to significant Irish Government investment in North/South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit. These projects with a particular focus on infrastructure will benefit the entire island of Ireland.
- ▶ A major investment to promote environmental sustainability with a particular focus on public transport and renewable energy in the context of our Kyoto obligations and more generally in areas like water, waste recycling, disused landfills and in agriculture: this investment to be complemented by the regional development strategy with an emphasis on environmentally friendly land use policies.
- ▶ For the first time in a National Plan significant multi-annual commitments of investment by key Commercial State Bodies and a major multi annual financial framework for key social inclusion schemes.
- ▶ A €50bn framework for Social Inclusion to help meet relevant commitments in *Towards 2016* and to complement non-Plan social inclusion items such as welfare rates; this area has been elaborated on in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

### *Regional Development*

The Plan sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with a particular focus on investment in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Gateway centres. **To further assist the process a Gateways Innovation Fund has been established. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 2007 the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, formally issued the Call for Proposals to NSS Gateway local authorities, seeking bid proposals on a competitive basis for the €300m of available funding.**

The Gateways Innovation Fund is additional to the significant NDP sectoral investment programmes already committed for the NSS Gateways. It is intended to incentivise, stimulate and reward joined-up strategies and action in the Gateways by helping to fund targeted strategic capital projects that can trigger the accelerated

development of the Gateways and their wider regions. The Gateways Innovation Fund, which will run for the three years 2008 to 2010, will require at least 20% co-financing at local level, as a practical demonstration of the commitment by Gateway authorities and the private sector to Gateway development and co-ordination. The closing date for submission of bid proposals from each Gateway is 15 November 2007, with the intention of allocating funding to successful proposals in early 2008.

### *Monitoring*

Work on establishing the monitoring system for the NDP is now nearing completion. The Central Monitoring Committee will have its inaugural meeting towards the end of the year. Membership of the Committee comprises representatives of the Government Departments involved in the implementation of the Plan, Regional Assemblies and Authorities, the Social Partners and Environmental Interests.

## 10. Public Private Partnerships

FIN

In the context of this agreement and in line with the vision set out in the NESC Strategy, People, Productivity and Purpose, public authorities will seek to pursue the PPP option in accordance with the National Framework for Public Private Partnerships, as adopted under the partnership process in 2001 and in accordance with related guidelines including on the application of the public sector benchmark and on stakeholder consultations.

### *Actions to be taken*

Government is favourably disposed to providing for trade union representation on the Board of the National Development Finance Agency. Government also recognises the complex issues that arise in seeking to develop PPPs. In that regard, resources will be made available through partnership funding structures to part fund appropriate training for unions to fully familiarise themselves with the PPP process and related procedures.

### **PROGRESS**

Funding has been made available to part fund appropriate training for unions to fully familiarise themselves with the PPP process and related procedures. **ICTU have engaged DCU to provide the course. Government's contribution towards the cost will be funded through the Enterprise, Trade and Employment Vote. The course commenced in September 2007.**

## 11. Transport 21 (2006-2015)

Transport

Transport 21 is the Government's capital investment framework for transport for the ten-year period 2006 to 2015. Transport 21 involves investment of in excess of €34 billion and entails 2 key strategies – A Greater Dublin Area strategy and a national strategy.

The Dublin strategy aims to transform the transport system in the Greater Dublin Area to enable it to cater effectively for existing demand and for future population and economic growth. There will be a particular emphasis on the development of an extensive, modern, integrated public transport network. This is to be achieved through a major expansion of rail-based public transport services and a significant increase in bus capacity and in a doubling of the Quality Bus Network. A new Dublin Transport Authority will be established to manage implementation of this crucial strategy. Congress and other interested parties will be consulted during the drafting of the legislation.

## PROGRESS

Significant progress was made on Transport 21 during 2006, with a total expenditure of €2,097 million. The total expenditure allocation for 2007 is €2,290 million. Work on all key projects is progressing well this year and nearly **€1,358 million has been spent to the end of September.**

The main elements of the Dublin Strategy include:

- ▶ The development of Metro North (St. Stephen's Green to Dublin Airport and Swords) by 2012:

## PROGRESS

The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) continues to engage extensively with residents along the route of Metro North. The RPA has received many, and sometimes irreconcilable, requests from residents relating to the tunnel alignment in the Drumcondra and Griffith Avenue areas. In response to feedback from the public, the RPA undertook to examine and appraise less direct tunnel alignments in the area and consulted the public on five possible options for the detailed tunnel alignment. The RPA will make a decision on the preferred tunnel alignment option for Drumcondra in the near future. Once a decision is made, the RPA will write to all residents in the area with the outcome of the assessment, to which they have contributed.

On 13 September 2007 the RPA announced the outcome of the first stage of the procurement process for Metro North. This involved the selection of those candidates who have been pre-qualified for the tender stage of the project. In all, 14 candidates have passed the pre-qualifying stage – 4 infrastructure providers, 5 rolling stock providers and 5 operators. Qualified candidates will form bidding groups and the tender documentation will be issued to those groups by the RPA early in 2008.

- ▶ The development of Metro West (Tallaght-Clondalkin-Blanchardstown-Ballymun) by 2014:

## PROGRESS

On 5 July 2007, following extensive public consultation, the Minister for Transport and the RPA Chief Executive announced the preferred route corridor for Metro West. The route is approximately 25 kilometres in length and will have up to 20 stops for passengers who want to make the journey between Tallaght East and Metropark, south of Dublin Airport. Among the stops under consideration are: Tallaght East, Belgard, St. Brigid's,

Clondalkin, Fonthill, Rowlagh, Liffey Valley, Porterstown, Millennium Park, Blanchardstown, National Aquatic Centre, Abbotstown, Huntstown, Meakstown, Silloge, Harristown, and Metropark, where it will join with Metro North. The RPA will consult further with key stakeholders and the public regarding the detailed design of the alignment, stops, Park and Ride sites and the tram depot.

- ▶ The provision of a new Luas line to Lucan by 2013:

#### PROGRESS

On 27 September 2007, the Minister for Transport and the RPA Chief Executive launched the public consultation process on the route options for the new Luas Line from Lucan to the city centre. Two broad route options have been identified by the RPA. Option 1 runs from Lucan Village to Trinity College via Ballyowen Park, Liffey Valley, Cherry Orchard, Ballyfermot, Inchicore, James's Hospital and Christchurch. Option 2 runs from Newcastle Road in Lucan to St. Stephen's Green via Castle Riada, Collinstown Park, Park West, Drimnagh, Rialto, the Coombe and Kevin Street. There are also a number of sub-options within these two broad corridors. The RPA has asked the public and all interested stakeholders to submit their views to the RPA. It is expected that a preferred alignment will be identified by early next year, pending the outcome of this stage of public consultation.

- ▶ The phased development of a Luas line from St. Stephens Green to Liffey Junction by 2012:

#### PROGRESS

This line will connect the two existing Luas lines in the city centre and continues on via Grangegorman, to meet the suburban rail line at Liffey Junction. Earlier this year the Dublin Transport Office (DTO) and Dublin City Council (DCC) recommended a traffic management plan for the city centre be initiated to facilitate bus, Luas and Metro and DCC is currently undertaking a traffic modelling exercise. Further progress will depend on outcome of DCC's traffic modelling work and on interface issues with Metro and Interconnector in city centre. The line to Liffey Junction will serve the new Dublin Institute of Technology Campus at Grangegorman and provide for interchange with the Iarnród Éireann Maynoth/Navan rail service at Liffey Junction. The RPA is currently undertaking preliminary work on this element of the project. The line is scheduled for completion in 2012, but this is subject to progress on the city centre link line.

- ▶ Extension of the existing Luas network to Cherrywood, Bray, Docklands and Citywest:

#### **PROGRESS**

Construction work on the Luas extension to Cherrywood commenced in February 2007 and the project has a target completion date of end 2010. Work is proceeding well. Enabling works on the Luas extension to the Docklands commenced in June 2007 and good progress is being maintained. Following public consultation, the preferred route for the further extension of Luas from Cherrywood to the Bray area was decided by the RPA and announced by the Minister on 6 June 2007. Following further public consultation on options for linking this proposed new extension with the DART, the RPA decided on 6 September that the scope of the project would be extended to provide for a link to the Bray DART Station subject to a funding structure which keeps the overall cost within the capital envelope for this project in Transport 21. The Luas extension to Citywest will be a 4-kilometre spur from the Red Line. The RPA expect to lodge the application for a Railway Order for this extension with An Bord Pleanála in October 2007.

- ▶ Feasibility study on a Luas line from Rathfarham to city centre:

#### **PROGRESS**

Work on this feasibility study is ongoing and is due for completion by end 2007.

- ▶ Capacity Enhancement on existing Luas network:

#### **PROGRESS**

All 26 trams on the Red line are being extended from 30 to 40 metres over a 12 month period to Summer 2008. These tram extensions will increase capacity on the Red Line by 40%. To date, 11 of the extended trams have entered service. In April 2007, the RPA signed a contract with Alstom Transport SA for 18 new trams, eight of which will cater for projected growth on the existing Red and Green lines. The remaining ten new trams will be used when the network is extended to Cherrywood and the Docklands. Delivery of these trams will begin in December 2008.

- ▶ The completion of the Kildare rail line upgrade project by 2010:

#### **PROGRESS**

The Minister for Transport made a Railway Order on 5 December 2006. Work has commenced and is expected be completed in 2010.

- ▶ The phased development of a rail link to Navan by 2015:

#### **PROGRESS**

Iarnród Éireann applied to An Bord Pleanála on 7 September 2007 for a Railway Order. Subject to the granting of the Railway it is anticipated that construction would commence in late 2008, to ensure the line reopens in 2010.

- ▶ The construction of a new rail station in the Docklands and the implementation of city centre rail resignalling project by 2009:

#### **PROGRESS**

The new Docklands Station opened in March 2007 and allowed the introduction of additional services on the Maynooth line.

- ▶ The construction of a rail interconnector and associated electrification works:

#### **PROGRESS**

Preparatory work by Iarnród Éireann on the route verification, conceptual and station design and geotechnical investigations for the Rail Interconnector got underway during 2006, with a view to making a Railway Order application for the project in 2009.

The DART upgrade project was completed, permitting the operation of 8 car trains across the Dublin suburban rail network.

- ▶ A 60% increase in bus capacity over the programme period:

#### **PROGRESS**

One hundred additional buses were approved for Dublin Bus and delivery, which began in 2006, was completed in January 2007.

- ▶ A doubling of the length of the Quality Bus Network by 2009:

#### **PROGRESS**

Significant progress has been made in 2007 including in opening sections of the Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) on Dublin's North City Quays.

- ▶ Phased upgrading of the M50 by 2010:

## PROGRESS

Work on Phase 1 of the upgrade project began in 2006 and will be completed by 2008. Phase 3 began construction in Q2 2007 and will be completed by Q1 2008. **The contract for Phase 2 was awarded in September 2007 with an expected completion date in 2010.**

In July 2006 the Government approved the establishment of a Dublin Transport Authority and the drafting of legislation for this purpose. In November 2006 the report of the Dublin Transport Authority Establishment Team was published and provided the basis for consultations with interested parties. Discussions took place with key transport agencies, regional and local authorities, trade unions and business organisations. A number of written submissions were also received.

The Agreed Programme for Government published in June 2007 includes a commitment to expediting the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority. Draft legislation is currently being finalised for submission to Government.

## *National Strategy*

The national strategy involves the development of a high-quality national road and public transport network, the provision of improved regional and local public transport services and investment in essential capital works at regional airports.

The national road programme will include:

- ▶ The completion of the inter-urban motorways linking Dublin to Belfast, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford by 2010:

## PROGRESS

Work is complete or underway on **almost 75%** of these vital routes and they are very much on target for full completion by 2010. **August 2007** will see the final section of the M1 motorway to the Border completed.

- ▶ The phased development of the Atlantic Road Corridor by 2015:

## PROGRESS

In the early years of Transport 21, investment in the national road network will focus on the completion of the five major inter-urban (MIU) routes. After that, attention will switch to the development of the rest of the network to a high standard. This phase of the roads programme will place a particular emphasis on the Atlantic Road Corridor which links

towns from Letterkenny to Waterford via Sligo, Tuam, Ennis, Limerick, Mallow and Cork with high quality roadway. Although much of this work will not be completed until the years after 2010, some good progress is already been made for example, the N25 Waterford City Bypass began construction in 2006 and the N18 Ennis Bypass (Phase 1) consisting of 14km new dual carriageway and 4.6km of wide single carriageway was opened in January 2007.

**N85- Phase 1 consisting of 4.6km of single carriageway opened to traffic August 9th with the remaining 2.5km section of new dual carriageway scheduled for opening in late Autumn.** In addition, earlier this year a decision was made to bring forward €400 million of the Transport 21 road investment funding into the period 2008 to 2010, primarily to accelerate the development of the Atlantic Road Corridor. This will accelerate the construction of important schemes such as the N18 from Oranmore to Crusheen. These schemes will now begin construction in 2008 as opposed to their original scheduled start dates of 2011. Good progress also continues to be made in terms of the planning and design of the various schemes along the route.

- ▶ Substantial upgrading of the rest of the national primary network and targeted investment in national secondary roads over the programme period:

## PROGRESS

2006 was a record year for the national roads programme. 14 major road projects (over 100kms) were completed and opened to traffic and eleven more (over 220kms) started construction - more than three times the number of starts in the previous year. The pace and momentum of the programme is being maintained in 2007. Almost €1.7 billion will be invested in the national road infrastructure **during 2007**. Key aspects of the 2007 programme include the completion of work on 9 schemes with a combined length of over 100 kms and the commencement of work on 7 schemes with a combined length of 215 kms.

**Already this year the first major inter-urban route linking Dublin to the Northern Ireland Border has been completed in full. The welcome trend of projects being delivered on or ahead of time and in budget has also continued e.g. The N6 Tyrellspass to Kilbeggan opened six months ahead of time and the N11 Arklow/Gorey Bypass was four months ahead of its original schedule.**

The main features of the national investment in public transport include:

- ▶ Phased upgrading of intercity rail services by 2009:

## PROGRESS

Iarnród Éireann took delivery of 67 new railway carriages for use on the new hourly service on the Dublin – Cork route. These were introduced into service in Q1 2007. Manufacture of the new 150 Intercity railcars continued with the first

18 delivered in March 2007. **The first of these are due into service on the Sligo line in November 2007** with a phased introduction of the remainder by the end of 2008. An order for an additional 33 railcars was placed with an expected delivery of September/October 2008. These are intended for use on long-distance commuter services and are due into service in early 2009.

- ▶ Phased re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor by 2014:

#### **PROGRESS**

Approval was given for Phase 1 of the Western Rail Corridor (Ennis to Athenry and Athenry to Galway commuter service). Line clearance work has commenced, physical track renewal will start in 2007 and services are scheduled to commence in 2009.

- ▶ New and improved commuter rail services in Cork and Galway by 2008:

#### **PROGRESS**

The Railway Order for the re-opening of the Midleton railway line was signed in April 2007. Construction is expected to commence in 2007 and be completed in 2008. It is expected the line will be operational in Spring 2009.

- ▶ Upgraded bus services and improved bus priority and park and ride in the four provincial cities:

#### **PROGRESS**

**A programme of implementation of bus priority and an examination of the potential of park-and-ride is continuing in the Regional Cities during 2007.**

- ▶ Upgraded regional and local bus services:

#### **PROGRESS**

Funding was provided for the provision of 160 buses for Bus Éireann's non-commercial services **with 116 being delivered in 2007. The first 13 of these buses have entered service in provincial cities.**

### ***Public Transport Accessibility***

The Department of Transport's Sectoral Plan, titled *Transport Access for All*, sets out a series of policy objectives and targets for accessible transport across all modes of transport.

The Department's First Progress Report on the implementation of *Transport Access for All*, together with the progress Reports of the five other sectoral plan Departments, was presented to the National Disability Strategy Stakeholders Monitoring Group in July 2007.

*Transport Access for All* is due to be reviewed in 2008.

### **Rural Transport Programme (RTP)**

The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was launched in February 2007 as a new programme to mainstream the former pilot Rural Transport Initiative (2002-2006) on a permanent basis with significantly increased funding. In line with the Social Partnership Agreement - *Towards 2016*, the Government has made available some €9 million for the Rural Transport Programme in 2007 (compares with €4.5million in 2005 and €5.1 million in 2006) which it is envisaged will lead to an increase in the frequency of existing services, extended coverage and additional groups of customers accessing rural public transport.

- ▶ **Figures for the first seven months of 2007 show an increase of 82,430 passengers compared with the same period in 2006. Current indications are that some 1,000,000 passenger trips will be undertaken on RTP services this year compared with 790,000 in 2006.**
- ▶ **Work has commenced** to extend the RTP on a phased basis to ensure nation-wide rural coverage and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 – *Transforming Ireland*, commits some €90 million to the Rural Transport Programme over its full term.
- ▶ **Addressing transport-related social exclusion is a basic principle of the RTP and the provision of transport services for older people and people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is a core element of the Programme. Indeed, all thirty-four community transport groups currently being funded under the RTP provide these services**

### **Public Transport Partnership Forum**

The Public Transport Partnership Forum will continue to provide a means for consultation with the Social Partners on matters relating to public transport.

### **PROGRESS**

The Public Transport Partnership Form (PTPF) met most recently on 27 September 2007. Items discussed at this meeting included an update on integrated ticketing and on the Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan.

## 12. Road Safety

Transport

The Government is committed to the continual reduction in the number of deaths and injuries on our roads through a combination of policy, education and legislative measures and will adopt a new **five year** national Road Safety Strategy (2007-2012) during the **last quarter of 2007**.

### PROGRESS

As outlined in the last Progress Report the current priorities include:

- ▶ Development, finalisation and adoption by the Government of the new Road Safety Strategy for 2007-2012
- ▶ Continued expansion of the Garda Traffic Corps over the next two years. The planned staffing threshold for the Corps of 1,200 officers will be realised by the end of 2008;
- ▶ High visibility and persistent enforcement by the Gardai;
- ▶ Privatisation of speed cameras to enforce speed controls.

The Strategy was presented to the Minister by the Road Safety Authority and circulated to other Government Departments in September 2007. It was published on 25 October 2007.

### Long-Term Goals

- ▶ Introduce any legislation required to support the implementation of that Strategy over the lifetime of the Strategy;
- ▶ Increased, sustained and visible enforcement by the Gardai;
- ▶ Continued operation of roadside Mandatory Alcohol Testing by the Gardai to secure the necessary attitudinal change towards the unacceptability of driving while under the influence of drink;
- ▶ Bring about the necessary changes in behaviour in relation to speeding and seat belt wearing with the increased risk of being caught;
- ▶ Increased role of the new Road Safety Authority, a single agency with responsibility for a wide range of functions, which have a bearing on road safety. The Agency will co-ordinate and advance the road safety agenda through delivery of road safety programmes, such as testing of drivers and vehicles, road safety research and data collection, driver education and the promotion of awareness of road safety in general.

## 13. Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities

EHLG

The longer timeframe of a ten-year framework agreement allows for pathways to be developed to transform the Irish housing environment: to improve not only responsiveness of services but also quality of services. In this context, the core objective of housing policy is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice.

### *Actions to be taken*

Working through the Housing Forum, the Government and the Social Partners will focus on five main areas to achieve the objectives of creating sustainable communities:

- ▶ Continuing improvements in the quality of houses and neighbourhoods, including improvement of consumer information in relation to housing;
- ▶ Providing tailored housing services to those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs, and in this way responding to the broad spectrum of housing need;
- ▶ Developing inter-agency cooperation where there is a care dimension;
- ▶ Maintaining the impetus for the delivery of housing at affordable prices to the market, including through State supported schemes, and other appropriate innovations, such as measures to support first time buyers;
- ▶ Progressing the social housing reform agenda set out in the Housing Policy Framework.

### **PROGRESS**

A new statement of housing policy, *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* was launched in February 2007. The policy statement strongly endorses the vision of better quality housing in sustainable communities as set out in *Towards 2016*. The statement sets out a vision to guide the transformation of the Irish housing sector over the next ten years, by delivering more and better quality housing responses and by doing this in a more strategic way focused on the building of sustainable communities.

It sets out a range of actions geared at:

- ▶ Building sustainable communities;
- ▶ Responding to housing need in a way that improves choice and encourages individual responsibility within communities. There is a clear emphasis on a services approach - one which tailors supports to households taking account of their position in the life cycle;
- ▶ Effectively delivering housing programmes, to get better outcomes for the household's supported, and better value for money for the tax-payer;

The vision for housing underpinning this statement was discussed with the social partners at the first meeting of the Housing Forum convened under *Towards 2016* in December 2006. That meeting also discussed the general approach to the addressing of the various housing commitments in this agreement. The Housing Forum members attended the Ministerial launch of the statement in February 2007.

### *Investing in housing support*

The programme of investment in housing over the next seven years is set out in the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*, under which some €21 billion in finance, including €3 billion in SWA Rent Supplement, is being provided. Some 27,000 new social homes will be commenced or acquired and 17,000 affordable units will be delivered in the initial 2007-2009 period. The resources being made available under the NDP will allow for similar levels of activity post 2009 and in total, it is estimated that the needs of some 140,000 households will be met over the full period of the Plan. The actual delivery will be determined as part of the mid-term review of the NDP in accordance with the commitment in *Towards 2016* to review progress taking account of housing needs, market developments and capacity.

### *Progressing the social housing reform agenda*

The Government has approved the drafting of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2007, comprising new and updated legislative provisions that will underpin a programme of social housing reforms aimed at improving services and their fair and efficient delivery.

The new legislation will underpin the new system of assessing housing need. Implementation of the revised housing needs assessment process has already begun with housing authorities being put on notice of the revised arrangements in May 2007. Full implementation of the new approach to assessing housing need is subject to the enactment of the aforementioned legislation. This and other aspects of the social housing reform programme are being advanced, in consultation with the social partners, through the Housing Forum.

**In relation to other elements of the reform agenda, progress has been made on improving inter-agency working. A working group has been established to progress work on the development of protocols to deal with co-operation between the HSE and housing authorities to provide a strategic framework for inter agency co-operation at local level. A protocol governing liaison between the HSE and the housing authorities on the assessment of the accommodation needs of people with a disability has been developed and is currently being implemented by the housing authorities and the HSE. A further protocol governing support costs for social housing projects provided for people with disabilities is being developed and is expected to be implemented later this year.**

**A National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities will be developed as recommended in the NESC 'Housing in Ireland' Report in order to support the provision of tailored housing and housing support to people with disabilities. This will be progressed through the establishment of a National Group under the aegis of the Housing Forum. The National Group was formally launched on 30 October 2007.**

**In March 2007, the Department launched new design guidelines on housing delivery entitled *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*. In September 2007, the Minister launched *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments*. These documents form part of a suite of guidance documents which the Department is developing to promote quality in housing and neighbourhoods.**

Key areas for development under the first phase of this ten-year framework agreement include new means of assessing need and enhancing delivery of social and affordable housing. The Government is committed to expanding the social and affordable housing options over the coming years and has indicated that increased investment will meet the needs of some 50,000 households over the three years to 2008, through the existing range of social and affordable housing options. Further households will benefit from the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

The Government is committed to providing additional investment over the period 2007-2009, which will provide an expanded range of housing options to households who cannot afford to provide for their accommodation needs from their own resources. This will include:

- ▶ The commencement/acquisition of an additional 4,000 new housing units over the period 2007 to 2009 for such households [through a combination of local authority (2,000), voluntary and co-operative housing (1,000), and RAS long-term contractual arrangements for new supply (1,000)]. This will bring the total number of new commencements/acquisitions in the period to 27,000 units;
- ▶ In addition, further households will benefit from full implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, involving contractual arrangements with landlords, for existing properties transferring from rent supplement;
- ▶ Implementation of the Local Authority Traveller accommodation programmes.

## PROGRESS

As a result of the various social and affordable housing measures the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households will be addressed over the period 2007-2009.

Over the period of the NDP, €21 billion will be invested in housing (including about €3 billion in rent supplement). The investment in housing programmes will result in the accommodation needs of some 140,000 households being met. **Data for the first six months of 2007 indicates that activity by local authorities and the voluntary and co-operative sector has increased, as measured by both commencements/acquisitions and importantly by the number of units in progress. Commencements/acquisitions on the local authority programme were up 15% compared to the same period in 2006.**

In addition to the current affordable housing measures which will deliver some 17,000 units over the period 2007 to 2009 through a more streamlined approach currently under development, the Affordable Homes Partnership is undertaking initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Greater Dublin Area. A key instrument is their role in bringing forward additional land for housing development. Other innovative means of increasing the supply of affordable housing will also be explored during the first phase of this agreement. Throughout the period of agreement there will an emphasis on innovation and joint policy approaches with the social partners to accelerate delivery, including affordable rental and shared equity options.

In addition, the Affordable Homes Partnership while maintaining its focus on delivery in the Greater Dublin Area where affordability problems are most acute, will build on its growing experience to assist the roll-out nationally in areas of communications campaigns in relation to affordable housing matters, common approaches by local authorities in relation to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2004, and application systems for affordable housing.

## PROGRESS

### *Affordable Housing*

Following a 20% increase in delivery in 2006, the delivery of affordable housing in 2007 has continued to grow, up 5% in the first 6 months of the year (approx. 1,200 homes). A strong focus on delivery continues to be maintained in order to drive progress towards the achievement of the 5,000 home target for 2007. In addition, consideration is being given to how the range of existing affordable housing mechanisms might be improved or expanded by new initiatives.

In January 2007, the Partnership made recommendations to two local authorities in Dublin for a variation of their county development plans to provide for the development of over 1,100 affordable homes in two locations in Dublin as part of an overall development of over 1,700 homes. One of these recommendations was not approved by the relevant local authority; the second recommendation has yet to be decided on. It is expected that the Partnership will be making recommendations in relation to a number of other sites in the coming months.

The Establishment Order under which the Affordable Homes Partnership was set up was amended in June 2007 to provide the necessary legislative support for the wider role envisaged for the Partnership under *Towards 2016*.

The multi-annual action plans in place at local authority level, supported by active land management strategies announced by the Government last year are key instruments in delivering this ambitious programme. These will be bolstered by the following measures:

- ▶ Active engagement with the voluntary and co-operative housing sector to increase their role in delivering on needs, through a rationalisation, early in the first phase of the agreement, of administrative and approval arrangements to ensure the earliest possible delivery of suitable quality projects, improvement in funding arrangements and measures to enhance governance of the sector and an expanding role for the sector under the Rental Accommodation Scheme;
- ▶ To further assist the voluntary and co-operative sector in the context of the programme as outlined, the Government will arrange through local authorities for additional land/units to be provided under this Agreement for the purpose of meeting identified housing need. It will be expected that units/sites sufficient to supply some 3,000 dwellings will be identified and made available over the period 2007-2009;
- ▶ The National Building Agency, which has considerable experience in area of regeneration and remedial works, will establish with immediate effect a dedicated unit to support local authorities in undertaking regeneration and remedial programmes as part of a programme to bring all social housing accommodation up to the best possible standard;
- ▶ Minimum standards regulations for the private rented sector will be updated by the Dept of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and effectively enforced by Local Authorities.

## PROGRESS

### *Active engagement with the voluntary and co-operative housing sector*

In consultation with the voluntary and co-operative housing sector, the assessment and approval procedures are being reviewed with the twin objectives of devolving greater management responsibilities to local authorities and accelerating and streamlining the planning, procurement and implementation stages of projects. The revised procedures are to become operational towards the end of 2007.

With a view to enhancing and strengthening governance in the sector and ensuring the sustainability of projects, particularly smaller, localised projects, the Department, in co-operation with the Working Group is working towards enhancing capacity and competence and the compilation of a Charter for Good Governance for the sector.

### *To further assist the voluntary and co-operative sector in the context of the programme as outlined*

Local authorities have been requested to identify sites for this purpose and to report progress to the Department – so far over 2,200 potential sites have been identified by authorities. The issue is currently being raised as part of the discussions between the Department and housing authorities on their housing action plans.

The National Building Agency set up the new Unit in January 2007.

### *Minimum standards regulations*

To achieve prompt delivery on this commitment, the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal announced in September 2006 an Action Programme on Private Rented Accommodation Standards. Development of this Programme is progressing. Work is proceeding to improve the standards in the private rented sector following on from the publication of *Action on Private Rented Standards* in 2006. A presentation on progress was made to the Housing Forum on 2 October 2007. This reflected the improvements that have been seen in both registration of tenancies with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) and enforcement by local authorities (44% increase in inspections in 2006), facilitated by increased funding which is now linked to performance. Work is underway on revising the Standards Regulations. Updated Regulations should be drafted by the end of 2007. Submissions have been received from stakeholders and revised regulations are expected to be available later this year. The Centre for Housing Research has conducted research work for the PRTB, including the preparation of good practice guidelines for local authorities that should be published shortly.

The Housing Forum will play an important role in inputting to policy development and evaluating outcomes over the period of the ten-year framework agreement. This will include housing issues in both the urban and rural environments. Progress will be reviewed following the first phase (during 2008) of the ten-year framework agreement. This

will inform the delivery under the next series of multi-annual housing action plans, taking account of market developments and capacity. In many areas, the outcomes for individuals will be critically dependent on the inter-linkages of services as described under the key lifecycle phases set out in Chapter 3 of *Towards 2016*.

## PROGRESS

The third meeting of the Housing Forum was held on the 2 October 2007. At that meeting the members examined a progress report on the goals set for housing in *Towards 2016* and gave their views on a housing allocation policy paper prepared by the Department. Policy symposia on specific issues will be held around the end of this year and in the first quarter of 2008.

## 14. Construction

EHLG

The Government recognises the key contribution of the construction sector in the development of the overall economy, and specifically in the delivery of public and private infrastructure. The sector employs 250,000 people across three major sub-sectors: Housing, General Contracting, and Civil Engineering.

### *Actions to be taken*

Government commits itself to working actively with the sector with regard to meeting national priorities. In this context, the Forum for the Construction Industry will continue to provide a means for consultation on matters relating to the industry.

## PROGRESS

On 24th September 2007 the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government published the annual Construction Industry Review and Outlook, an independent assessment commissioned from DKM Economic Consultants. Among the key findings and predictions highlighted in the report are:

- ▶ The industry was valued at €35.5 billion in 2006;
- ▶ Output is expected to decline in real terms by about of 1.5% this year with a further reduction of 6.2% in 2008 before returning to positive growth in 2009;
- ▶ Housing output peaked at over 88,000 units last year. While there are different predictions as to output for this year, DKM expect it to fall back to 77,000 units before stabilizing at 60,000 units in 2008;
- ▶ New private non-residential construction, primarily in the industrial, commercial, tourism and agriculture sectors, expanded by 20% in 2006 and is on course to grow by 29% this year;

Government investment in public infrastructure grew by 2.7% in 2006 and a similar increase is again expected in 2007.

## 15. Energy Policy

CMNR

It is imperative for a modern competitive economy to have reliable, secure and competitively priced energy available to it. Long-term actions and decisions regarding the energy sector must also be sustainable from an environmental perspective in order to provide safeguards for future generations.

### *Actions to be taken*

The key outcomes to be achieved during the course of the first phase of the wider ten-year framework agreement include:

- ▶ Publication of the Green Paper on National Energy Policy (mid 2006);
- ▶ Publish White Paper on National Energy Policy (end 2006);
- ▶ Launch National Energy Efficiency Awareness Campaign (September 2006);
- ▶ Establishment of the Single Electricity Market (July 2007);
- ▶ Establishment of an Energy Research Council (mid 2006);
- ▶ Continued and extended support for renewable energy sources, including implementation of renewable energy strategies and a National Bio-Energy/biofuels Strategy (2006);
- ▶ Completion of the North/South Gas Interconnector Project (2006);
- ▶ Completion of the East/West and North/South Electricity Interconnectors (2012 at the latest);
- ▶ Progressive delivery of the All Island Energy Market Framework (2006-2012).

## PROGRESS

### *Green Paper on National Energy Policy*

The Green Paper on National Energy Policy was launched on 1st October 2006

### *White Paper on National Energy Policy*

The White Paper on National Energy Policy was published and launched on 12 March 2007.

### *Power of One campaign*

On 26 September 2006 Minister Dempsey launched the Power of One campaign, a two-year national campaign to address the issue of energy efficiency in Ireland.

### *All-island single wholesale electricity market*

An all-island single wholesale electricity market was established on 1 November 2007. The necessary legislation was enacted on both sides of the border in March 2007. The two regulatory authorities announced that the legal framework for the Single Electricity Market has gone active from 3 July, 2007. This is the main preparatory step to the start of trading planned for 1 November 2007.

### *Energy Research Council*

The Energy Research Council was established in mid 2006 with the first meeting of the Council taking place in June 2006. It is anticipated that the Council will meet on a number of occasions in 2007 to discuss strategic directions for energy research.

### *Consumption of renewable energy*

Ireland has a national target to increase the gross consumption of renewable energy sourced electricity to 15% by 2010.

There is over a Gigawatt of renewable powered electricity capacity connected to the national grid. This consists of approximately 774MW of wind powered plant, 236MW of hydro powered plant with the balance (c. 34MW) made up of different biomass technologies.

Renewable energy sourced electricity generating plant continue to be delivered under the Alternative Energy Requirement (AER) Programme and last year Minister Dempsey launched a new renewable energy support mechanism known as the Renewable Energy Feed In Tariff (REFIT) in order to ensure that the target is achieved.

### *North/South Gas Interconnector project*

The payment of the Exchequer contribution of €12.7m was made in November 2006 following confirmation of the satisfactory completion of the North/South Gas Interconnector project.

### *Electricity interconnector between Ireland and Wales in July 2006 (East/West Interconnector)*

The Government approved plans for the construction of a single 500 megawatt electricity interconnector between Ireland and Wales in July 2006 (*East/West Interconnector*). The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) has been requested to hold a competition to select a developer to secure the design and construction of the interconnector by 2012 at the latest.

**The interconnector will be owned by EirGrid to ensure that this key strategic asset remains in public ownership. EirGrid is progressing work on route selection and technical specification of the interconnector and has selected Woodland in Co. Meath as the most favoured connection point on the Irish side. Work is also advancing with the relevant authorities on finalising the connection point on the west coast of Britain. EirGrid under the regulatory oversight of CER, is also finalising the competition structure, documentation and related contractual arrangements with a view to going to the market as soon as possible.**

### *All-Island Energy Market Framework (2006-2016)*

Delivery of the All-Island Energy Market Framework (2006-2016) targets identified within the Framework are on track.

### *North/South Electricity Interconnector*

EirGrid and Northern Ireland Electricity are investing approximately €180 million in this project which will be completed by 2011. They are now involved in the planning stage for the construction of the interconnector which will underpin the all-island single electricity market. The link will double the existing cross-border electricity transfer capacity to over 600 MW. New arrangements are also proposed in respect of the construction and operation of future interconnectors in the Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006.

### *All-island Energy Market Development Framework*

The Framework, which was jointly published in November 2004 with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland, sets out goals and timeframes across a range of areas including electricity, gas, renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy research. A review of the Framework will be carried out jointly with the North towards the end of 2007.

## **16. Telecommunications**

**CENR**

The Communications sector is of fundamental importance to the economy and is an important factor in determining long-term national economic competitiveness through its impact on productivity gains, innovation, balanced regional development, new regional development, new business processes, and new services and applications. In Ireland, telecommunications services are provided by private operators in a liberalised, regulated market in line with the EU telecoms framework.

### *Actions to be taken*

In order to achieve its overall goal over the course of this ten-year framework agreement, the Government will set out a telecommunications regulatory framework, which ensures competition, innovation and choice in the provision of services, and provides an environment that facilitates new entrants to the market and sustainable, long-term investment by operators in infrastructure. The Government will also address market failures, which would impact on its overall goal, including infrastructure deficits, by targeted actions in the market.

As it represents a step-change in connectivity for individuals and businesses, the progressive enhancement of broadband services in the telecommunications market is a Government priority within its overall telecommunications goal. Specific short-term commitments, which support this Government goal, include:

- ▶ Monitoring the implementation of full local loop unbundling in order to ensure that it stimulates competition, choice, and innovation in broadband services in the market place;
- ▶ Completion of the Metropolitan Area Networks programme in order to support the regional provision of services by a range of operators;
- ▶ Continue to explore technical options to address the requirements of people living in underserved areas, and remote rural areas.

## PROGRESS

### *Monitoring the implementation of full local loop unbundling*

A new iteration of LLU was launched on 25 September as planned. It should be noted that one issue relating to the need for customers to formally approve a migration has been agreed in principle but not fully signed off. It is expected that this will be done shortly. Other than that, there are no material issues remaining which impair the use of this product and it will then be up to the industry to avail of LLU, which is seen as the best means of offering differentiated products and enabling innovation.

There were over 18,000 lines unbundled by the end of August 2007. Eircom commitments on local loop unbundling were delivered by the target date of end September 2007. A fit-for-purpose LLU product range is now available to alternative operators who wish to avail of the service. ComReg will publish a further detailed update on the status of LLU in due course.

### *Phase 1 of the Metropolitan Area Networks*

Phase 1 of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) programme completed delivery of open access, high-speed broadband networks to 27 towns and cities throughout the country. All 27 MANs from Phase 1 have been successfully handed over to E-Net, whose role is to manage, maintain, market and operate the MANs on behalf of the State.

Phase II of the MANs programme involves the construction of MANs in over 90 additional towns in various locations nationwide, **using a combination of fibre and wireless solutions in achieving this target. Construction is complete in 30 towns and is well advanced in another 30.**

### *Group Broadband Scheme (GBS)*

Following a Ministerial decision, the GBS is being superseded by the National Broadband Scheme (NBS).

### *National Broadband Scheme (NBS)*

The NBS will address the issue of the so-called last 10%-15% of the country which will never have access to broadband without investment and support. All reasonable requests for broadband houses and premises in rural areas will be met. The Department issued a Contract Notice on the 2 May 2007 initiating the procurement process. A competition for the award of the NBS Contract will take the form of a competitive dialogue procedure as set out in the European Communities (Award of Public Authorities' Contracts) Regulations 2006. **The first phase of the procurement process, the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) phase, is now complete and four candidates have pre-qualified.**

**The next phase of the procurement process involves inviting candidates to participate in a competitive dialogue process.** It is anticipated that during this competitive dialogue process, various key issues (such as the technological means to be employed to address the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources requirements for the NBS Contract and the level of required funding to be made available under the NBS Contract)

will be discussed with candidates. A full statement of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resource's requirements for the NBS Contract and the matters to be discussed with candidates during the competitive dialogue process will be set out in the Invitation to Participate in Competitive Dialogue element of the procedure and ancillary documents. The estimated timescale for the award of the NBS contract is **Quarter two of 2007, with rollout of the services due to begin as soon as possible thereafter. This timeline is subject to negotiations with candidates during the competitive dialogue phase of the procurement process.**

**In order to map the areas in Ireland without broadband coverage this Department undertook a comprehensive mapping exercise. As a result the indicative map was prepared and presented to service providers to help inform the tendering process. The map is periodically updated and published on the Department Communications, Energy and Natural Resource's website to take account of market dynamics.**

**This ongoing updating process will continue through the current competitive dialogue phase, right up until the Invitation to Tender stage of the procurement process, in order to ensure that the NBS addresses the most accurate and up to date situation on the broadband market as at the actual time when bidders are about to submit their tender.**

In the medium term it is expected that the substantial and current investment levels by the private sector in the market will be maintained.

While investment levels by the private sector area is a matter for that sector, discussions between the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and the private sector have touched on this issue and also the need for continued investment by the private sector in their infrastructure.

## 17. Education and Training

ES

The EU Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs 2005-08 provide for increased investment in human capital through better education and skills. They also provide for adaptation of education and training systems in response to competency requirements, and to support quality standards in education and training and the promotion of more flexible pathways. The National Reform Programme highlights key priorities in the context of ensuring an integrated approach to addressing skills needs across the education and training sector, addressing barriers to access and progression, the issue of life-long learning and tackling early school leaving and literacy and numeracy issues.

In the context of above, the high level outcomes to be achieved within a ten-year framework agreement will be to:

- ▶ Enhance early education provision for children from disadvantaged communities and for those with special needs;
- ▶ Substantially reduce literacy/numeracy problems among children, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities, and the adult population;
- ▶ Encourage children to be active agents in their own learning and to engage in collaborative active learning;

- ▶ Strengthen the technical and vocational dimensions of curricula and to embed key skills such as learning to learn and ICT, to develop higher order thinking skills, to diversify and strengthen language learning, to modernise the technology subjects, and to increase the take up of the physical sciences at senior level;
- ▶ Drive the lifelong learning agenda by enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher-level qualifications;
- ▶ Learning opportunities for adults targeted at vulnerable groups and those in disadvantaged communities with low levels of educational attainment.

Specific short-term commitments within the first phase timeframe include:

- ▶ Roll out of measures under the DEIS initiative for educational inclusion;
- ▶ Further develop measures to combat early school leaving and enhance attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment at primary and second-level;
- ▶ Increased provision of services for those with special educational needs;
- ▶ Increased provision for migrants at both primary and second-level;
- ▶ Further development of second-chance educational measures for vulnerable groups;
- ▶ Development of a National Skills Strategy which will map out the skills needs of the economy to 2020, with a particular emphasis on qualifications up to level 7 of the National Framework of Qualifications (ordinary degree level);
- ▶ Strengthen and develop baseline data/information sources;
- ▶ All children will have the opportunity to become ICT literate by completion of second level; there will be a serious drive to encourage more children to complete second level;
- ▶ Increased focus on integration of services and partnership working at national, regional and local level.
- ▶ Address the continuing fall in the number of people studying science and engineering in order to ensure skills for a modern economy are met;
- ▶ Falling quality in Mathematics needs to be addressed for a knowledge economy.

## **PROGRESS**

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion, is being introduced on a phased basis over a period of 5 years (2005-10). Under the new NDP, some €361m is being made available under the DEIS and Early Education Sub Programme to combat disadvantage in primary and secondary schools serving communities with concentrated levels of disadvantage. The DEIS provision is in addition to existing annual educational disadvantage funding for primary and second-level schools of some €140m. High-level goals have also been set under the NDP in relation to early childhood education, literacy and completion of second-level.

As a result of the identification and review processes, over 870 schools have been included in the new School Support Programme (SSP) under DEIS. These comprise 630 primary schools (urban and rural) and 203 second-level schools. Roll out of support measures under the programme commenced in 2006.

Key actions under the plan include:

- ▶ Targeted early childhood education provision for urban/town primary school communities: (See Early Childhood Development and Care, Chapter 3, 30.2.1);
- ▶ Targeted class size reductions of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes in urban/town primary schools serving the most disadvantaged communities: This measure was implemented in 2006;
- ▶ Access to teacher/co-ordinator support for any of the rural primary schools not already in receipt of such support under a previous measure: This measure was implemented in the 2006/07 school year; and
- ▶ Enhanced literacy support measures for urban/town primary school: (See Improving Education Outcomes for Children, Chapter 3, 30.2.2).

**Home/School/Community liaison and School Completion Programme services have been extended to any of the urban/town primary schools and second-level schools not already benefiting from them.** An additional 80 posts were allocated under DEIS in October 2006 in order to extend HSCL services to any of the DEIS schools at both primary and second-level that do not currently have the service. Under School Completion Programme services, 43 new clusters (including both primary and second-level schools) have been created in 2006/2007 and this will bring the total number of clusters to 125 nationwide.

## 18. Environmental Sustainability

EHLG

The overall policy focus and priority is to mainstream the integration of environmental considerations into policy formulation and to provide for better environmental enforcement.

### *Actions to be taken*

Government will work in an island-of-Ireland context, wherever possible, in the formulation and implementation of relevant sectoral strategies. Among the measures to be pursued at sectoral level will be:

- ▶ Publication of Consultation Paper on the Review of the Climate Change Strategy by June 2006;
- ▶ Publication of an updated climate change strategy by end-2006;
- ▶ Investment in environmental infrastructure, especially in relation to waste water treatment, rural water supplies and recycling facilities;
- ▶ Implementation of further EU and domestic environmental legislation, taking due account of regulatory impact assessments;
- ▶ Additional impetus to enforcement measures;
- ▶ Utilisation of economic instruments as circumstances require;
- ▶ Assessment of the appropriateness of the range of environmental policy responses;
- ▶ A renewed National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) to be published by mid-2007;
- ▶ Increasing environmental awareness generally, and especially in relation to waste prevention, energy and water conservation;

- ▶ Examination of the feasibility of the application of satellite accounts in the area of environmental sustainability (2007);
- ▶ Strengthening the role of COMHAR in the ongoing process of policy development in the context of environmental sustainability.

## PROGRESS

A revised National Climate Change Strategy was published in April 2007 detailing measures by which Ireland will meet its 2008-2012 commitment, how this will position us post-2012, and identifying areas to enable us to meet our 2020 commitment. Key measures include: a commitment that 15% of electricity be generated from renewable sources by 2010, and 33% by 2020; carbon offsetting of all official air travel; €15m multi-annual Climate Change Awareness campaign and establishment of a Commission on Climate Change to provide high level advice to Government.

In the context of the NDP a programme of investment will be maintained in respect of co-funding local authority expenditure on waste recovery/recycling infrastructure and landfill remediation.

Access to Information on the Environment Regulations (S.I. No. 133 of 2007) transposed under EU Directive 2001/18/EC became effective on 1 May 2007.

Provision of funding to the EPA for the Office of Environmental Enforcement is **ongoing**.

The plastic bag and landfill levies have been in operation for a number of years, and the Programme for Government proposes a carbon tax will be introduced during the lifetime of the Government.

Environmental considerations are being incorporated into a broad range of policy formulation, such as the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013, **in addition to the range of environmental policy commitments set out in the new Programme for Government that aim to move Ireland into the top five countries in the world as measured by the Environmental Performance Index.**

**The First Report on the implementation of the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy was submitted to the European Commission by Ireland in July 2007. A general public consultation process on the national strategy will be opened in October 2007. The Comhar Annual Conference in November 2007 will focus on how best to implement the actions to be identified in the new national strategy.**

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is in the process of devising an Environmental and Heritage Awareness Strategy, which will be completed by Summer 2008.

Special attention will be paid to the development of environmental indicators in the context of the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland.

Eight vacant positions on the Comhar Council were filled in May 2007. As part of the agreed Programme for Government, new organisational arrangements are to be introduced for Comhar.

## 19. Rural Development

AFF

The NSS concept of selected *gateway* centres dispersing development to linked towns and rural hinterlands will be an important driver of the rural economy. Key requirements will include programmes to support the infrastructure of such areas to ensure their attractiveness as places in which to live and work, encouragement of greater innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas, harnessing the potential of the country's natural resources for energy generation e.g. in the marine sector, forestry and bio-fuels and the development of new market opportunities in areas such as specialist food production, leisure, tourism, culture and heritage.

The National Strategy for Rural Development is currently being prepared jointly by the Dept. of Agriculture and Food and Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as required by the EU framework on rural development. This will be the basis for a national rural development programme, commencing in January 2007, which will provide support under three broad rural objectives:

- ▶ To improve the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors;
- ▶ To improve and protect the environment and countryside and;
- ▶ To enhance the quality of life in rural areas and diversify the rural economy.

### PROGRESS

Progress achieved under objectives 1 and 2 above is recorded in A Competitive and Profitable Agri-Food Sector, Chapter 2, Section 20, while developments under objective 3 are recorded immediately hereunder.

**The amended National Rural Development Strategy was submitted to the EU Commission in July of this year together with the completed Rural Development Programme. The Programme was approved in July and the formal Commission decision issued in September. The position in regard to the details support measures comprised in the Programme is set out at 20.4.**

### 19.1 Rural Development (D/CRGA)

CRGA

Measures under the third objective are directed towards improving the economic and social well being of rural communities and will focus on actions such as:

- ▶ Promoting economic activity locally, including, for example the development of indigenous rural resources in artisan food, forestry, marine, rural/agri tourism and cultural heritage;
- ▶ Developing local initiatives essential to community well-being, with particular focus on the availability of local culture and leisure facilities;
- ▶ Village and countryside enhancement; and
- ▶ Environmentally friendly initiatives and conservation of areas of high natural and cultural value.

The allocation of the funding under the National Rural Development Programme to individual measures will reflect the need to underpin the competitiveness and sustainability of the agriculture and forestry sectors while, at the same time, acknowledging and supporting the key contribution being made to rural areas by the wider rural economy. Engagement between local development agencies and the co-operative movement will be encouraged, to ensure their familiarity with the co-operative option, particularly where incorporation is a condition of funding for applicants.

## PROGRESS

The funding available for the delivery of LEADER-type activities under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 will almost treble from €150m for the 2000-06 period to €425.4m for the 2007-13 period. The new Programme will complement the other funding for rural development from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs such as the Rural Social Scheme and CLÁR and a key component of the Programme shall be the implementation of the Countryside Recreation Strategy.

The measure will be delivered through Axis 3 of the Programme and will aim to meet the key Programme objectives of improving the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy through:

- ▶ Increasing economic activity and employment rates in the wider rural economy through encouraging on-farm diversification into non-agricultural activities.
- ▶ Supporting the creation and development of micro-enterprises in the broader rural economy.
- ▶ Encouraging rural tourism built on the sustainable development of Ireland's natural resources, cultural and natural heritage.
- ▶ Improving the access to basic services by rural dwellers by, for example, addressing inadequate recreational facilities.
- ▶ Regenerating villages and their surrounding areas by improving their economic prospects and quality of life.
- ▶ Maintaining, restoring and upgrading the natural and built heritage.

**The Rural Development Programme for Ireland 2007-13 was approved by the European commission on July 24 this year with an almost three-fold increase in funding available for LEADER-type activity to €425.4m. Axes 3 and 4 of the Programme will be delivered by area based Local Action Groups. The selection process for these Groups will commence shortly and it is planned that delivery of the new Programme will commence in Spring 2008.**

The measures to be funded, **and the allocation**, under the Programme will be the following:

- ▶ Diversification into non-agricultural activities for farm families - **€16.66m**
- ▶ Support for business creation and development - **€48.26m**
- ▶ Encouragement of tourism activities - **€45.4m**
- ▶ Basic services for the economy and rural population - **€49.61m**
- ▶ Village renewal and development - **€54.2m**
- ▶ Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage - **€51.7m**

- ▶ Training and information on adapted and new skills - **€29.45m**
- ▶ **Skills acquisition and animation measures - €34.63m**
- ▶ **Implementing local development strategies - €4.1m**
- ▶ **Implementing co-operation projects - €10.7m**
- ▶ **Running the Local Action Group - €80.73m**

In addition, a chapter on the challenges in developing the rural economy are set out in a dedicated chapter in the new National Development Plan which was published at the end of January 2007

<http://www.ndp.ie/documents/ndp2007-2013/ndp-2007-2013-English.pdf>

The chapter also looks at the issues critical to the future development of the rural economy and the existing and planned sectoral measures from across Departments that will significantly support or impact on the rural economy.

The CLÁR Programme, as referred to above, is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that has suffered more than 35% drop in population between 1926 and 2002. The programme covers parts of 22 counties and all of County Leitrim and benefits a population of nearly 727,000. CLÁR schemes cover a wide variety of developments such as village, housing and schools enhancement, electricity conversions, roads, water supply, sewerage disposal, health, coastal, sports and community projects. In 2006 €23.06 million was spent, with a further **€7,647,304, 949** spent to date in 2007.

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Road and Water Schemes	16,484,718	2,901,157
Sport, Community & Enhancement Schemes	2,455,975	2,133,466
Health and Education	1,361,402.34	711,063.00
Energy & Telecommunications	688,491	1,189,239
Other	2,016,052	712,279
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,006,638.34</b>	<b>7,647,304</b>

The Rural Social Scheme, also referred to above, is an income support scheme which helps provide additional resources to maintain and improve local amenities and facilities in rural communities. These communities also benefit from the skills and talents of local farmers and fisher persons, while participants experience opportunities to improve existing skills, and perform valuable work in the community. To date all 2,600 participant places, along with 130 supervisor positions have been allocated throughout the country, with a total of €1.5 million Capital Funding allocated to the Scheme for 2007.

**The current situation of 2,600 participants and 130 supervisors' places increased on 18th September 2006 from 2,500 and 125 respectively. Implementing Bodies can offer yearly contracts to all Participants on the scheme subject to the continuity of the overall scheme, sufficient funding being made available and no decrease in the overall number of available places, together with the fulfillment of a number of conditions including, continuing to fulfill the eligibility conditions for participation on the scheme, satisfactory performance of duties etc.**

To date €1,387,331 out of the allocated €1.5 million for 2007 has been issued to Implementing Bodies for new capital projects which are carried out by RSS participants. These projects include walkways, ancillary services and other discrete projects that in the Implementing Bodies opinion benefit / enhance the community. The cost of some of the materials (e.g. markers, arrows, signs, map boards, gates, stiles etc.) is allowed along with the hiring of machinery to aid the participants with certain specific tasks that can't be carried out by the participants themselves.

## 20. A Competitive and Profitable Agri-Food Sector

### *A Shared Objective*

The overriding objective, to which all parties<sup>1</sup> are committed, is the sustainable development of a competitive farming and a consumer focused agri-food sector which contributes to a vibrant rural economy and society. This provides the best platform for a profitable sector that delivers viable incomes to farmers.

### *Maximising Farm Incomes*

AFF

#### **Action 20-1**

The EU and the Government will continue to support farm income through a combination of CAP direct payments, the rural development schemes, animal and plant health regulatory activities, agricultural training, advice, research and marketing and promotion initiatives.

### **PROGRESS**

The Government continues to support farm incomes through direct payments to farmers through various schemes as well as providing funding for activities and bodies which promote efficiency and profitability at farm level.

The main schemes encompassed by the CAP direct payments include the Single Payment, Rural Environmental Protection, Disadvantaged Areas Compensatory Allowance and Forestry.

Over **99%** of payments under the 2006 Single Payment and over **99%** of payments under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme have issued amounting to around **€1.48** billion.

**Over 94,000 applications have received Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payment for 2007 amounting to €231m. Advanced payments worth some €533m under the 2007 Single Payment Scheme commenced on 16**

---

1 The parties referred to are the four organisations who negotiated *Towards 2016*, as also indicated in the introductory text i.e. Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA), Macra Na Feirme and Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS).

**October 2007. Expenditure under these schemes in 2006 amounted to approximately €699m. Expenditure on these schemes to the end of September 2007 amounted to some €509m.**

Currently payments to farmers from all direct payment schemes amount to over 80% of family farm income and it not expected that this proportion will diminish significantly in 2007.

Total funding of €5.8 billion has been agreed for the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. The National Exchequer is providing 3.5 billion, the majority (60%) of the agreed funding. Fuller details on the provisions of the RD programme are set out in Action 20-4.

Exchequer funding of €196 million has been provided in 2007 for agriculture related training, R & D and food promotion.

## WTO

## AFF

### Action 20-2

The Government will seek an outcome to the WTO negotiations in which agriculture does not carry a disproportionate burden in the final deal, and that respects the CAP reforms already agreed. National objectives in the negotiations will include: continued “green box” status for the Single Farm payment, protection of the “green box” category of payments from reduction commitments, full parallel treatment for all forms of export subsidies, maximum possible protection for agricultural products of particular interest to Ireland from increased competition from imports, the inclusion of non-trade concerns in the final agreement and continuation of the safeguard clause. The Government will ensure full consultation with relevant social partners at key points in the negotiating process.

## PROGRESS

Government objectives on WTO have not changed. An intensive round of negotiations is expected to take place in the next few months with a view to making progress and to concluding a new WTO agreement by year end. The Department will continue to avail of every opportunity to achieve the Government’s objectives in relation to agriculture.

## Financial Perspectives

### Action 20-3

Following the negotiation of the new Financial Perspective at the European Council in December 2005, the Government is committed to ensuring that the review of the EU Budget which was agreed will not impact on the allocations for CAP direct payments, markets supports and rural development in the period 2007-2013.

In accordance with the terms of the agreement on the Financial Perspective, 2007-13, the European Council will review the situation based on a wide-ranging report covering all aspects of EU spending, including the CAP, to be presented by the Commission in 2008/09. Apart from the publication by the Commission of a discussion paper in 2007, significant developments are not expected until next year. The Government remains committed to ensuring that the financial allocations agreed for the CAP and rural development in the Financial Perspective are not reduced in the period to 2013.

## **Rural Development Programme 2007-2013:**

### **Supporting Competitiveness, Sustainability and Diversification**

AFF

#### **Action 20-4**

Relevant stakeholders, including the farming organisations, will be consulted on the new (Rural Development) Programme. The draft Programme will require an independent evaluation and a strategic environmental assessment. Subject to the outcome of this process and the agreement of the European Commission, the Government will include the following in the Programme:

- ▶ A REPS 4 measure that will continue to pro-actively enhance the rural environmental, water quality and biodiversity. Payments under the scheme, including Natural 2000, will rise by 17% compared to REPS 3.
- ▶ A new forestry programme, based on the strategic review now being undertaken, with a 15% increase in forestry premium rates.
- ▶ A new early retirement scheme at an increased maximum payment rate of €15,000 per annum. Maximum payments to existing retirees will also be increased to €14,075 for those in ERSI and €15,000 for those in ERS2.
- ▶ Special measures for suckler and dairy farmers that are set out in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.3.
- ▶ An on-farm investment measure targeted at farmers modernising their production systems. The measure will include support for the livestock and crops sectors.
- ▶ An on-farm investment measure targeted at farmers modernising their production systems. The measure will include support for the livestock and crops sectors.
- ▶ Payments under the new Farm Waste Management measures will be financed, at the rates already announced, from this funding package. A total of €350m will be allocated for farm waste and other on-farm investment measures.

#### **PROGRESS**

The new REPS 4 Scheme was launched in August 2007. The 8% increase in Disadvantaged Area Payments is in place from 2007 and €231m has been paid to farmers to date. The new early retirement scheme was launched in June 2007.

A young Farmers' Installation Scheme was introduced in June 2007 which provides a grant of €15,000 to eligible young farmers who commit to the development of their business. This is a 56% increase on the grant available under the preceding Scheme.

A Farm Improvement Scheme was introduced in July 2007 which provides grants for farmers to modernise their production systems. The maximum investment ceiling is €120,000 with a separate ceiling of €120,000 for dairy hygiene investments. Top-up grants are available for eligible young farmers in certain cases. The maximum income unit restrictions have been removed so that all farmers can participate in the Scheme.

The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 was approved at EU level in July 2007 and most of the Schemes comprised in the Programme has been commenced. The Forestry, Suckler Cow Welfare and

Farm Waste Management measures will be funded nationally outside of the terms of the Rural Development Programme.

### *Building Competitive Capacity in the Sectors*

AFF

#### **Action 20-5**

**Beef:** In order to ensure a viable industry and the maximum price and return to farmers, the short to medium term goal for the beef industry is to ensure that the high market penetration in the EU is consolidated and developed and that access to commercially attractive third country markets is maintained. This will require a strong focus on quality.

Implement the actions in the AgriVision 2015 Action Plan to ensure competitiveness on high value markets in the EU and internationally.

#### **PROGRESS**

The 2015 Action Plan was published in March 2006 and contained 167 recommendations to which the government is committed to implementing over a 3-5 year period.

As set out in the last Progress Report the internal implementation process is well advanced. Responsibility for all actions has been assigned to specific individuals and organisations who report on progress achieved on an ongoing basis. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has established two external groups, i.e. the 2015 Agency CEO Group and the 2015 Food Industry Committee with a remit to identify issues impeding the sector and to ensure a fully consolidated approach to its development.

To facilitate operations, the Food Industry Committee comprises three distinct groupings. The Large Industry group, the Small/Medium Enterprise group and an Artisan group. Membership of the groups is made up of senior food industry representatives.

The Stakeholders Forum, provided for under the AgriVision 2015 Action Plan is a wider body involving key representatives of the farm organisations, processors, consumers, retailers and relevant public bodies. This conference type forum was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 and involved keynote international speakers on issue facing the industry. As part of the Stakeholder Forum, a report was published outlining progress on each of the actions in the Plan. Implementation was evaluated on a four-point basis and one year following the launch of AV 2015, 65% of the action points have been completed or are being implemented on an ongoing basis.

#### **Action 20-6**

Have a food labelling regime which provides maximum information to consumers on the country of origin of beef products at restaurant and catering outlets.

## PROGRESS

As set out in more detail in the last Progress Report, the labelling of beef is governed by comprehensive EU regulations which are underpinned by a full national animal identification and traceability system.

Regulations for the purpose of beef labelling in the restaurant and catering sectors that were made came into operation on 3 July, 2006. These Regulations made the provision of country of origin information on beef in these sectors mandatory. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland has responsibility for the enforcement of food labelling legislation.

**In addition draft new regulations, to require operators in the retail and catering sectors, to provide country of origin information on poultrymeat, pigmeat and sheepmeat are the subject of a current public consultation process.** On completion these will be submitted to the European Commission for approval as required by EU legislation.

### Action 20-7

Continue the strong political and diplomatic effort to maximise the access of Irish beef to international markets and to seek to remove any inappropriate technical barriers which block entry to such markets with the objective of reopening markets currently closed to Irish beef.

## PROGRESS

**Good progress is being made in our efforts to gain access in third country markets. Most recently the Saudi Arabian market has been re-opened and this will have a beneficial impact in the region. A delegation from DAFF and An Bord Bia visited Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines recently with positive results which are being followed up. Work is ongoing in relation to Japan and China.**

### Action 20-8

Focus and enhance marketing and promotion efforts, including those by An Bord Bia, on high value markets, especially in the EU.

## PROGRESS

Bord Bia's grant-in-aid for 2007 has been increased by 18% (€4 million) to strengthen its capacity to deliver market information and marketing and promotion activities. Their Marketplace 2007 event in May 2007 showcased the capability of the Irish food and drinks industry and will help connect suppliers of Irish food and drink with major international buyers.

**Over 50 leading Irish food companies exhibited while 220 retail and foodservice buyers and distributors from across Europe, the U.S. and Asia participated at the Marketplace event. A complete follow up programme is in**

place to effectively manage the business opportunity created over the two day Marketplace 2007 event. All exhibitors have been contacted to offer feedback on the event and to evaluate and convert the business opportunities created. Both Dublin based staff and overseas offices are currently co-ordinating this feedback with plans to have business estimates in place for the year end.

The final and third year of Bord Bia's pan European Beef Promotion involves Irish beef being promoted in 13 export markets, covering the UK and Continental Europe. Thirty eight European retailers will participate throughout 10,000 supermarket stores with a potential reach of over 100 million consumers. Since Bord Bia launched the European Beef Promotion in 2005 the volume of Irish beef exported to the European retail market has grown by some 69% to 245,000 tonnes (cwe) in 2007. The promotional objectives are; to increase consumer awareness of Irish beef; build the consumer profile of Irish beef as a premium offering with high integrity and eating quality; and to support new and existing listings in the higher value foodservice and retail sectors.

#### Action 20-9

Continue the live export trade in compliance with our high welfare standards.

#### PROGRESS

The Department continues to apply arrangements in relation to live exports that protect the welfare of animals being transported and which comply with EU legislation including that applicable from January 2007.

#### Action 20-10

Ensure that the high standards of Irish food safety, quality and traceability will be vigorously promoted to provide a competitive advantage against low cost imports.

#### PROGRESS

As described in more detail in the previous Progress Report, national legislation was introduced to enforce the European Food and Feed Hygiene legislation which came into effect on 1 January 2006. This legislation ensures that the highest food safety standards are established across the European Union.

Since January 2005, the same legislation imposed a requirement that all food products must be traceable. Every food business operator must record the supplier and recipient of each food product.

Data from the Department's animal traceability system has been made available to back up additional voluntary labelling claims for use by some retailers. Bord Bia also draws on these high standards of traceability in promoting awareness of the qualities and provenance of Irish product and in developing Quality Assurance schemes.

Bord Bia operates quality assurance programmes across a range of products including beef, lamb, pigmeat, poultry and eggs. Currently there are some 22,000 farms certified under the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme, which operates to the EN45011 standard. This standard has recently been achieved for lamb at farm level and is now being developed at processor level. Schemes for poultry species have been amalgamated into a single standard that will also be submitted for EN45011 accreditation. Bord Bia uses its quality assurance logo for these products in its promotional programmes which is increasingly sought after by consumers.

#### Action 20-11

Encourage beef processing plants to strengthen and refine quality related pricing systems to encourage production of high quality carcasses, which meet consumer preferences.

#### PROGRESS

Certain beef processing plants are required to collate and forward pricing data to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF), which is subsequently published in the farming press on a weekly basis. The information relates to the prices paid by the plants for different conformation and fat scores on carcasses, which is an assessment of the quality of the carcasses. Farmers can see the extra payment by meat plants for the better quality carcasses, which is a reflection of demand for such types of carcasses from their customers and consumers.

#### Action 20-12

Ensure that all beef imported into the EU meets the required EU standards.

#### PROGRESS

As stated in the last Progress Report all imported animal products, including beef, must meet the EU's harmonised standards with regard to country of origin, establishment of origin and residue controls. They must be presented with the requisite health certification, documentation and fees for examination at an EU approved Border Inspection Post (BIP) on entry on to the territory of the EU and there undergo veterinary examination. These examinations include documentary, identity and physical checks in accordance with EU rules and take into account any restrictions or limits on exports from third countries or regions of third countries imposed by way of EU safeguard decisions. The principal beef exporting country to the EU continues to be the subject of a safeguard decision banning the export of beef from regions of that country affected by Foot and Mouth disease. The EU operates its third country approvals process through the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and this organisation also audits the operation of the import controls by the Member States BIPs. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has stressed to the EU Commission and at Council of Ministers the importance of ensuring that imported meat is subject to the same rigorous hygiene and traceability requirements as applies to EU products.

#### Action 20-13

Actively support the genetic improvement of the beef herd for efficiency and carcase quality traits.

#### PROGRESS

DAFF continues to implement this action through the approval and support of the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) who are responsible for achieving the greatest possible genetic improvement in the national cattle herd for the benefit of Irish Farmers, and the Dairy and Beef industries.

With the support of NDP funding, ICBF continue to actively support the genetic improvement of the beef herd with continued investment in the operation and establishment of the National cattle breeding infrastructure.

Research has continued into designing optimum breeding schemes, designed to test and make available for farmers the best possible bulls in AI. New integrated National Dairy and Beef breeding schemes have been agreed for 2007-2010 and are being implemented.

Research has also continued into designing optimum breeding schemes, with submission of a proposal for National Dairy and Beef breeding schemes for 2007-2013 designed to test and make available for farmers the best possible bulls in AI.

**The Suckler Beef Value has been launched for beef farmers and is designed to allow farmers make better breeding decisions and increase profits from the beef herd.**

A new web bull search facility has been developed for farmers, a new breeding information service 'HerdPlus' which provides a range of farm management aids including **Beef Eurostar index reports, Suckler cow report, slaughter report, calving and fertility report breeding charts, and personalised recording notebooks has been launched leading to more accurate information for breeding purposes.**

The new Beef index has a sub-index designed to identify bulls that are good at producing cattle that have a high carcass weight for age, good conformation at kill out, and good lifetime feed efficiency.

#### Action 20-14

Encourage the development of supply contracts for specific markets between beef processing plants and producers.

#### PROGRESS

This is an ongoing process, particularly relating to specialist and niche markets, the development of which is proactively promoted by industry and Bord Bia.

#### Action 20-15

Actively support and promote the further extension of the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme, in conjunction with all industry stakeholders.

#### PROGRESS

Following discussions with all the industry stakeholders, the Department agreed to provide an Bord Bia with a special contribution to kick-start the expansion of the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme (BQAS) to EN45011 Standard. Under this Scheme the Government allocated €1.9 million in 2006 to fund up to 14,000 farm audits. A similar amount has been provided for 2007. It is intended to have 35,000 farms participating with inspections fully up to date by end 2008.

#### Action 20-16

Continue to develop research work on meat yield from bovines through Teagasc and ICBF.

#### PROGRESS

DAFF continues to facilitate the development of a robust and accurate method of meat yield prediction using the modern technology currently being used for beef carcass classification purposes. Collaborators in the project include Teagasc, ICBF, E&V technology and the Department. Teagasc will conduct a further meat yield study early in 2007 to add to the bank of data from previous studies. The yield data from these studies will be used to develop a set of prediction equations for estimating meat yield from beef carcasses.

#### Action 20-17

Introduce a special set of measures to encourage appropriate development on suckler farms in line with national and EU policy priorities and to assist adaptation to market requirements. The new measures will support quality beef production focused on consumer requirements. Funding of €250m will be allocated for this from the rural development funding package outlined in paragraph 4.2 and will be subject to the evaluation and agreement processes outlined in paragraph 4.3.

#### PROGRESS

An Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme for Suckler Herds, was included in the proposed Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013, which was submitted for EU approval in December 2006. The objective of this scheme is to encourage and underpin the adoption of high standards of animal welfare and to improve the quality of breeding cattle in our beef sector. A budget of €250 million has been allocated to the scheme with annual payments of €80 per cow, payable over five years, available to suckler cow farmers who undertake to comply with all measures set out in the scheme.

Following discussions with the European Commission it was decided to exclude the scheme from the RDP and to seek State Aid approval for it, as required under EU law. These negotiations are in progress, **and early Commission approval is expected.**

## *Sheep*

### **Action 20-18**

The Sheep Industry Strategy Group has set out a series of recommendations aimed at positioning the industry to compete effectively in a very competitive environment. The Department of Agriculture and Food and the stakeholders are fully committed to implementing these recommendations. To ensure effective and timely action on the Report, an Implementation Group involving all parties has been established.

### **PROGRESS**

The Sheep Strategy Implementation Group reported in early April 2007. The Minister announced support for the sector under a number of headings in May. These include an enhanced REPS, aid for on-farm investments, assistance for production, breeding, quality control and animal health and welfare.

## *Dairy Sector*

### **Action 20-19**

The Department of Agriculture and Food have implemented a milk quota exchange system and consultations will take place with the farm organisations to review its operation following the first exchange.

### **PROGRESS**

The new Milk Quota Trading Scheme has been implemented successfully. The first and second quota exchanges took place on 31 January and 25 April, 2007, respectively. A total of 200 million litres of quota, representing 4 per cent of the national pool, was traded over the two exchanges, and is available to milk producers for the current, i.e. 2007/2008, milk quota year.

**The Scheme for the 2008/09 period has been announced by the Minister, following a comprehensive review with the farming organisations and with ICOS and has undergone some minor modifications. The next exchange will take place in December 2007.**

#### Action 20-20

The Government shall put in place increased funding of €100m, to support capital investment projects which will assist the modernisation and development of the dairy processing industry. The aim shall be to support the efficient production of core and added value products. Projects shall be considered for funding with effect from September 2006.

#### PROGRESS

The announcement of grant awards under the capital investment package for the Irish Dairy Processing Sector was made in April 2007. A total of 19 capital investment projects were approved and awarded Government grant assistance of €114 million, which will generate an estimated capital spend of €286 million. The one-off opportunity this fund provides will enable the industry reach a level of efficiency that will improve overall competitiveness and secure new international trading opportunities. **Many of these projects have commenced to the implementation phase, which will continue throughout 2008.**

#### Action 20-21

At EU level, Ireland will continue to negotiate an appropriate support framework that will secure a competitive milk production sector within the EU and export competitiveness on world markets.

#### PROGRESS

Although 2006 was a more challenging year for the Irish dairy industry, as a consequence of tightness of supply on EU and World Markets, prices for dairy products have increased considerably. The high prices and limited supply situation has continued in 2007 and looks set to prevail for the rest of the year. **The Minister has requested the Commission to consider her request that milk quotas be increased by 3% from April 2008 in response to the current supply deficit.**

#### Action 20-22

Further support will be provided for R & D and market development projects in the context of the national Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation and the National Development Plan.

#### PROGRESS

€641m has been provided for Agri-Food Research in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 to provide a scientific foundation and support for a sustainable, competitive, market oriented and innovative agriculture, food and forestry. For food, expenditure on public good research funded under FIRM (the Department's Food Industry Research Measure) **the €31m awarded for food research including food & health, food manufacturing, food ingredients, food safety in 2006 following external evaluation will ensure a good pipeline of research outputs in the early years of the new NDP.**

In addition, funding of €2m, following independent evaluation, was approved for the purchase of strategic equipment by research institutions. Of the 6 proposals awarded funding, 5 now have equipment in place. The remaining piece of equipment will be commissioned in November 2007. Funding of €1.1 million was also awarded under the graduate development programme for the next five years. The Programme has been initiated and it is expected that the first two modules will be delivered in the early part of 2008. The third Initiative in Networking and Teambuilding is in the final stages with two of the three proposals in the early stages. The remaining successful proposal is currently undergoing negotiation.

The €5.5m Joint Research Initiative between DAFF & the Marine Institute, the “Marine Functional Foods Research Initiative”, has been evaluated and the successful consortium is currently developing the scientific work programme. It is anticipated that this Initiative will be funded by the end of November 2007.

Collaborative research initiatives with the Health Research Board were officially launched in June 2007. Research proposals were invited in the theme areas of “Food safety Monitoring and Surveillance”, “Nutrigenomics”, “Food Consumption databases” and “Nutritional Health in the Elderly”. The evaluation process commenced in September and is expected to conclude in November 2007.

**Under the Research Stimulus Fund (RSF) The 35 research projects dealing with sustainable agricultural production research projects under the Research Stimulus Fund (RSF) to be carried out by the research institutions over a 3 to 4 year period have now commenced and evaluation of the first round of Progress Reports indicates steady progress following some initial start-up delays.**

A further €20.5 m has now been approved for awarding to 38 of the 67 applications received under a Call launched in July 2007 which included Agri-Energy, Agri-Environment, Plant Biosciences, and Agri-Economy and Policy theme areas.

#### **Action 20-23**

In line with changes in the economic value of the various constituents of milk, including milk protein, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will extend its monitoring and cross checking of the milk testing regime to include all constituents used for payment purposes and, in consultation with the partners, shall ensure transparency in the milk analysis regime.

#### **PROGRESS**

The review of the regime for monitoring the protein content in milk is at an advanced stage and consultations have taken place with the farming organisations and ICOS. It is expected that proposals for enhanced monitoring and cross checking of the milk-testing regime to include all constituents for payment purposes will be announced in the coming months.

#### Action 20-24

The genetic improvement of the dairy herd will be actively supported by all parties.

#### PROGRESS

The current level of genetic gain in our National dairy herd which is €5 per cow per year is capable of being greatly increased. A number of actions are ongoing to ensure that the genetic merit of the dairy herd increases. These include further **reviews and enhancements to the dairy EBI, further enhancements to milk recording and AI electronic recording systems**, improving the ICBF database to facilitate more accurate evaluations for animals, revamping information services to farmers to allow them to have better genetic evaluations for their breeding stock and promotion of AI to encourage better uptake of the best available bulls.

#### Action 20-25

The competitive production of milk will be reinforced through research and advice on the optimal production of systems.

#### PROGRESS

DAFF funding to ICBF includes funding for research on designing the optimal dairy index for Irish milk production systems. The EBI (**Economic** Breeding Index) was launched in November 2000 as the optimal selection tool to use by Irish farmers and has been updated since to accurately reflect Irish production costs and systems.

#### Action 20-26

Introduce a special set of measures to encourage appropriate development on dairy farms in line with national and EU policy priorities and to assist adaptation to market requirements. The new measures will encompass access to REPS for more intensive dairy farmers, operating under derogation from the Nitrates Directive limits, and increased investment ceilings for grant support for dairy on-farm investment. These measure will cost an estimated €320m from the rural development funding package outlined in paragraph 4.2 and will be subject to the evaluation and agreement processes outlined in paragraph 4.3.

#### PROGRESS

The new Rural Development Programme **for the period 2007-2013 has been approved and** includes provision for a new REPS 4 scheme with improved access for dairy farmers as well as significant improvements in grant-aid for investments in milk production facilities on their farms.

**Under REPS 4, intensive dairy farmers who were previously excluded from REPS** (as they were operating above the 170kg organic nitrogen limit) can now apply under the new scheme. **Generous** payment rates per hectare **are** available to dairy farmers, i.e. € 234 up to 20 ha, € 205 for next 20 ha, € 82 for next 15ha and € 10 ha afterwards. Further details on the Nitrates derogation is included under Action 20-79 beneath.

The new Farm Improvement Scheme introduced in July 2007 provides for an increased investment ceiling to €120,000 for investments in on-farm milk production facilities (in addition to the separate ceiling of €120,000 for general farm improvement), **has** open eligibility to all farmers regardless of their income level and to increase the sub-limits for milking machine and bulk milk tanks.

#### Action 20-27

Particular and early attention will be paid to dairy farms in the new herd health / quality initiative outlined in paragraph 7.1.

See response to Action 20-53.

#### Action 20-28

The pig and poultry sectors will be examined in the light of the existing and emerging competitive market pressures with a view to securing supply chain efficiencies at production and processing levels and identifying options for added value and product differentiation.

#### PROGRESS

The Department has established an expert group to examine the difficulties facing the poultry **and possible solutions**. **The group will finalise its work shortly. In the case of the pigmeat sector, there are current pressures. Bord Bia has been asked to intensify its marketing and promotional efforts.**

#### *Forestry*

#### Action 20-29

A review of forestry policy, following the Bacon Report, will be completed and will feed into the detailed decisions on the Rural Development Programme referred to above.

#### PROGRESS

Final comments on the Report of the High Level Working Group appointed to review forestry policy are being collated at present, following which the Report will be presented to MAC and the Ministers. Its findings have strongly influenced the shape of the forestry measures under the Rural Development Programme, including the establishment of the Forest Environment Protection Scheme (FEPS), greater recognition of non-timber value of forests, greater emphasis on upskilling of forest-owners, agri-forestry and provision for planting of non-agriculture land.

## Horticulture

### Action 20-30

Strategic funding will be provided for capital investments which contribute to the development of a competitive horticulture and potato sector.

### PROGRESS

Under the NDP 2007-2013 funding of €56m will be provided for capital investments for on farm developments in the commercial horticulture sector (€49m) and the seed potato sector (€7m). **The first round of grant approvals for the seed potato sector was announced on 5 October 2007. An invitation to submit applications for the first round of the horticulture scheme was issued on 11 October.**

### Action 20-31

The role of Producer Organisations in supply and marketing will be expanded and strengthened.

### PROGRESS

**The Regulation on reform of the common organisation of the market for fruit and vegetables as adopted by the Agriculture Council on 26 September provides significant additional flexibility and incentives to increase the attractiveness of producer organisations. The role of producer organisations is being strengthened to encourage concentration of supply in the face of ever greater concentration of demand. The detailed implementing rules for the reform are currently being negotiated with a view to having it in operation for 2009.**

**The Council Regulation** includes provision for an increased EU contribution of 60% towards the cost of actions undertaken by **producer organisations** to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables targeted at children in educational establishments. (See Action 20-32)

### Action 20-32

Bord Bia in conjunction with industry stakeholders will strongly promote the importance of fruit and vegetables in a healthy diet.

### PROGRESS

As set out in the last Progress Report Bord Bia has completed two years of a 3 year Food Dude pilot to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables by schoolchildren in 150 primary schools. It won a World Health Organisation award in 2006.

In February 2007 the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food launched a Healthy Eating Initiative to make the Food Dudes programme available to all primary schools. A sum of €4 million has been provided in the 2007 Estimates and, subject to funding availability, satisfactory performance and evaluation, similar monies will be provided to Bord Bia in following years to allow the maximum number of interested schools to participate.

**Between June and September preparations were put in place to continue with the national roll-out of the Food Dudes Programme in October and November through identifying and contacting schools, etc.**

The EU Commission is working on a proposal for an EU school fruit scheme to be introduced in 2008. As part of this process it has established an expert group from the Commission and from countries who have school schemes in operation. Bord Bia has been invited to be a member of this expert group which had its first meeting on 24 September.

## *Cereals*

### **Action 20-33**

In the context of the overall drive for traceability and quality, the increasingly important role of indigenous cereals as a source of feed will be examined in conjunction with key participants in the supply chain.

### **PROGRESS**

Efforts to increase the 1.7m tonne of home grown cereals used in the manufacture of animal feed in 2006 have been severely hampered by the dramatic increase (over 70%) in wheat prices during 2007. Factors causing this include increased demand for wheat from the biofuel industry; and difficult weather conditions in the major wheat growing regions of the world. It is hoped that cereal production in Ireland and in the EU will increase significantly in 2008 in response to the improved market situation and the dropping of the 10% set-aside obligation on cereal land should assist this.

## *Strengthening Competitiveness, Innovation and Consumer-Focus in the Food Industry*      **AFF**

### **Action 20-34**

Consider in the framework of the NDP appropriate supports for R&D, capital expenditure, marketing and promotion, and human resource development, subject to EU state aid rules and in consultation with stakeholders.

### **PROGRESS**

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 includes funding of €641m for the agriculture, food and forestry sectors and €289m for capital investment and marketing and promotion activities targeted at the food sector. The food

industry will also have access to the range of horizontal supports including funding for commercial research, training and human resource development provided for in the Plan.

The Minister recently announced the members of the R & D Subgroup. This group, headed by industry will advise on research themes and act as National Platform to input into the EU Technology Platform deliberations on EU Framework Research Programmes.

Investments grant aided under the Dairy Investment package are progressing satisfactorily.

The closing date for applications under the Beef and Sheepmeat Package has been extended to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

#### Action 20-35

Promote initiatives to identify the best market opportunities for the food sector and work closely with producers and exporters to expand export sales effectively in new and emerging consumer markets within the enlarged EU and internationally.

#### PROGRESS

Bord Bia's market based staff have implemented a systematic follow up of potential business with overseas buyers hosted at Marketplace 2007. This has involved category assessment and the delivery of additional information requested. New business has already been written in some cases.

The final and third year of Bord Bia's pan European Beef Promotion involves Irish beef being promoted in 13 export markets, covering the UK and Continental Europe. Thirty eight European retailers will participate throughout 10,000 supermarket stores with a potential reach of over 100 million consumers. Promotions in 2007 will cover following Markets: Sweden, Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia.

A new Irish beef marketing strategy is nearing completion. This follows consultation with industry as to how best to use the promotional resources available over the period 2008 to 2013.

Bloom took place in the Phoenix Park, Dublin over the June bank holiday weekend and was successful on a number of fronts: attendance, quality of gardens and displays and the promotion of the best of Irish horticulture. 50,000 visitors attended and the event received considerable positive media coverage. A structured review revealed a 98% satisfaction among visitors and higher than anticipated sales by exhibiting horticultural businesses.

#### Action 20-36

Facilitate, support and promote a doubling in the value of food and drink exports to the Far East over three years.

#### PROGRESS

Exports to Asia region thus far in 2007 are strong, and are on course to meet the established target of doubling by 2009. In addition to participating in trade fairs (Sial China and the World Pork Congress) and general business development initiatives, the focus has largely been on building awareness of Ireland and the capability of the Irish food and drink industry. Journalist groups have been hosted in Ireland during the period from both China and India. The resultant coverage has been very positive. In addition to appointing a representative in China, Bord have also retained the services of trade consultants in Japan and India.

#### Action 20-37

Direct State Agencies involved in education and training to ensure that courses are provided to meet the skills needs of the food industry.

#### PROGRESS

As stated in the last Report, Teagasc will continue to develop and provide nationally accredited education and training courses to the food processing industry. In addition, the 2015 Food Agency CEO group and Food Industry Committee provide a structure for a high level approach in this area to complement work underway.

#### Action 20-38

Establish a centre of excellence focused on servicing the market development needs of small businesses.

#### PROGRESS

Bord Bia's Centre of Excellence will be branded 'Bord Bia Vantage – Centre of Excellence for Small Business' and will be launched to national media and key opinion formers on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2007. A nationwide road-show commencing in January 2008 will support detailed communication of all aspects of Bord Bia Vantage to small business client companies. The on-line resource guide will be branded *Vantage Point* and will be a very comprehensive live website operational by the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007. The resource centre will be branded *Vantage Plus* and commenced a series of nationwide workshops on the topic of Distribution on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007. The high impact sales centre will be branded *Vantage Partner* and in September 2007, commenced its first 18 month long Business Development Programme with 8 SME client companies.

#### Action 20-39

Focus on strategic market research to provide enhanced support to industry marketing activity.

## **PROGRESS**

The consumer trends work was extended by means of an “Innovation Expedition” which involved representatives of 14 companies visiting stores, restaurants and other locations that exemplify the Health and Wellness trend. This new format will be repeated.

A study into how the Irish retail market might look in 2020 has been underway consulting widely with many players within and beyond the Irish food industry. This will be presented by end of year 2007.

Research is underway to examine how consumers shop the produce fixture in Irish retail outlets. This work will provide insights that will be helpful to Irish edible horticultural suppliers.

A report on landscaping in Ireland was presented to horticultural producers at the Kildare Growers’ Show.

### **Action 20-40**

Further develop a portfolio of promotion and market development services with clearly associated targets and objectives.

## **PROGRESS**

Some €90m has been provided in the National Development Plan 2007 –2013 for marketing including funding for Bord Bia for generic promotion, market supports in line with EU rules, promotion of quality and quality assurance. Bord Bia has reviewed its promotion and market development services and set out targets for each.

### **Action 20-41**

Take initiatives to increase the contribution of small, specialist and innovative food enterprises to growing the local and regional economy, with particular emphasis on regional food strengths and the economic potential of links with other sectors such as tourism.

## **PROGRESS**

Building on the success of the Regional Food Fora, a National Conference on Local Food will be held in Mullingar on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2007, a joint initiative by DAFF and Bord Bia, this event aims to raise awareness and understanding of ‘Local Food’ as defined by the Irish consumer; highlight the benefits of local food initiatives for Irish producers, consumers, retailers and foodservice operators; provide relevant and practical information for those involved in local food production and, address some of the issues highlighted at the Regional Food Fora. The audience will comprise of local food producers, relevant producer associations and organisations, key opinion formers and influencers, industry representative bodies and relevant state agencies.

To coincide with the National Conference, Bord Bia will publish 'Alternative Routes to Market'. The purpose of this guide is to assist growers, producers and other food entrepreneurs who wish to set up in business through farmers' markets, farm shops and box schemes. Information and advice will be presented in a concise, easy-to-use format, with step-by-step action plans, useful checklists and relevant guidelines. Both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will be covered.

Bord Bia has extended the Periscope research among Irish consumers to cover Local Food and the environmental aspects of food consumption. In addition Bord Bia has specifically commissioned consumer research into local food consumption in Ireland.

#### Action 20-42

Continue to investigate the possibility of introducing country of origin labelling at retail, restaurants, hotels and other food outlets for lamb, pig-meat and poultry-meat and subject to State Aid rules press the EU Commission to introduce suitable labelling regulations.

#### PROGRESS

During 2006 the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food participated in a consultation process undertaken by the European Commission in regard to food labelling. The Department submission stressed its strong preference for origin labelling of meat and meat products and the desirability of there being common EU-wide legislation to support a labelling regime.

In addition Ireland, (as indicated under Action 20-6) is currently finalising draft national regulations, to require operators in the retail and catering sectors, to provide country of origin information on poultry-meat, pig-meat and sheep-meat. On completion these will be submitted to the European Commission for approval as required by EU legislation.

#### Action 20-43

Support and promote quality assurance schemes and initiatives in a way which maximises the benefit to the producer within EU state aid guidelines.

#### PROGRESS

The Department secured an extension of EU state aid approval to end 2007 to ensure that the introduction of new state aid rules did not lead to an interruption of activity on quality assurance schemes.

Bord Bia has been active in promoting quality assurance schemes on beef, pigmeat, poultry, eggs and horticulture. Details on the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme have been indicated under Action 20-15; inspections on beef hold-

ings has risen from some 4,500 in 2005 to 15,500 in 2006. It is intended to have 35,000 farms participating with inspections fully up to date by end 2008.

An amount of €2.3m was included in the 2007 Estimates to support Bord Bia in expanding membership of the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme and launching and building up membership of a Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme. The Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme, involving the major commercial flocks, is being introduced in 2007 with the objective of carrying out 11,000 inspections in 2007. Some 10,000 of these would be joint beef/sheep holdings while 1,000 would be single operations.

In addition the EU Producer Organisation Scheme and the NDP grant aid scheme will require producers to participate in recognised quality assurance schemes.

#### Action 20-44

Promote the further growth of the organic sector by continuing investment aid and by a new support measure for organic farmers distinct from the Rural Environment Protection Scheme.

#### PROGRESS

**The new stand-alone Organic Farming Scheme was launched in August 2007 under the Rural Development Programme for the period 2007-13, which has been approved by the European Commission, include a stand-alone provision for support for organic farmers. Previously, organic farmers could avail of direct support only by way of participation in Rural Environment Protection Scheme. The new measure is designed to alleviate shortages of supply of organic produce from both of those sectors. Organic farmers will still, of course, be able to join REPS as well.**

**New Scheme of Grant Aid for the Organic Sector was launched in June this year, as a State Aid outside the Rural Development Programme. Grant aid at 40% is available for both on-farm and off-farm investments.**

#### Action 20-45

Ensure a fully co-ordinated approach by the State Agencies involved in supporting the sector.

#### PROGRESS

A 2015 Food Agency CEO group has been established by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ensure co-ordination at the highest level.

#### Action 20-46

Increased public funding will be provided for research and development in the new national development plan. DAF's competitive research programmes (FIRM, RSF and COFORD) will underpin collaboration and capacity building in Irish research centres. All parties are agreed that this public investment should be matched by a much increased private research effort in the agri-food sector.

#### PROGRESS

Expenditure on the FIRM & RSF programmes for the 2007-2013 period is expected to be of the order of €14m & €7m respectively a year compared with some €7m and €1.5m a year on average under the 2000-2006 NDP.

DAFF secured €14m in funding from the interdepartmental competitive research fund for projects involving partnering with the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCENR), the Health Research Board (HRB) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**The €5.5m Joint Research Initiative between DAFF & the Marine Institute, the "Marine Functional Foods Research Initiative", has been evaluated and the successful consortium is currently developing the scientific work programme. It is anticipated that this Initiative will be funded by the end of November 2007.**

The recently announced joint research Initiative with the Department of Health & Children and the Health Research Board resulted in receipt of 5 proposals. Following independent evaluation, successful applicants will be notified in the coming months.

Minister Coughlan announced establishment of Research Group on 21 September, to be chaired by Mr. Dan Browne of the Dawn Meats Group. The first meeting arranged took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2007. One of the Group's first tasks is to advise on priority funding areas for 2008 FIRM call.

DAFF also consulted and reached agreement with the EPA and D/CMNR on the priority areas for the use of the €2.5m and €5.75m allocated for Agri-Energy and Agri-Environment respectively. €7.25m of this was then used to fund or part-fund relevant energy and environment projects received under the 2007 RSF call, with the remaining €1m set aside for use to fund bioforest biomass project(s) received under a Call operated jointly by COFORD and EPA.

In addition, COFORD (The National Council for Research & Development) plays a vital role in the identification of research priorities in the forestry sector and funding will be provided in the new NDP for the continuation of the COFORD Forestry Competitive Research Programme. COFORD will continue to collaborate with the forest industry, through its applied research and technology transfer frameworks, to increase the level of business-led investment in R&D and innovation.

Since the beginning of 2007 COFORD has put in place research programmes in climate change and forests, biodiversity, forests and water, forest planning and management, forest policy and economics, totalling 27 projects at an estimated cost of €13 million to 2012. COFORD is also funding the Forest Energy 2007 programme which is geared towards the development of cost effective wood fuel production from young forests.

## *Protecting Animal Health*

AFF

### **Action 20-47**

Continue effective Brucellosis and BSE programmes focusing on the aim of early eradication of both diseases.

### **PROGRESS**

The current intensive programmes for both Brucellosis and BSE have succeeded in reducing the incidence of both diseases e.g.

- **There have been no Brucellosis depopulations so far this year (compared with 3 in 2006, 27 in 2005, 68 in 2004 and 328 in 1999)**
- BSE cases have fallen from 333 cases in 2002 to 41 in 2006

The current programmes continue to operate with the objective of eradicating both diseases. Brucellosis levels here are now at an all time low but it is likely that small numbers of cases will continue to arise.

While an adjustment has been made to the programme recently (the exclusion of young bulls from the Round test), it is necessary to maintain strict controls in place and continued vigilance will be necessary. There are continuing problems in parts of Northern Ireland and close co-operation will continue to be maintained between the respective Departments. In addition, BSE numbers continue to fall in 2007 and the indications are that there will be fewer than the 26 cases projected by the Department's model for the year. The model forecasts fifteen cases in 2008.

### **Action 20-48**

In view of the improved situation, to continue to seek EU Commission acceptance of a higher age for BSE testing of Irish cattle destined for the food chain.

### **PROGRESS**

DAFF will continue to press the Commission on this issue which requires amendments to EU legislation.

#### Action 20-49

Strengthen policies, and in particular continue the wildlife vaccine research policy, aimed at containing the incidence of TB to enhance consumer safety and trade.

#### PROGRESS

As reported in the last report, the TB eradication programme includes a range of measures, underpinned by an effective computerised system, including annual test of all herds, follow-up and focused strategic additional testing, restriction of holdings when reactors are disclosed, the use of blood testing for TB in certain circumstances, the rapid removal of reactors and a compensation regime for farmers whose herds are affected by disease. In addition, a comprehensive wildlife programme is in place **involving** (a) the removal of badgers where they are implicated in a disease breakdown and (b) a research project, in co-operation with UCD, on the development of a vaccine against tuberculosis in badgers that, if successfully developed, could facilitate the eradication of bovine tuberculosis. However, while work will continue to be undertaken, it is not likely that a vaccine will become available in the immediate future.

#### Action 20-50

Update and further coordinate with industry stakeholders and state agencies contingency planning for significant disease outbreaks to enhance our capacity to identify and deal with diseases and pests.

#### PROGRESS

DAFF already has contingency arrangements in place to deal with possible outbreaks of exotic diseases such as FMD, Avian Influenza, EIA, Bluetongue, etc. These are kept under on-going review and updated as appropriate to take account of the evolving situation. In addition, measures deemed necessary to address particular concerns will be introduced.

**In view of recent outbreaks of FMD and Bluetongue in Britain, contingency arrangements have been specifically reviewed and additional measures put in place in response to the increased threat to Ireland posed by these outbreaks. The Department's consistent approach has been to ensure that the control measures in place are proportionate to the risk posed at any given time. The Department has also engaged actively with various stakeholders to ensure a flow of accurate information and advice and to discuss and address issues of mutual concern.**

#### Action 20-51

As regards arrangements for prescribing veterinary medicines, special arrangements that give equivalent assurances as the normal prescribing regime will be introduced in the context of mastitis control programmes for prescribing intramammaries in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## **PROGRESS**

A new Statutory Instrument designed to give effect to this commitment, is expected to be signed by the Minister before the end of October 2007.

### **Action 20-52**

Disease levies will be reduced by 50%, subject to Oireachtas approval, with effect from 1 January, 2007.

## **PROGRESS**

In line with this commitment, disease levels were reduced by 50% from 1 January, 2007 and as a result levies payable will fall by €5m annually.

### **Action 20-53**

The Government and farm organisations will work with industry and other relevant organisations to develop a comprehensive herd health/quality initiative aimed at improving health management and quality farm production.

## **PROGRESS**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food continues to develop arrangements for adoption by the industry and organisations of initiatives aimed at improving herd health and quality farm production.

## ***Providing Quality Service and Supporting Farm Income***

**AFF**

### **Action 20-54**

Implement the provisions of the Farmers Charter, particularly the payment and service delivery timeframes specified for services and schemes, subject to EU regulatory requirements.

## **PROGRESS**

The provisions of the Farmers Charter are being implemented and reviewed by the Charter Monitoring Committee.

### **Action 20-55**

Build on the experience gained in 2005 in implementing the SPS and achieve over 90% of payments by the end of each scheme year.

## **PROGRESS**

The achievement in 2005, in terms of percentage of farmers paid by 31 December, 2005 has been surpassed in 2006 - 95% of farmers were paid by 31 December, 2006.

#### **Action 20-56**

Recognising the importance of the SPS to farmer's cash-flow requirements and income, pursue with the European Commission provision for the making of advance payments on an on-going basis from 2006.

#### **PROGRESS**

**Approval has also been received from the European Commission to make a 50% advance payment for 2007 and this payment was issued in October 2007.**

#### **Action 20-57**

During the lifetime of this agreement, seek to achieve maximum integration of SPS checks with checks on other schemes operated by the Department.

#### **PROGRESS**

The Department is committed to ensuring the maximum level of integration of inspections across all areas including inspections under the Single Payment Scheme and the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. This integration means that control checks in one farm visit can be carried out in relation to eligibility of land declared, identification and registration of animals on the holding and compliance with the other 18 Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) under cross-compliance.

#### **Action 20-58**

Continue to seek to strike a balance between minimising paperwork associated with the SPS and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the scheme.

#### **PROGRESS**

The introduction of the Single Payment Scheme in 2005 has dramatically reduced the paperwork for farmers in applying for the scheme. In addition, the Department has introduced an on-line application system for the SPS and DAS scheme for 2007 to facilitate the application process. Over 7,500 farmers availed of this facility this year. See also Action 20-59.

#### **Action 20-59**

Review the operation of the arrangements for cross-compliance in the light of the findings of the European Commission audits and of the experience gained in 2005.

#### **PROGRESS**

The Department has already reviewed the operation of the cross-compliance system following feedback from audits undertaken in 2005 and 2006.

The Commission has carried out its' review of cross-compliance and the proposals were presented to Council on the 16 of April 2007. **The Council conclusions were adopted in June. Proposed amendments have been tabled to both the Council Regulation EU No. 1782/2003 and the Commission Regulation EU No. 796/2004 and discussions regarding same will continue at official level over the coming months. The new Regulations will not come into effect until 2008.** The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food **has carried** out a full review of the inspection arrangements and checklists for the Single Payment Scheme with a view to simplification of the arrangements (including paperwork) where possible while, at the same time, ensuring compliance with the regulatory requirements.

#### Action 20-60

Examine in consultation with the parties, the matter of appropriate tolerances for cross-compliance statutory management requirements (SMR) applicable under the SPS from 2006 and 2007, on the basis that some events are regarded as inadvertent, minor in nature and capable of occurring in practical farm situations.

#### PROGRESS

As described in the last Progress Report, the Department, in consultation with the farm bodies, has already agreed certain level of tolerances for the various cross-compliance requirements applicable under the SPS. These tolerances were the subject of EU audits during 2006. The cross-compliance arrangements applicable in Member States have been reviewed by the European Commission. The Commission has invited Member States to volunteer presentations on their tolerance systems as part of the expert group set up to examine Commission proposals following its' review of cross-compliance. Ireland presented its system at the Management Committee meeting on 6 June 2007. Discussion on the issue will ensue at EU level over the coming months.

#### Action 20-61

Ensure effective and widespread consultation by DAF with the Farming Bodies and individual farmers on key service delivery issues.

#### PROGRESS

Ireland submitted a paper to the EU on its priorities for Simplification of the CAP which includes provision for 14 days advance notification of inspections as well as a reduction to 1% in the level of cross-compliance inspections. At the Management Committee Meeting for Direct Payments on the 18 July 2007 the Commission tabled a working paper on proposed amendments to Commission Regulation 796/2004 as a follow-up to the Commission's report to the Council and the conclusions reached at the June Council. In relation to the advance notice of inspections the text circulated in the working paper on the 18 of July is as follows:

**"On the spot checks shall be unannounced. However, provided that the purpose of the control is not jeopardised, advance notice may be given, strictly limited to the minimum time period necessary. Such notice shall**

not exceed 14 days. However, for on-the-spot checks involving livestock payments the notice mentioned in the first sub-paragraph of this article shall, except in duly justified cases, not exceed 48 hours. Furthermore, where the legislation applicable to the act and standards relevant to cross-compliance already provides rules for advance notice of on-the-spot checks, those rules shall also apply in the case of on-the-spot checks related to cross-compliance”.

At point 14 of the June Council conclusions the Council requested the Commission to study ways of improving the coherence and practicability of control rates and advance notice of on-the-spot checks. The question of advance notice of all inspections will be pursued in this context.

#### Action 20-62

Establish a Monitoring Committee with an independent chairperson to oversee the implementation of the Farmers Charter.

#### PROGRESS

The first meeting of the committee took place on 27 February, 2007 under an independent chairperson. A further meeting has taken place since then and other meetings will be held as required.

#### Action 20-63

Seek to secure European Commission agreement for 14 days advance notification of inspections under the SPS and for a reduction to 1% in the level of cross-compliance inspections from 2007.

See response to Action 20-61

#### Action 20-64

Move to the use of the direct credit payment system for all farmers by the end of 2007.

#### PROGRESS

The Department has continued its efforts to raise awareness of the benefits and convenience of payment by Direct Credit among farmers and this has resulted in some 66,000 farmers being set up for payment using this payment method. A further campaign to encourage the remaining farmers to use the electronic payment method **will be undertaken in the final quarter of 2007.**

**Action 20-65**

The Department of Agriculture and Food will play an active role in the development of the energy policy processes referred to in Chapter 2 to ensure that agriculture, including co-operatives contribute to the development of biofuels and bio-energy as part of a coherent national energy policy.

**PROGRESS**

The 'Bioenergy Action Plan for Ireland' includes a number of Actions to increase the share of renewable energy derived from the Agriculture and Forestry sector. Among the commitments are measures to increase production of energy crops, improve the supply of wood energy and support research and development in the agri-energy field. The Department is making considerable progress in rolling out these measures.

**Action 20-66**

The farming organisations will actively participate in the forum to be established for engagement with the social partners as part of the arrangements for the development of a cohesive policy approach to biofuels.

**PROGRESS**

This matter is currently under consideration.

**Action 20-67**

The EU Biomass Action Plan will be actively implemented with a view to increasing production of renewable energy materials and improved income opportunities for farmers.

**PROGRESS**

The developing Bioenergy market and attractive grants on offer are encouraging farmers to exploit new opportunities in producing renewable energy materials. As set out in Budget 2007, €14 million is being made available over the period 2007-2009 to encourage farmers to grow energy crops. The measures include a new national payment of €80 per hectare; see Action 68 following; and a new Bioenergy Scheme; see Action 72 following. Adjusted payments for energy crops are also available under the REPS and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Funding for research and development in the bioenergy area is being provided through the Department's Research Stimulus Fund Programme; see Action 70.

#### Action 20-68

To promote and seek improvements in the EU Energy Crops Scheme to stimulate growing of energy crops.

#### PROGRESS

The EU Commission will review the operation of the Energy Crops Scheme during the 2008 Health Check of the Common Agriculture Policy. The area claimed under the Scheme increased from 5,000 hectares in 2006 to 7,500 hectares in 2007. In addition to the €45 EU premium, the area claimed is also eligible for the new national top-up payment of €80 per hectare, subject to certain conditions. €6m is being made available for this measure in the 2007 – 2009 period.

#### Action 20-69

Grant-aid for the development of anaerobic digestion and fluidised beds combustion systems will be considered.

#### PROGRESS

The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 provides for the continuation of a grant scheme for the development of on-farm waste processing systems such as anaerobic digestion or fluidised bed combustion.

#### Action 20-70

Improved funding will be provided under the Research Stimulus Fund to encourage research projects on biofuels and other non-food use of crops.

#### PROGRESS

To date research institutions have been awarded €1.5m in respect of 5 projects arising from specific emphasis placed on bio-fuel and other non-food crops in calls in 2005 & 2006 under the Research Stimulus Fund.

**A further €4.2m will be committed to the successful energy-related projects arising from the 2007 RSF Call.**

#### Action 20-71

EU approval will be sought for a new scheme of supports to encourage the harvesting and processing of biomass from forests and to promote the use of wood biomass as a source of renewable energy.

#### PROGRESS

In the Budget 2007, €0.6million was provided for a special scheme to grant aid biomass harvesting machinery such as harvesters and chippers for the processing of forest biomass. Provision was also made for a further €0.6m in 2008. **The scheme was launched in April 2007 and €500,000 in grand-aid has been awarded to date.**

#### **Action 20-72**

A pilot project on willow planting will be established to evaluate further its potential from a bioenergy and waste disposal viewpoint.

#### **PROGRESS**

The Department launched a new Bioenergy Scheme in February 2007 to encourage farmers to plant willow and miscanthus. The Scheme provides 'establishment grants' up to a maximum of €1,450 per hectare. Almost 800 hectares of willow and miscanthus were planted in 2007. In addition to establishment grants, farmers who plant willow and miscanthus can also qualify for adjusted payment under the Rural Environment Protection Scheme and the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, subject to certain conditions.

### *Enhancing the Environment*

**AFF**

#### **Action 20-73**

The SAC Monitoring Committee will ensure the implementation of the 2004 SAC agreement and will meet at two monthly intervals, or as decided by the Monitoring Committee. The committee will also deal with issues in Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and other issues relevant to the environmental designation of land.

#### **PROGRESS**

The Designated Areas Monitoring Committee (formerly the SAC Monitoring Committee) continues to meet frequently, dealing with a broad range of issues relevant to the environmental designation of land in all protected areas.

#### **Action 20-74**

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government will ensure that the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board will hear an appeal within four months of receipt of the appellant's scientific report, except in cases where a further time-bound scientific evaluation is required. Following the recommendation of the Appeals Board, the Minister will issue his decision within four weeks of receipt of this recommendation and the appellant will be notified forthwith.

#### **PROGRESS**

Additional resources have been provided to the Appeals Board to enable this target to be achieved in 2007.

#### Action 20-75

Compensation for losses suffered or costs incurred as a result of restrictions imposed by the designation of land will continue to be paid. This will be broadened to ensure that landowners will be paid for habitat enhancement works which may be required under a NPWS farm plan.

#### PROGRESS

A range of compensation payments are in place and being paid on an ongoing basis. The NPWS Farm Plan Scheme includes a provision for compensation in respect of habitat enhancement works required under a plan.

#### Action 20-76

The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) will be used to improve notification procedures for designation of SACs, SPAs and NHAs.

#### PROGRESS

LPIS is in place and is being used by the National Parks Wildlife Services (NPWS) for notification procedures.

#### Action 20-77

A separate Marine SAC Monitoring Committee will be established.

#### PROGRESS

**This matter is currently under consideration.**

#### Action 20-78

The Government will ensure that the farm organisations are consulted on the implementation of the Nitrates Regulations, in particular with regard to drawing up guidelines for farmers and local authorities, the provision of information and advice for farmers and the farm inspection arrangements. Proposals for an inspection protocol will be developed.

#### PROGRESS

There is ongoing liaison with farm organisations and other interested parties in relation to implementation of the Nitrates Regulations. Proposals for an inspection protocol for local authorities are being developed in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

#### Action 20-79

The Government will continue to seek to secure European Commission approval for derogation under the Nitrates Directive for limits of up to 250 kg / ha per annum to be allowable in appropriate conditions. The farming organisations will be consulted in this context.

## PROGRESS

In November 2006, the EU Nitrates Committee authorised the EU Commission to grant a derogation to Ireland from the limit of 170 kg of nitrogen per hectare per year from livestock manure imposed under the Nitrates Directive to allow the application of a maximum of 250 kg per hectare per annum.

The derogation relates to grazing livestock and only applies to grassland farms (at least 80% grass) and certain conditions apply.

An application process for the derogation is in place (for 2007 the closing date for applications was October 12), for which, in excess of 5000 applications have been received to date.

### Action 20-80

The Government will ensure that proportionate measures to prevent and reduce water pollution are taken by all sectors and that an undue or disproportionate burden is not placed on the agriculture sector.

## PROGRESS

A comprehensive range of measures is being pursued in the context of river basin management to identify the appropriate measures to be taken to protect the status of waters and the aquatic environment, **from all sectors including aquaculture, forestry, industry and wastewater treatment. For example, Regulations were made in November 2006 and September 2007 in relation to the licensing of, respectively, aerial fertilisation of forestry and discharges from local authority wastewater treatment plants.**

## *Measures to Encourage Structural Change*

AFF

### Action 20-81

Under EU VAT law, the VAT rate under the flat rate scheme for unregistered farmers is set on the basis of macro-economic data for the previous three years. In order to continue to ensure that the farmers' flat rate addition is calculated as accurately, transparently and revenue neutral as possible within the criteria laid down by the EU Sixth VAT Directive, the Government will arrange for the relevant Departments and Offices to meet the farming representatives at an early date to review the data and methodology used in this calculation. The objective shall be to complete the review prior to Budget 2007.

## PROGRESS

To date, two meetings of the group established to review the methodology underlying the farmers' flat rate have been held and submissions have been received from the farming organisations setting out their concerns. While further work is required to complete the review, a number of these concerns were addressed in Budget 2007.

#### Action 20-82

The existing 25% scheme of stock relief for farmers will be continued for a further two years until 31 December 2008 subject to compliance with relevant EU rules.

#### PROGRESS

In Budget 2007 it was announced that the existing general 25 per cent stock relief for farmers and the special incentive stock relief of 100 per cent for certain young trained farmers are being extended from 1 January 2007 for a further two years subject to clearance with the European Commission under State aid rules.

#### Action 20-83

The special rate of stock relief for young trained farmers will also be continued for a further two years until 31 December 2008 subject to compliance with relevant EU rules.

#### PROGRESS

Budget 2007 continued the existing 100% general stock relief rate for young trained farmers for a further two years until 31 December 2008 subject to compliance with the European Commission under State aid rules.

#### Action 20-84

With a view to facilitating farmers in restructuring their holdings, the existing stamp duty exemption for land swaps will be extended in a targeted manner to cases where one farmer is consolidating. However, this provision will be subject to EU approval as regards State Aids.

#### PROGRESS

As set out in the last Progress Report it was announced in Budget 2007 that stamp duty consolidation relief is to be extended for a further two years to 30 June 2009. The relief will also be extended to qualifying exchanges of land where only one farmer is consolidating his/her holding. However, commencement of these changes will be dependent on State Aid approval from the European Commission

#### Action 20-85

In line with a recommendation in the Report of the Agricultural and Training Forum, the minimum eligibility requirement for stamp duty relief for young trained farmers, installation aid and top-up grants aimed at young trained farmers would be changed to the 'Advanced Certificate in Agriculture', subject to appropriate transitional arrangements.

## **PROGRESS**

Budget 2007 provided that the minimum eligibility requirement for stamp duty relief for young trained farmers will be changed to the 'Advanced Certificate in Agriculture. This will come into effect from 31 March 2008 following appropriate transitional arrangements.

These educational requirements have been taken into account when drawing up the new schemes in regard to installation aid and farm improvement within the context of the 2007-2013 rural development round.

### **Action 20-86**

Further increases in the thresholds under the land leasing exemption will be considered with a view to facilitating farmers in developing their levels of scale and efficiency, subject to compliance with relevant EU rules.

## **PROGRESS**

In Budget 2007 an improvement to the leased land exemption tax exemption was announced whereby a new exception limit of €20,000 per annum will be introduced from 1 January 2007, for leases of 10 years or more duration. This measure is subject to clearance with the European Commission under State aid rules.

### **Action 20-87**

The Government is committed to facilitating and promoting farm partnerships. In this context, the Government will ensure that, where practicable, schemes and rules shall act to encourage and promote farming in partnership in the interests of efficiency and competitiveness.

## **PROGRESS**

The scheme of Milk Production Partnerships (MPPs), which enables dairy farmers to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of their enterprises as well as bring about lifestyle improvements, is currently being reviewed. Eligibility criteria and the general provisions governing the implementation of the scheme are being examined with a view to making MPPs more attractive and accessible to milk producers. In the longer term, it is hoped that the MPP template can be applied to other sectors.

## 21. Art and Culture

AST

The Government and Social Partners recognise the importance of arts and culture in their contribution to the economy as a whole and to the significant additions they make to the quality of the lives of all citizens.

### *Actions to be taken*

The Government is committed to facilitating the promotion and sustainable development of the arts and culture sectors and their contribution to national economic and societal progress through the provision of an appropriate legislative, policy and resource framework. In this regard the Government will:

- ▶ Endeavour to create an environment that enables arts and culture to flourish;
- ▶ Promote Irish art abroad and develop the Film industry;
- ▶ Develop the National cultural institutions and support development in other arts and cultural projects at regional and local level;
- ▶ Continue to endeavour to make arts more accessible to all including the support of programmes in socially deprived areas.

### **PROGRESS**

Funding of €904 million has been secured under the Culture sub-programme of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007 to 2013 which will be allocated in respect of areas under the remit of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

### *Arts Council Funding*

Since 2005 the Department has provided funding of €162.3m. The strategy includes proposals specifically aimed at children and young people, by supporting youth projects.

**The Art in Education Committee, set up in 2006, has completed its work and the next steps arising from its report are being considered.**

### *Redevelopment of the Abbey Theatre*

In July 2006, Government gave its approval for the procurement of a design for the new Abbey Theatre at George's Dock via an international design competition, and decided that the procurement of a new theatre should be in accordance with PPP guidelines on a Build/Finance/Maintain basis.

**The interagency committee, chaired by the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism, set up to oversee both procurements, has met a number of times and a project team, chaired by the Office of Public Works has been appointed and has also met a number of times. The preparations for the international design competition are nearing completion; legal advisors and technical advisors have been retained and preparations are in train to acquire the other necessary advisors.**

### *Gaiety Theatre*

Grant aid of €7.5m was approved towards the cost of refurbishing the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin with the intention of providing city with Opera House facilities of international standards.

**Work has now been completed and the Theatre has been re-opened.**

### *ACCESS Scheme*

The ACCESS (Arts and Culture Capital Enhancement Support Scheme) programme is a key element of the Department's regional arts strategy. Applications for a second round of ACCESS closed on November 17th 2006 and an independent Selection Committee made recommendations for funding to the Minister. 67 projects have been awarded funding of €32million.

**Successful applicants are now required to fulfill conditions for funding allocations before funding is drawn-down.**

### *Film Industry*

The Irish Film Board funding in 2007, at €19,659m, is deemed sufficient to enable the Board to continue its role of developing and supporting the Irish film sector, marketing Ireland as a film location through the newly opened office in Los Angeles and raising the profile of the Irish audiovisual industry abroad.

Significant improvements made to the Section 481 scheme in the Finance Act 2006 and the increased capital allocation made to the Board in 2006 succeeded in attracting several important television projects to the State in 2006.

**The Department of Finance has undertaken a review of the case for improvement in respect of the Section 481 scheme, in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. A draft report has been prepared and a final report should be completed shortly.**

### *Regional Museums*

The Department has established a pilot programme that will facilitate funding of designated county museums, and museums participating in the Heritage Council's Standards and Accreditation Scheme. €100,000 in grant-aid has been approved for specific projects. The Department has continued to provide funding to the Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Foynes, County Limerick, the Hunt Museum, Limerick, and the Cork Butter Museum

### *Cross –Border*

The project facilitating the translation of the *Commentarius Rinuccinnianus* is now complete and the final report is awaited. The translation of the *Historia* will commence on receipt of the Commentarius report.

The Department has approved three additional cross border projects which will commence shortly.

### *National Gallery of Ireland*

The Gallery is progressing plans for its major capital development. It has completed its exhibition 'Treasures from the North' and 'Paintings from Poland: Symbolism to Modern Art (1880 – 1939)' is now showing.

### *National Museum for Ireland*

The National Museum of Ireland is hosting the Viking Longship until mid-2008 and has held several public events associated with the arrival of the vessel in Ireland, including a formal welcoming ceremony in Collins Barracks and a series of Norse craft workshops.

### *Irish Museum of Modern Art*

The Irish Museum of Modern Art has hosted a series of high-profile exhibitions in 2007, including those of Lucien Freud, Joán Míro and Alex Calder.

### *National Library of Ireland*

The exhibition centre has held two major exhibitions and continues to be used for occasional exhibitions. This centre will be developed as a major resource for the public. The Library continues to acquire manuscripts and collections of importance for the national collection.

A new Repository Building is planned for the Kildare Street location and planning permission process has been approved. The OPW is now dealing with this and building will commence as soon as possible.

### *Chester Beatty Library*

The Library continues to improve its exhibition space.

The Library held a major exhibition in 2007 based around the Codex Leicester, an original Leonardo Da Vinci Manuscript that was on short-term loan to the Library and the appointment of a Head of Conservation has been approved.

### *Crawford Art Gallery*

The Gallery came under the aegis of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism in 2006 and in addition to management costs funding has been provided for improvements to the building and exhibition space and for the acquisition of important works. The Gallery continues to hold public exhibitions of importance to the remit of the Gallery.

The New Board, appointed in December 2006, has issued contracts for the production of a financial plan and a Strategic or Development plan. The Board and management will build on these plans and develop ongoing strategies for the Gallery.

### *Culture Night*

€35,000 was provided to the Temple Bar Cultural Trust in 2007 for Culture Night, which was held on 14 September 2007. On that evening, key artistic and cultural venues in Dublin City, including the National Cultural Institutions extended their opening hours until late in the evening.

### *Computerisation of the pre-1900 Church genealogical records*

An Advisory Group Report has been agreed by the Department and a number of the key recommendations have been acted upon, including commencement of the computerisation of the transcribed Dublin City church records, commencement of the reconstitution of Irish Genealogy Ltd. and establishment of a Scoping Group to assess the best means of addressing the computerisation of un-transcribed church records.

### *Culture Ireland*

Since its establishment in 2005 as the national agency for the promotion of Irish arts and culture worldwide, Culture Ireland has provided funding to 701 projects across all art forms, totalling €7.29m, in 55 countries across five continents. In the last year it has invested in strategic showcasing and networking at key global arts events including the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Venice Architecture Biennale, Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Art Biennale and the Prague World Theatre Design Quadrennial. A Chief Executive has been recruited, legislation is in preparation for statutory establishment and partnerships are being developed with other state agencies and arts organisations.

### *James Joyce Centre*

The centre is receiving a special grant and capital allocations from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to implement a two-year development plan.

The two year period draws to a close and CHL Consulting has been contracted to carry out a review of the implementation of that plan and make recommendations on the future. Towards the end of 2007 the Department will make recommendations for the future support of the Centre.

### *Commemorations and Festivals*

The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism will collaborate with a number of other offices including the Department of the Taoiseach to commemorate a number of important anniversaries, as they occur in each year.

In 2007 the quarter centenary of the Flight of The Earls, The Foundation of the Irish College in Louvain, The 350th anniversary of the Birth of Luke Wadding, are amongst the principal events.

Also in 2007, a replica Viking Longship sailed from Roskilde in Denmark to Dublin. The arrival was the centre-piece of an important cultural and tourism event in the Docklands area. A huge crowd turned out for the arrival.

Furthermore the 50th Anniversary of the Dublin Theatre Festival is receiving special support to acknowledge its prestigious successes over those years. The Druid Theatre productions of JM Synge's plays were recorded for RTE and the Department has agreed to fund the distribution to all post primary schools in the state.

The National Social and Economic Forum report on 'the Arts, Social Inclusion and Cultural Inclusion ' was presented to Government in February 2007. It looked at ways of improving access to the arts for all strands of society. **Acting on its main recommendation, the Minister for Arts Sport and Tourism has set about establishing a Strategic Committee of relevant Government Departments to consider the report's recommendations.**

## **22 Sport**

**AST**

The Government and the Social Partners recognise the important contribution which sport makes to the social and economic development of the country. The benefits can be assessed in terms of physical and mental well being of the population, social and cultural development, education, personal development and economic impact.

### *Actions to be taken*

The overall Department objective for Irish sport over the next three years is to promote and encourage a vibrant and active sports sector, especially in areas of disadvantage, with increased participation levels, good quality sustainable facilities and opportunities for people to play an active role in sport; where the talents, potential and needs of competitive and elite athletes are also cherished and supported in their pursuit of excellence and success. A policy for physical recreation will be developed, to complement existing policies in sport for the enhancement and support of participation, and the strengthening of social capital.

In this regard the Government, through an appropriate policy and resource framework, will:

- ▶ Support and influence increased interest and participation in sport among all age groups;
- ▶ Provide funding towards the development of modern, well equipped and well managed sports facilities at national, regional and local level;
- ▶ Enhance the supports required to improve the standards of performance of Irish sportspersons in an environment which respects the ethical values of sport.

## PROGRESS

As set out in the last Progress Report, the 2007 budget for the Irish Sports Council has increased by 30% or €13m to more than €54m and ensures that the ISC can continue to embark on initiatives and programmes which increase participation in sport and physical recreation by people of all ages in the country. Funding has been provided to enable the continued extension of the network of Local Sports Partnerships through which sports initiatives at local level are delivered and co-ordinated.

The Sports Capital Programme is the main vehicle for State funding of sports facilities aimed at both increasing participation generally and at improving performance levels of top competitors. The total allocation of sports capital funding from 1998 to 2007 is €568m in respect of 6,716 projects in virtually every parish, village, town and city throughout the country. In 2007 the total sports budget is over €295 million, an increase of 21.5% over 2006.

As set out in the last Progress Report, the Irish Institute of Sport was launched in July 2006 to deliver optimal support for Olympic and Paralympic athletes and sports. In the lead up to the 2008 Olympics/Paralympics, the Institute will concentrate on 14 focus sports with about 90 athletes involved under the Carding Scheme.

## 23. Tourism

AST

The policy for the development of tourism sets out a new vision for Irish tourism, identifies key drivers of success and includes strategic targets for the ten-year period to 2012. A new Tourism Strategy Implementation Group has been established to champion the implementation of the outstanding elements of the strategy.

### *Actions to be taken*

The key targets, as endorsed by Government, are to double overseas tourism revenue to €6 billion over the period 2003 – 12, with an associated increase in visitor numbers from just under 6 million in 2002 to 10 million in 2012. Targets have also been set for promotable visitor numbers, domestic tourism and regional spread. In line with the strategic policy framework, the key Tourism State Agencies (Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland) will continue to roll out a range of programmes and policies to deliver on the objectives.

## PROGRESS

The targets for 2007 are to achieve growth in overseas visitor numbers and foreign revenue receipts of 5% and 7.3% respectively. CSO figures for the first seven months of 2007 show an increase of 4.3% on the same period in 2006 while the corresponding revenue figures for the first six months of the year shows an increase of 7.6%.

As set out in the last Progress Report, in May 2006, the Tourism Strategy Implementation Group (TSIG) was established to continue oversight of the implementation of the *New Horizons* Report and work with tourism agencies, the industry and other Government Departments to advance the tourism development agenda and respond to evolving issues as they arise. **TSIG are at present preparing a progress report on its work to date, in accordance with its terms of reference; the report is also expected to set out a proposed approach for a mid term review of the *New Horizons* Strategy.**

### *National Convention Centre*

Construction of the Centre has commenced and is on schedule to be operational in 2010. In the meantime, the operators are working closely with Fáilte Ireland Tourism Ireland Ltd and the Dublin Convention Bureau to market the venue.

### *Product Development*

The National Development Plan's €800m Tourism Programme includes €137m for product development (exclusive of the provision for the National Convention Centre).

The €137m fund will support three areas of investment: the development of international class visitor attractions, the development of soft adventure and activity products, and certain elements of tourism infrastructure which will not be fundable from other sources in the NDP

The Tourism Infrastructure Fund, which is the first initiative to be rolled out under this sub-programme, is supporting local authorities and other key infrastructure providers to develop appropriate facilities for tourists. It targets facilities such as walking and cycling routes, jetties and moorings, angling stands, access paths to key areas of environmental and scenic interest, and signposting and orientation facilities in heritage and historic towns. To date grants worth in excess of €9m have been announced.

### *Tourism Structures*

It is expected that each regional tourism development board for each tourism region will have a detailed plan available before the end of the year.

## ***National Development Plan***

As outlined in the last Progress Report, progress The Tourism Development Programme included in the National Development Plan is the largest ever Government investment programme for the development of Irish Tourism. It provides a total Exchequer investment of €800m over the next 7 years.

The International Marketing Sub-Programme will invest €335m in marketing Ireland abroad as a tourist destination.

The Tourism Product Development and Infrastructure Sub-Programme will provide €317m in Exchequer investment to enhance Ireland's tourism product offerings and to provide for the capital cost of the new National Conference Centre in Dublin.

The Training and Human Resource Development sub-Programme will invest €148m in the education and training of the tourism workforce, both domestic and non-Irish national, as well as sustained structured education opportunities in the third level colleges and Institutes of Technology. It will also provide for the continuation of initiatives aimed at improving management capability and networking in SMEs and micro-enterprises at regional level.

## **24. Recreation**

**CRGA**

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in conjunction with Comhairle na Tuaithe will address the three issues of access to the countryside, developing a countryside code and developing a national countryside recreation strategy.

### **PROGRESS**

Comhairle na Tuaithe was established by Mr. Éamon Ó Cuív T.D., Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in January.

To date Comhairle na Tuaithe has agreed a set of access parameters that it believes will act as a basis for conflict prevention and integrate a variety of needs and responsibilities. It has also agreed the key features necessary for countryside code development, with a focus on the potential application of the internationally recognised Leave No Trace initiative.

Details of these are available in a booklet launched in September 2005 and also on the Department's website at [www.pobail.ie](http://www.pobail.ie).

Comhairle na Tuaithe has also completed its work on the development of a National Countryside Recreation Strategy. This was launched in September 2006 and is available on the Department's website at [www.pobail.ie](http://www.pobail.ie) or on request from the Department.

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is dealing with the following issues as part of the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy:

- (a) **In its report on a National Countryside Recreation Strategy** Comhairle na Tuaithe raised a number of legal issues to be addressed. **In order to address these issues** the Minister **established** an expert group, to urgently advise on tackling each of the legal issues raised. **In the Terms of Reference the Minister** requested that the Expert Group provide a report dealing with the following:
- (i) Whether legislation is necessary in order to confer on the public a right to access private land for recreational purposes ('right to roam') and, if so, the nature of the rights which might be conferred;
  - (ii) Impact of the Constitution of Ireland and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
  - (iii) Issues relating to occupiers and other liability, indemnity and insurance.

The Expert Group presented its report to the Minister on the 9 May 2007. **The report was circulated to the members of Comhairle na Tuaithe on 29 June where they were given until the 30 August to forward any submissions they may wish to make. The Department is currently examining these submissions.**

- (b) The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 means a trebling of EU and National funding for rural development under a LEADER type programme. Three of the main priorities under the new EU Rural Development programme **are:** -
- ▶ The development of recreational tourism
  - ▶ The complementary development of the broader rural tourism package
  - ▶ The development of small or regional road sectors
- (c) The Department is actively pursuing the possibility of using former railway infrastructure as recreational trails for cycling etc. with Iarnród Éireann.
- (d) Funding has been provided for the employment of **11 Rural Recreation Officers** to promote walking tourism in areas where there are clusters of suitable, accessible walks. **These officers** will act as a contact person for walking tourists and will provide a wide range of support and advice. They will be funded through the **Rural Recreation and Rural Development Schemes Subhead. The 11 areas selected were announced by Minister O Cuív at the National Ploughing Championships on 25th September. The selected routes are: The Bluestack Way, The Burren Way, The Kerry Way, Kilkenny Trails, The Sheep's Head Way, Slí Chonamara, The Slieve Bloom Way, The Sligo Way, The Suck Valley Way, The Tochar Valley Way and The Wicklow Way**

**Work on the recruitment of the Rural Recreation Officers is set to commence in the coming weeks.**

- (e) Work is continuing with Fáilte Ireland on the upgrade and enhancement of looped walks around the country. In 2006 the Department made €600,000 available to Fáilte Ireland for capital work on Looped Walks. A further €1.5m has been made available in 2007.
- (f) In April the Department drafted proposals in relation to a Development and Maintenance Scheme of WayMarked Ways and priority walks and a Lease/Purchase Scheme of land to be developed and maintained as part of the WayMarked Ways and priority walks. These proposals were circulated to the members of Comhairle na Tuaithe for their observations and a sub committee has since been established to further develop the proposals. The proposals were discussed at a meeting of Comhairle na Tuaithe on September 7th and are currently being revised following discussions.
- (g) At the publication of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy in 2006, the Minister allocated €90,000 (€30,000 per annum for three years) to Wicklow Uplands Council and Wicklow Rural Partnership to provide a network of access routes over private lands in areas of high scenic and amenity value in County Wicklow.
- (h) Funding has been made available to Great Southern Trail to upgrade a section of the existing walking trail to cycling standard. Great Southern Trail are a non-profit voluntary group working to develop the abandoned Limerick to Tralee railway line so that everyone can explore the region in a safe, leisurely way by foot or bicycle.

## 25. Ireland's National Reform Programme (NRP) under the EU Lisbon Agenda

TAO

The Lisbon Agenda of 2000 was relaunched in 2005 with a renewed focus on growth and jobs. Whilst this is appropriate in the EU context, it is equally important that progress be made in parallel with social equity and sustainable environmental development.

### *Actions to be taken*

The social partners will be consulted in the course of updates, progress reports and new iterations of our NRP. In Ireland's case, our Social Partnership process represents an important element of the overall approach to achieving the Lisbon goals and will contribute through the NRP and the associated progress reporting arrangements. Where appropriate, new policy directions or initiatives contained in this agreement arising from engagement with the social partners in the context of, or arising under, this ten-year framework, will be incorporated into the ongoing reporting arrangements under the Lisbon Programme.

## **PROGRESS**

The annual exchange of views with the European Commission on Ireland's NRP took place on 18 July, 2007, including engagement with the social partners.

Ireland's second annual Progress Report on NRP implementation was submitted to the European Commission in October 2007.

The 2007 Progress Report reflects strongly the new Programme for Government, agreed in June 2007, which sets out in clear and ambitious terms the Government's shared vision for Ireland's development over the coming five years. This includes maintaining the success of the social partnership process, which serves as Ireland's National Reform Partnership for the purposes of the Lisbon Agenda, while working with the social partners to ensure the full implementation of the *Towards 2016* agreement.

The Report captures key developments to this end during the past 12 months, working with the social partners through the *Towards 2016* framework.

It also captures the substantial progress over the past 12 months in relation to the four priority action areas agreed at the 2006 Spring European Council, along with the areas of focus suggested by the Commission in December 2006 in its assessment of Ireland's National Reform Programme.

While the overall emphasis is on growth and jobs, the Report stresses again the interdependence of our social, economic and environmental goals, in line with *Towards 2016* commitments.

The position is that there is now a comprehensive and integrated set of national strategies under the *Towards 2016* framework, including the National Reform Programme, the National Development Plan 2007-2013, and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. The 2007 Progress Report makes clear that the primary focus in the period ahead is now on implementation of these complementary strategies.

## **26. External Relations - EU and the Wider World**

**FA**

The Government will continue to promote and protect Ireland's interests at the heart of the European Union as it continues to evolve and enlarge. This includes the further development of our relations with our current and future EU partners, a number of whom are very interested in the success Ireland has enjoyed as a result of social partnership.

The Government will continue to promote and protect Ireland's interests in other international fora and in the wider world. In the context of the Union's relations with the wider world, we will work to ensure that the interests of people in the world's poorest countries are protected as far as possible.

## PROGRESS

As outlined in the last progress report, climate change and a new energy policy for Europe were the main issues for discussion at the 2007 Spring European Council and the June European Council saw agreement reached on the outlines for a new Reform Treaty. **The final text of the Treaty which will now be known as the Treaty of Lisbon was agreed at the Informal Heads of State and Government attended by the Taoiseach in Lisbon on 18-19 October. It will be formally signed in December.**

The Taoiseach and the Minister continue to meet on a regular basis with European and non-European partners to promote Ireland's bilateral relations as well as issues of international concern.

The Taoiseach's meeting with President Sarkozy in Paris on 21 September 2007 and the Minister for Foreign Affairs' meeting with Foreign Secretary Miliband on 8 October were important in advancing Ireland's relations with two key EU partners on a number of issues.

Implementation of the recommendations in the White Paper on Irish Aid is at an advanced stage, including establishment of a Conflict Resolution Unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs which will coordinate and utilise Ireland's peace-building knowledge base and development assistance resources in support of conflict resolution internationally.

## 27. Official Development Assistance (ODA)

FA

The Government is committed to reaching the United Nations target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on official development assistance (ODA) in 2012.

### *Actions to be taken*

The fight against HIV/AIDS is an essential element of the fight against poverty and will continue to be central to the work of the aid programme.

## PROGRESS

For 2007 the total allocation to the Irish Aid Vote (Vote 29 - International Cooperation) is €730m - an increase of €130m on 2006. An estimated further €85 million is allocated through other government departments, which brings a total allocation in 2007 for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) of €815 million. This allocation will be fully spent in 2007.

Within the Irish Aid Vote, €587 million is allocated to our bilateral programme which includes funding to a wide range of areas inter alia our partner countries, NGOs and missionary organisations, rehabilitation assistance, emergency humanitarian assistance, HIV/AIDS, development education and public information.

A further €110.6 million is made available through the multilateral programme to our partners organisations within the UN family and other International Organisations involved in development cooperation.

The allocation meets our 2007 target of ODA at 0.5% of GNP and ensures Ireland continues to be one of the most generous donors in terms of our rate of contribution as a percentage of GNP compared to our EU partners and other OECD countries.

In 2007, €100 million is allocated by Irish Aid to address HIV and other diseases of poverty – malaria, TB, polio – under the Taoiseach's Initiative on HIV and other communicable diseases. An annual work plan guides the allocation of resources to multilateral UN agencies and global partnerships; regional inter-governmental bodies; developing country governments and non-governmental organisations.

All resource allocation is guided by Irish Aid's Health and HIV/AIDS policies which focus on reducing the spread of communicable diseases and mitigating their impact, especially that of HIV.

The single biggest recipient of Irish Aid funding in this area is the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. In 2007, Irish Aid will allocate €20 million to the Global Fund. Established in 2002, early signs of impact are emerging with an estimated 1.8 million lives saved as a result of Global Fund supported programmes. As a direct result of the Global Fund, 1.1 million HIV positive people are on HIV treatment; 2.8 million are receiving TB treatment and over 30 million malaria bed nets have been distributed.

Another key partner is the Clinton Foundation HIV Initiative. In 2007, almost €16 million has been allocated to address HIV prevention, treatment and care programmes in Lesotho and Mozambique, two of the most affected countries in the world.

Irish Aid supports regional work on HIV and AIDS through the Southern African Development Community and a range of non-governmental organisations. Key priorities include programmes to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS; programmes to address the needs of children affected by HIV and AIDS and supporting progressive human resources for health policies.

All Irish Aid Programme Countries – Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa and Malawi – have robust HIV and health programmes focused on strengthening the capacity of government and civil society to prevent the spread of disease and improve the health status of their respective populations.

Oversight of the Taoiseach's Initiative is provided internally by a cross divisional committee on HIV and communicable diseases chaired by the Director General of Irish Aid, along with an external expert group – the Technical Advisory Group – consisting of members of academia, public health and civil society.

## 28. Irish Abroad

FA

In light of the report of the Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants, the Government recognises the need to maintain and, where appropriate, increase support for the Irish abroad, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. This will include working with partners in the voluntary sector abroad to develop further comprehensive support services for our vulnerable citizens.

### PROGRESS

As outlined in the last progress report, funding for Emigrant Services in 2007 has increased by 26% to €15.165 million. Irish community organisations are being supported in Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, Argentina, South Africa, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Singapore, France and Mexico. While the primary focus of funding continues to be on supporting welfare services for our most vulnerable and marginalised citizens abroad, increased funding has allowed support for a number of capital projects, as well as culture and heritage projects that assist community networks.

## III. The Lifecycle Framework

### 29. Introduction

This Chapter develops a new framework within which to address key social challenges by assessing the risk and hazards which the individual person faces and the supports available to them at each stage in the life cycle. The key lifecycle stages are Children, People of Working Age, Older People and People with Disabilities (who, in accordance with the policy of mainstreaming, will benefit from measures at all stages of the lifecycle).

In this way, the life cycle approach adopts the perspective of the person as the centrepiece of social policy development and should help policy to evolve in a manner which encompasses actions across relevant departments and agencies.

The lifecycle approach also offers the potential of a more streamline, outcomes-focused approach to monitoring and reporting on progress within social partnership across key national strategies and for improved availability and use of data. Further details of these issues are provided in Chapter 4.

#### *Applying the Lifecycle Framework*

Translating the lifecycle framework into such explicit policy terms in an ambitious exercise and the long-term goals pose major challenges in terms of availability of resources, building the necessary infrastructure, and institutional and service delivery at both national and local levels.

The parties acknowledge that making progress will require a capability to adapt flexibly to require institutional and service delivery changes at both national and local level and to learn from the insights provided by the lifecycle framework and evidence about effectiveness of different interventions. It also requires a degree of prioritisation and a balance between identifying the specific needs of target groups while retaining the perspective of the desired social outcomes for life cycle age cohort as a whole.

The Chapter sets out long-term goals for each stage of the lifecycle as well as priority actions for the initial phase of the agreement which build on the significant increased investment in social provision during 2006, the first year of the agreement.

#### *Review of Progress*

The Government and social partners agree to review progress towards its long-term goals during 2008, drawing on the experience during the first phase of the agreement, in order to agree revised and updated strategies and targets at that stage.

## 30. Children

### 30.2.1 Early Childhood Development and Care

HC

The Government and social partners agree to continue to work together over a ten-year period to develop an infrastructure to provide quality, affordable childcare and to work towards increasing the supply of childcare places (of all types) by 100,000 over this period. This will be achieved through a combination of the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) 2006-2010, appropriate successor programme(s) and other providers.

#### *Actions to achieve this will include:*

- ▶ Creation of 50,000 new childcare places, including 10,000 pre-school places and 5,000 after-school places, as part of the €2.65 billion National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010;
- ▶ Development of a National Childcare Training Strategy which will aim to provide 17,000 childcare training places during 2006-2010, and include quality and training provisions of the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP);
- ▶ Targeting the early childhood education needs of children from areas of acute economic and social disadvantage through DEIS (the action plan for educational inclusion). It will concentrate early education on children who will subsequently attend urban/town primary schools serving the most disadvantaged communities (180 urban/town primary school communities will be targeted for support);
- ▶ Relevant departments and agencies will work together to complement and add value to childcare programmes in disadvantaged communities with a view to ensuring that the overall care and education needs of the children concerned are met in an integrated manner. This will also involve the provision of education related professional support and training to existing providers, together with a curriculum and quality framework for early childhood education;
- ▶ Steps to standardise and improve inspections under the Child Care (Pre School) Regulations by publishing the strengthened revised regulations and providing training for inspectors across the HSE, establishing improved administrative systems to facilitate a national standardised inspection service and ensuring that standardised inspection reports are publicly available, and;
- ▶ In order to facilitate the provision of after-school facilities, the parties agree to support and encourage school facilities being made available for childcare provision as a key addition to the utilisation, development and support of local community facilities.

#### *It is also agreed that*

- ▶ A review of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 will be undertaken prior to its conclusion in consultation with the social partners. This will assess the progress made to date to address childcare needs with a view to developing new policy responses and successor programme(s) appropriate to emerging needs in childcare, and;
- ▶ The early childhood education component of the DEIS programme will be extended to encompass the remaining 140 urban/town primary school communities under the School Support Programme, following completion of roll-out to the existing target group of 180 urban/town primary school communities.

## PROGRESS

### *National childcare investment programme*

The National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP) is being implemented, and by the end of August 2007 €132m in capital grants had been approved to childcare providers under this programme. These approvals are expected to lead to the creation of 18,284 new childcare places as well as supporting 5,290 existing places to further develop quality childcare provision. In addition the NCIP continues to support the City & County Childcare Committees as part of the infrastructure for childcare.

### *National childcare training strategy*

The Inter-Departmental Group on National Childcare Training Strategy has met on 6 occasions and is working towards publishing a consultative document by the end of 2007. This will be followed by a widespread consultative process in the first quarter of 2008.

A Sectoral Standards sub-group has also met on 6 occasions. The work of the Sectoral Standards sub-group is to align education, training and professional development in the childcare sector to the National Framework of Qualifications.

### *DEIS*

Work is nearing completion on the recommended form of intervention in early years settings that act as feeder pre-schools for DEIS.

There is a series of workshops taking place on Siolta and how it can be applied across different settings.

The Curricular Framework for Early Years will now be published in 2008.

### *Child Care (pre-school services)*

The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 came into effect on 3 September 2007. Steps have also been taken to standardise and improve the pre-school sector inspection process. A standardisation project by the HSE was established and the new tools for standardised inspections have been developed by the HSE. Training of Inspectors has been and continues to be provided to enable Inspectors to adopt and use the new inspection tools. The HSE is also in the process of improving the administrative systems to facilitate the national standardised inspection system which will ensure that standardised inspection reports are publicly available.

### *After-school facilities*

In relation to the provision of school facilities for childcare and for the utilisation, development and support of local community facilities, it is a decision for the Board of Management of a particular school to decide how to

use its facilities. The Department of Education and Science is encouraging the sharing of school facilities with the wider communities but ultimately it's a matter for the Boards of Management.

### *National childcare investment programme*

The review of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 – 2010 is not scheduled to take place before 2009.

### *Early childhood education*

Once the first phase of the roll-out of supports for pre-schools in the DEIS Band 1 areas is complete, the extension of the early childcare education component of the DEIS programme will follow.

## **30.2.2 Improving Education Outcomes for Children**

ES

The Government and social partners agree to work together for continued improvements in the standard and quality of education and to promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.

### *Actions to be taken*

They agree to prioritise the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities by supporting schools and their communities to achieve equality in terms of educational participation and outcomes in line with national norms. This will include

- ▶ Adopting a more focused approach and putting in place a range of additional supports under DEIS to tackle literacy and numeracy problems in primary schools. Targets will be put in place at both national and individual school level to substantially reduce the literacy and numeracy problems in schools serving disadvantaged communities. Additional literacy supports, under DEIS, will also be targeted at junior cycle students;
- ▶ To help further address absenteeism, early school leaving, behavioural problems and special needs an additional 100 posts in total will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009;
- ▶ There will continue to be flexible responses to meeting the needs of those young people who leave the formal education system early through second chance education measures such as Youthreach where a significant increase of an additional 1,000 places will be provided by 2009 and the opportunities created for recognition of learning through the national framework of qualifications;
- ▶ Protocols will be developed and put in place to ensure co-operation and mutual support among those working to improve attendance and retention in schools. DEIS provides that the National Educational Welfare Board and the Department will work together to ensure that an integrated approach to children at risk is adopted between educational welfare officers and other staff involved in the implementation of the new School Support Programme;

- ▶ The Education Act 1998 provides for school boards to publish their admission policies. Legislative and other provisions in relation to admission will be kept under regular review in the context of the ten-year framework agreement, with a view to fostering an inclusive school environment;
- ▶ Future provision of schools will reflect the increasingly diverse nature of pupil enrolment in response to the local demand and in conformity with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 and with established criteria and procedures for recognising new schools;
- ▶ Enhanced support for the effective integration of international children at both primary and second-level through the provision of an extra 550 language support teachers by 2009 and the reform of the current limit of two additional teachers per school, and
- ▶ The Government has already committed itself to reducing the number of children per classroom teacher at primary level to 28:1 in 2006/2007 and 27:1 in 2007/08 and the actual pupil teacher ratio at primary and post-primary will continue to improve as a result, in particular, of the application of resources in respect of special needs pupils.

## PROGRESS

### *Literacy & Numeracy*

Significant resources are being targeted to address literacy and numeracy difficulties in disadvantaged schools through the measures announced in the DEIS action plan. **These measures include the commencement of training in the Ready Set Go Maths programme. The Ready Set Go Maths programme focuses on four related strands - sorting, relationships and operations, counting and understanding numbers. From September 2007, DEIS Cuiditheoiri will be in a position to support teachers in infant classes in the coming year.**

The second phase of implementation of the action plan in 2007/08 included the following measures for schools participating in the new School Support Programme (SSP):

- ▶ roll out of the Ready Set Go Maths programme has commenced, with initial training of the Primary Curriculum Course Support Programme personnel having taken place. From September 2007, DEIS Band 1 Junior Infant teachers have commenced Ready Set Go Maths training.
- ▶ The Reading Recovery Programme has been extended to schools in Dublin, Monaghan, Cork, Limerick and Galway. The programme is being extended to an additional 84 schools in 2007/08. Two new Reading Recovery Teacher leaders have completed their training in 2007 and one teacher has commenced training in 2007/2008 to become a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader. The construction of two Reading Recovery rooms is nearing completion in Kilkenny and Dublin West education centres. The First Steps programme is being extended to some 80 schools in 2007/08. The Maths Recovery programme is being rolled out and 60 schools have received training in the programme to date. A further 150 Maths Recovery teachers are due to receive training in 2007/2008. Seminars have been held to brief school principals on the programme.

- ▶ the Demonstration Library Project has been extended to 10 additional second-level schools in 2007/2008 and will be extended to a further 10 schools in 2008/2009.
- ▶ the Junior Certificate Support Programme is being extended to an additional 30 schools in 2007/2008.

### *Youthreach*

Some €2 million is allocated in 2007 to 20 existing Youthreach Centres to address the special educational needs of students aged 15-20 years. Consideration will be given to extending the arrangement to all Youthreach Centres following an evaluation.

VECs were invited earlier this year to apply for the 400 new places. Applications for a total of just over 1,100 places were received by the DES. Following examination and analysis of those applications, the 400 new places were allocated to VECs in April 2007. It is planned that another 200 places will be allocated in 2008 and the remaining 400 in 2009.

### *National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)*

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was allocated 15 additional posts for 2007 under the first phase of the provision in Towards 2016. Five of the additional 15 posts have been filled and the current recruitment drive will be completed by December 2007.

The allocation of posts to Educational Welfare Services will strengthen the field services and contribute to improving the coverage in respect of the services provided by the NEWB. The allocation of additional permanent posts to the corporate services functions will contribute to improving organisational supports necessary for the discharge of core NEWB functions.

Draft Code of Behaviour Guidelines have now been the subject of a formal process of consultation. The NEWB has received extensive feedback from a wide range of organisations. The detailed work of revising and integrating any consequent changes into the Guidelines is continuing and is now at an advanced stage. While the work on completing the Guidelines is advancing, the Board is planning for the implementation and roll out of the Guidelines to schools in early 2008.

### *Improving attendance & retention in schools*

A high level working group is working to develop protocols for the integration of the work of educational welfare officers and staff on the following educational inclusion programmes, whose work involves a school attendance element. The bodies and schemes involved on the group at present are:

- ▶ National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
- ▶ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- ▶ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- ▶ Visiting Teachers Service for the Hearing and Visually Impaired (VTHVI)
- ▶ Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL)

- ▶ School Completion Programme (SCP)
- ▶ Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers (VTST)

As all these services operate in schools the following representative bodies were also invited to participate:

- ▶ National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and
- ▶ The Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)

The objective of the group is to ensure maximum benefit is derived from the substantial personnel resources deployed in these programmes by assisting with the development and implementation of clearly articulated operational guidelines of best practice for collaboration in service delivery among the services and agencies. The work of the group will help to establish co-operation, information sharing and acknowledged roles of responsibility for all parties and thereby ensure that every available EWO is utilised to the optimum.

At the meeting of the national coordinating teams for Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP) with the national management team of the NEWB, plans were developed to pilot joint working relationships between the three services. At least one potential site was chosen in each of the five regional areas in the NEWB. Some progress has been achieved with a number of these plans. In Knocknaheny in Cork, three meetings have been held between managers of NEWB/SCP/HSCL. The teams met with the principals of the local primary and post primary schools who were very keen to be involved in the pilot and contribute to an analysis of the work practices. A questionnaire has been prepared to explore with the professionals what is working well and what areas of collaborative work can be improved. A focus group was scheduled for late October to analyse and discuss the findings of the questionnaires and determine the next steps.

In the Dublin North Inner City the NEWB meet regularly with their HSCL and SCP counterparts to exchange information, identify the lead agency involved in a case, determine a procedure around role involvement and have proactive discussion around targeting children from schools exhibiting high absence patterns at an early stage of intervention. The remainder of the pilot sites will progress in the near future. At the June meeting, each group identified a person to initiate the project.

### *Integration of international children*

The appointment of a Minister of State for Integration and the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Integration have taken place. The development will co-ordinate the response of three Government Departments (Department of Education and Science, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs) in relation to the integration of newcomers to Ireland. The appointment of the Minister and the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Integration will help ensure the provision of an efficient and effective delivery of services to assist the integration across a number of inter-related areas to avoid duplication and gaps in provision. At present, the exact division of responsibilities between the three Departments and their interaction is under discussion.

The Office of the Minister for Integration, in conjunction with the DES, have commissioned an independent review to assist in the development of a national English language training policy and framework for legally-resident adult immigrants based on extensive stakeholder consultation. This work is currently in progress and it is planned to have the work completed by end-March 2008.

The DES is in the process of developing proposals to address deficits in relation to initial teacher education (Colleges of Education and H.Dips) and continuous professional development (in-service) of teachers at primary, post-primary and further education levels who deal with newcomer children and adults, regardless of whether or not they have English as their first language. This work is currently in progress and it is planned to have supports in place for 2008.

The EU has designated 2008 as the Year of Inter-Cultural Dialogue with the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) as the co-ordinator of the Irish contribution. A draft schedule of activities has been produced and there will be a specific (as required by the EU) focus on education and young people. It is envisaged that a number of events based in primary and post-primary schools will be undertaken to highlight the importance of intercultural dialogue.

The Budget 2007 announcement of 200 additional language support teachers relates to the first phase of the allocation of the 550 under Towards 2016. Primary and post primary schools have been notified by the DES of their additional language support teacher allocations from the first phase. There has been a small change to the allocation of the remaining 350 posts. A further allocation of 150 will be made to schools in 2008 which will be followed by a final allocation of 200 in 2009.

### *Staffing Schedule*

The Circular setting out the staffing schedule for primary schools for the 2007/8 school year was issued to all primary schools in March, 2007. The schedule was prepared on the basis of an average of 27 pupils per mainstream class teacher (as compared to 28 pupils per teacher for the 2006/07 school year) and also reflected the changes introduced in 2006/07 in relation to the criteria for developing school status and the appointment of administrative principals and deputy principals.

These measures will ensure progress towards the Lisbon target of reducing early school-leaving to 10% by 2010.

The ongoing relevance of curricula to changing social and economic needs, allied with the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning are key factors in ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills for participation in the knowledge society and for active citizenship. At post-primary level, key actions will include measures:

- ▶ To strengthen the technical and vocational dimensions of curricula, to embed key skills such as learning to learn and ICT, to develop higher order thinking skills, to diversify and strengthen language learning, to modernise the technology subjects and to increase the take up of the physical sciences at senior level. It will continue to be

a clear objective of the school building and modernisation programme that there should be adequate laboratory and other specialist room provision for all schools teaching science and technology, and

- ▶ To implement an ongoing programme of curricular reform building on the review of mathematics and languages already underway, the new syllabi in the technology subjects already developed, and the reconfiguration of subjects proposed as part of senior cycle reforms.

## PROGRESS

At post primary level, revised syllabi in Junior Certificate Science, Leaving Certificate History and Leaving Certificate Geography were examined for the first time in 2006. These subjects all provide for assessment of practical coursework as part of the examinations. The Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006 to 2013 has been published and provides for a further strengthening of science in schools over the period of the plan.

A €40m investment programme is under way which will enable post primary schools to replace and modernise existing equipment in metalwork and technology rooms, and facilitate the introduction of revised syllabi in Technology and Design and Communications Graphics with effect from September 2007.

The introduction of the new syllabi, Technology, and Design and Communications Graphics, will play an important role in ensuring that students are prepared for participation in further and higher education and employment. This is part of a phased development, which will be followed as soon as possible by the implementation of revised syllabi in Leaving Certificate Engineering Technology and Architectural Technology.

### *Further actions include*

- ▶ Development of special educational needs services in the framework of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act which provides a legislative basis for assessment, for individual educational plans and for the delivery of services on foot of these plans. It will also ensure that parents have a right to be consulted and kept fully informed at all stages of the process;
- ▶ Continued support of actions to promote anti-racism and the participation of international children and young people, minority groups and Travellers in education;
- ▶ Continued development and support for the youth work sector and, in that context, further resources will be provided to progress implementation of the National Youth Work Development Plan and the Youth Work Act, 2001, on a phased and prioritised basis. Following a review of the Youth Work Development Plan, to be undertaken in 2008, consideration will be given to the need for a further plan;
- ▶ As part of the drive to enhance the safety of school transport, the Government will ensure that each child travelling on a school bus will be accommodated on a one seat per child basis and that all buses participating in the school transport service will be fitted with safety belts. Following a pilot period, consideration will also be given to rolling out nationally the Warning Flashing Light System on school buses;

- ▶ Particular attention will be paid, through the Safer Routes to Schools scheme, to facilitating concerted action between parents, schools and traffic agencies to encourage walking or cycling to school and to actively manage school travel. The pilot phase will be developed with a view to rolling out 'Safer Routes to School' nationally, and
- ▶ Building on the 'broadband for schools' initiative, particular attention will be paid, in the context of the Mobhaile Project, to curriculum specific content and how this can enrich the education experience and the level of engagement by all partners in primary and secondary education.

## PROGRESS

### *Education for persons with special educational needs*

In October, 2006, in compliance with the obligations placed on the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, the NCSE submitted its Implementation Report which sets out the NCSE's views and recommendations on a plan for the implementation of the EPSEN ACT.

This report provides a framework for the phased implementation of the Act between 2006 and 2009 and outlines the resources, action and other supports which it considers are needed as integral elements of any roll out of the Act. Consideration of the Implementation Report submitted by the National Council for Special Education is ongoing.

**The DES has been considering the implications of EPSEN for schools and, in particular, the issues raised by the Education Partners during the meetings held in May and June 2007. To assist in the process, an internal working group, comprising members of the Inspectorate, National Education Psychological Service and officials from a number of related policy sections, has continued to meet. It is clear that the roll-out of EPSEN will have financial implications - these are being considered as part of the Estimates Process.**

**The Special Education Appeals Board is continuing to identify the resources and processes it will need to put in place to ensure that it will be ready to hear appeals under EPSEN once the various sections are commenced.**

**The Cross-sectoral Health/Education team continues to meet to identify and co-operatively resolve cross-cutting issues arising from the provisions of both EPSEN and the Disability Act.**

**The DES is finalising its response to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Implementation Report which sets out the NCSE's views and recommendations on a plan for the implementation of the EPSEN Act.**

### *Interculturalism/Racism Awareness*

The Department of Education and Science is concerned to promote inclusive school environments that reflect, value and affirm linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. The DES priority is that this approach is implemented in a cross-curric-

ular manner throughout all subject areas. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has published Intercultural Guidelines for both primary schools and second-level schools. Guidelines for Teachers of Students for whom English is an Additional Language have also been published by the NCCA.

**The DES is represented on an Advisory Group chaired by the National Consultative Council for Racism and Integration. The role of this Advisory Group is to deliver a realistic proposal to Government for sustainable high quality and cost effective interpreting and translating services for Government Service Providers. The target date for the proposal is early 2008.**

### *Youth work sector*

#### *Youth Work Act, 2001*

VECs have recruited Youth Officers and an induction training programme is in progress. Financial support is continuing in 2007 to VECs in respect of this new structure.

#### *Assessor of Youth Work*

Following sanction for the post from the Department of Finance, the post of Assessor of Youth Work was advertised in December, 2005 and an appointee took up duty in August 2006 on a two-year contract.

#### *National Child Protection Unit*

The work of the National Child Protection Unit (CPU), located in the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is ongoing. The Unit continues to be financially resourced by the DES.

#### *National Youth Work Development Unit*

The National Youth Work Development Plan proposes the establishment of a Development Unit at national level, which is perceived as a key element in the development of youth work. The establishment of such a Unit is central to implementation of some 18 of the other actions proposed in the Plan. The Minister for Youth Affairs has approved the establishment of a Youth Work Development Unit in NUI, Maynooth.

#### *Development of the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme:*

A €330,000 (26%) increase in funding for this Scheme was sanctioned in April 2007, bringing the total for this Scheme to €1.6m in 2007. This will mean that more local youth clubs and groups will be able to avail of this funding.

#### *School transport*

In January 2007, it was announced that all 3,000 school buses nominated to serve in the school transport scheme, which is administered by Bus Eireann on behalf of the DES, have now been equipped with seat belts, to enhance the safety of passengers traveling to and from school. It has also been possible to end the arrangement whereby three children occupied two adult seats as additional capacity and extra buses were brought into the system. €165m is

being spent in 2007 on the entire school transport operation which includes the transporting of over 135,000 children to and from school each day. The DES, Bus Eireann, and the Road Safety Authority also supported a major multimedia campaign, including TV, cinema and radio ads at the start of the school year, to remind people that it is the law to wear a seatbelt where they are provided. Each school has also received a copy of a DVD and posters which alert young people about the safety issues in and around school bus travel.

Now that school transport is operating on the basis of one-for-one seating with seat belts for all service recipients, the intention is to focus on safety-conscious behaviour on and in the vicinity of school buses.

### ***'Broadband for schools'***

The DES and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) met with the Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB) at the end of February 2007 to discuss Mobhaile. The NCTE has since engaged, on an exploratory basis, with Mobhaile. The NCTE is working with Young Social Innovators (YSI) to support their teachers through the identification of resources on different aspects of internet safety. YSI students will have access to Mobhaile web services to create a project website on the topic of internet safety, using the resources identified by the NCTE.

The DES is continuing to work with the NCTE to support the ongoing development of the ScoilNet website into an educational portal with a broadening range of online resources available to teachers and learners.

## **30.2.3 Improving Health Outcomes for Children**

**HC**

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver tangible improvements in the health outcomes for children over a ten-year period. This will involve addressing a range of issues including:

- ▶ Prevention, early intervention and treatment services within the health sector;
- ▶ Policies in other areas such as education, income support, accommodation, childcare, food and the environment, and;
- ▶ Lifestyle related risk factors.

Our approach to health services for children will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (2001).

### ***Actions to be prioritised include:***

- ▶ Delivering, under the framework of the Vision for Change Strategy, a significant number of child and adolescent community mental health teams (CMHTs) within the context of a 7-10 year target of 1 CMHT per 100,000 of the population by 2008, subject to sufficient resources being made available, and two CMHTs per 100,000 of the population by 2013. These child and adolescent CMHTs will develop clear links with primary and community care services and identify and prioritise the mental health needs of children in each catchment area;

- ▶ Intensifying our efforts to achieve the WHO target of 95% immunisation for children and actively targeting areas where take-up rates are below this level;
- ▶ Developing a new strategic Health Promotion policy by end-2007 which will address the factors undermining the health of young people;
- ▶ Launching a National Nutrition Policy to address Children's Food Poverty and Obesity;
- ▶ Developing a national database to monitor prevalence trends of growth, overweight and obesity;
- ▶ Developing the School Meals Programme which will receive €2m in additional funding in 2006;
- ▶ Monitoring prevalence trends of smoking and substance use through the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys and the European School Survey Project on alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD), and;
- ▶ Carry out a review of secondary care paediatric services outside Dublin.

## PROGRESS

### *A Vision for Change Strategy*

The implementation of 'A Vision for Change' requires the recruitment of 40 additional child and adolescent mental health teams. It is envisaged that these will be provided on a phased basis over a 5 year period. Funding for 8 additional teams was provided in 2006 and a further 8 teams were funded in 2007.

**Four new purpose built 20-bed units in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick are at an advanced planning stage and have secured funding through the HSE Capital Programme 2006-2010.**

**Additional beds, for the treatment of 16 and 17 year olds, will be developed in adult units as an interim arrangement pending the development of four new 20-bed units. 14 of these beds are due to come on stream early next year in St Stephen's Hospital, Cork and St Vincent's Hospital in Fairview.**

Currently there are 12 child and adolescent psychiatric in-patient beds in the public sector for the under 16 age group, 6 at St Anne's, Galway and 6 at Warrenstown House, Dublin. A further 4 beds will be provided this year at St. Anne's Galway. Warrenstown in Dublin is currently recruiting to provide a 7-day week service later this year. A further 4 beds are planned for 2008.

### *WHO target*

Surveillance data from Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) shows that Immunisation rates for young children are up over 20% nationally following awareness campaigns and targeted work in specific areas of low uptake that encourage parents to protect their children against serious disease. The national uptake rate for children aged 24 months now stands at more than 90% for most vaccinations. As a result of the 'Be wise - immunise' campaigns run for parents, the promotion of European Immunisation Week and other new initiatives we are moving closer to the World Health Organisations (WHO) targets of at least 95% of young children being immunised against a range of diseases. This is the desirable level of immunisation against a range of diseases

stipulated by the WHO. Nationally, 91% of children aged 24 months have received immunisation against tuberculosis (BCG vaccine), polio, Pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, Hib disease, and meningitis C. This compares to 83-86% of children receiving the meningitis C vaccine when national collection of data on uptake was first published in 2002. The National Immunisation Office of the Health Service Executive will continue to target low uptake areas and to raise awareness of immunisation and increase the success of immunisation systems.

### *Health Promotion Policy*

After significant deliberation it has been decided that an inter-departmental approach is the most appropriate way of ensuring that health promotion policy will adequately address the full complexity of health determinants, many of which lie outside the remit of the health sector. Accordingly the development of policy in this area will be progressed in the context of the inter-sectoral work on chronic disease prevention that has recently been tasked by the Government to the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion. The Department intends to bring proposals to the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion on how best to proceed with this inter-sectoral work before the end of the year.

### *National Nutrition Policy*

The National Nutrition Policy will be published in the coming months possibly early 2008. The development of a database to monitor prevalence trends of growth, overweight and obesity is now being handled by the HSE and is at an exploratory stage. The Department of Health and Children will have an input into this process.

### *Schools Meal Programme*

An additional €3 million was allocated for the development of the School Meals Programme in 2007. This funding will facilitate the take-on of additional schools and the expansion of the scheme in some existing participating schools. Demand on the scheme has far exceeded expectation, both in terms of the number of schools participating and the number of meals being provided to pupils. A total of €16.6m was allocated for school meals in 2007 and expenditure on the scheme is expected to exceed this. Over 60% of all schools on the Department of Education & Science's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) have joined the scheme. There has also been an increase in applications from community based preschools, local and voluntary organisations, and schools who are not on the DEIS list. Over 1,500 schools/preschools and over 165,000 children will benefit under the School Meals Programme in 2007. The programme aims to provide regular nutritious food to children to help improve their daily diet and is a direct intervention providing meals to children in poverty.

Through the Healthy Food for All (HFfA) initiative, a toolkit to fast track availing of this funding to provide healthy lunches has been prepared and the Health Promotion Policy Unit (HPPU) of the Department of Health and Children will support this through printing the toolkit. The HPPU is also represented on the HFfA Advisory Group. The national guidelines on developing a National Nutrition Policy for Post-Primary Schools document due out by the end of year will also help inform this process.

### *National Health and Lifestyle Survey and European School Survey Project*

The Irish results of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (HBSC 2006) were launched in August 2007. Fieldwork for the Irish phase of the 2007 European School Project on Alcohol and Drugs (ESPAD) has been completed and the results are being analysed.

Fieldwork is nearing completion on the National Health and Lifestyle Survey and the first results will be published in early 2008.

### *Secondary Care Paediatric services outside Dublin*

The HSE's primary focus in 2007 has been the completion of the work of the Transition Group which is progressing the development of the new National Paediatric Hospital, in particular the development of the High Level Framework Brief for the new hospital.

The HSE plans to progress consideration of secondary paediatric service requirements nationally when the High Level Framework Brief has been approved. The secondary care review will be informed by the Children's Health First provisions and the High Level Framework Brief for the new National Paediatric Hospital, including the model of care for paediatrics.

In common with the approach taken in other recent service reviews, it is likely that there will be provision for stakeholder engagement in progressing the review.

## **30.2.4 Promoting Recreation, Sport, Arts and Culture in the Lives of our Children**

**AST**

The Government and social partners recognise the importance of recreation, sport and physical activity for the balanced and healthy development of children.

### *Actions to be taken*

The Government is committed to

- ▶ Increasing support for sports infrastructure and sporting organisations recognising that sport has the potential to be a driver for social change and that targeting specific groups can address issues of exclusion and inequality;
- ▶ Promoting sport in education settings as it is important in addressing negative trends of participation among young people particularly those in the late-teens. This is supported by research undertaken by the ESRI last year and reinforced in the Task Force Report on Obesity;

- ▶ Achieving the Irish Sport Council target for 2006 to 2008 to increase by 3% the numbers of children taking part in sport. This will involve the implementation of the complete national roll-out of the Local Sports Partnership (LSP) network and the associated roll-out of the Buntús programme for primary schools and pre-schools through the LSP network; the introduction of the LISPA child centred model for lifelong participation in Irish sport (Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity); and support for national sports organisations that attract young people.
- ▶ Publishing a National Recreation Policy to complement the National Play Policy already in place. These will provide frameworks to address the availability of amenities for younger children and youth friendly and safe facilities and environments for older children/young people. The OMC (Office for the Minister of Children) will work with Government Departments, including the Departments of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Education and Science, to examine spending programmes across Government with a view to the adoption of a more integrated strategic approach to meeting prioritised needs at local level consistent with the National Recreation Policy.

Through the use of existing facilities, and the developments set out in Chapter 2 of this document the Government will continue to encourage participation by children in arts and cultural activities as a means to enrich their quality of life.

## PROGRESS

As set out in the last Progress Report, the Sports Capital Programme is the main vehicle for State funding of sports facilities aimed at both increasing participation generally and at improving performance levels of top competitors. The total allocation of sports capital funding from 1998 to 2007 is €568m in respect of 6,716 projects in virtually every parish, village, town and city throughout the country. In 2007 the total sports budget is over €295 million, an increase of 21.5% over 2006.

The 2007 budget of the Irish Sports Council has increased by more than 30% or over €13m to over €54m. This continued increased level of funding will allow the Council to fully realise the commitments in its strategic plan to increase participation in sport including to increase by 3% the number of children taking part in some level of extra curricular sport and extra school sport combined. The Local Sports Partnerships (LSP) are charged with increasing participation and ensuring that the experiences in sport are positive.

**There are now 22 LSPs fully operational around the country and** it is anticipated that the sports partnerships network will be **fully rolled out in early 2008**. They will make an essential contribution to reaching the Council's ambitious targets for increasing the participation rates of adults and children in sport in Ireland.

The Buntús Programme is also continuing to be rolled out by the ISC through the LSP network to primary schools and child day care centres. The Programme aims to support the primary PE curriculum by providing equipment, resource cards and training to primary school teachers and allows teachers and introductory level coaches introduce sport to children in a safe and fun way.

**'Buntús Start' supports childcare workers in delivering quality physical activity sessions within a child care setting. Training, resource cards and equipment are delivered to pre-schools by the LSPs in conjunction with the HSE and county childcare committees.**

Through the use of existing facilities, and the developments set out in Chapter 2 of Towards 2016 the Government will continue to encourage participation by children in arts and cultural activities as a means to enrich their lives.

In October 2006, the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, directed the Arts Council to establish a Committee to advise on matters relating to Arts and Education.

Having regard for the statutory functions of the Arts Council as set out in Section 9 of the Arts Act 2003, and in accordance with section 21 of that Act, a Special Committee was established to advise the Arts Council on how best to align the Council's strategies for the promotion and encouragement of the arts with the priorities of the formal education system. **The Committee has completed its work and its report is being considered.**

**The National Recreation Policy was launched by the Minister for Children in September 2007. This Policy was developed by the Office of the Minister for Children in response to concerns raised by teenagers and parents. In the consultations conducted throughout the country in the development of the National Children's Strategy (2000), the need for improved play and recreation facilities was the single biggest concern cited by children and young people.**

### 30.2.5 Income Support

SFA

Very significant additional resources are being made available in 2007 to help tackle child and family poverty.

#### *Actions to be taken*

Actions to make further progress towards the objective of eliminating child poverty will include:

- ▶ Progress towards the existing NAPS target for those relying on social welfare payments, which the parties agree remains valid and appropriate – i.e. that the combined value of child income support measures be set at 33-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate;
- ▶ Progressing, as a priority, further work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes. This could include enhancing existing provisions or the introduction of new or reformed mechanisms. Child income supports which avoid employment disincentives will be reviewed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs as a priority and this work, which will be informed by the NESC study on a second tier child income support, will be completed within one year, and;
- ▶ Focusing on children in lone parent households and larger families, informed by the Government discussion paper on supports for lone parents, and a review of the re-focusing of the family income supplement in favour of larger families with low earnings.

## PROGRESS

### *Child Benefit*

In Budget 2007, the three weekly rates of child dependant increases (€16.80, €19.30 and €22.60) were increased and consolidated at €22.00. An increase of €10 per month in Child Benefit from April 2007 was announced, bringing rates to €160 per month in respect of each of the first two children and €195 per month for the third and subsequent children. In addition, the back to school clothing and footwear allowance, which is paid to the poorest families with children, was increased to €180 for children aged 2 to 11 years and €285 for children from 12 years of age, increases of €60 and €95 respectively. More information on these increases was provided in the last Progress Report.

On the commitment to review supports:

- ▶ The FIS study on the level of take up is ongoing.
- ▶ As FIS thresholds have been increased substantially for many families in recent years, and as the number of FIS recipients has also increased (over 21,000 in payment, **benefiting almost 43,000 children**), an analysis of the existing FIS customer base **is being carried out. This analysis will be completed shortly** and will assist with future policy decisions.
- ▶ NESC were requested by the Department of the Taoiseach to examine the amalgamation of CDAs and FIS. Its final report will also inform future policy in this area.

### *Lone parents*

A new social assistance payment for lone parents and parents on low income, informed by the Government discussion paper *Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents*, is being developed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

A sub-group of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion is progressing work on an implementation plan on the non-income recommendations contained in the paper. To further inform the process, the Department of Social & Family Affairs with the co-operation of FAS, the Office of the Minister for Children and the Department of Education and Science, have, since mid-October 2007, commenced testing the proposals in both an urban and rural setting. These tests will focus on identifying and resolving the practical and administrative issues that may arise. They allow for operational and logistical co-ordination between the relevant departments and agencies to be considered and developed and facilitate the development of the new scheme.

### *One Parent Families*

Budget 2007 increased the upper earnings limit for the one parent family payment to €400 per week in accordance with a recommendation contained in the Government discussion paper.

### *Deserted Wife's Benefit*

The upper earnings threshold for recipients of Deserted Wife's Benefit who first claimed the payment prior to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1992 was also increased in the Budget. From May 2007, a new single earnings limit of €20,000 gross earn-

ings will be introduced for these recipients. Once claimants' earnings go over this limit, they will now be entitled to a new half-rate, transitional payment for 6 months.

### **Family Income Support**

Re-focusing of family income support in favour of larger families continued in Budget 2007 (effective from January 2007). All weekly income thresholds were increased, with additional increases for larger families – see table below.

**Table: FIS Thresholds 2007**

Number of children	2007 Thresholds (€)	Increase in family payment (€)
1	480	9
2	550	24
3	625	36
4	720	54
5	820	69
6	910	81
7	1,020	105
8 or more	1,090	111

This means that, for instance, the threshold for a family with two children has increased to €550 (net), €40 greater than 2006, resulting in a net weekly FIS increase of €24 for most two child FIS families. A family with five children can now earn up to €820 (net) per week, €115 more than 2006, corresponding to a weekly FIS increase of €69.

## **30.2.6 Children and their Families**

**HC**

The Government and the social partners recognise the central importance of the family unit to the lives of children and the need to strengthen the system of supports available to children and their families.

### **Priority actions to be pursued include:**

- ▶ Putting in place enhanced policies to support families in a changing society and in particular to ensure that policies are designed to promote family formation and family life;
- ▶ The development and delivery of Family Support Initiatives to further develop and strengthen child welfare and protection services as part of national policy for child support;
- ▶ Strengthening services under the Teen Parent Support Initiative, which supports teen parents during pregnancy until their child reaches two years of age;

- ▶ A study of the extent to which children undertake inappropriate care roles will be undertaken (with the involvement of relevant Departments) to establish the extent and degree to which this issue arises and the levels of impact it has on the lives of children concerned. Based on the outcome of this study and an analysis of the issues identified, a programme of in-home supports will be developed to alleviate specific problem areas identified for children;
- ▶ Accelerated implementation of the Children Act 2001, building on the additional resources being made available in 2006, will strengthen national management of High Support Units, Special Residential Services and associated services in the HSE to complement the new Irish Youth Justice Service with increased collaborative working in this area;
- ▶ Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children's residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published in the Autumn 2006 Session;
- ▶ Implementing the Youth Homelessness Strategy (YHS) with the objective of reducing and if possible eliminating youth homelessness through preventative strategies. The OMC will undertake a review of progress on the implementation of the Strategy. On this basis a future programme of action will be developed, and;
- ▶ Closer links will be developed at national and local level between the Youth Homeless Forum and the Adult Homeless Forum in each area to improve and monitor the effectiveness of systems at local level and ensure continuum of care for the individual upon reaching 18 years of age.

## PROGRESS

### *Enhanced policies to support families*

The Department of Social & Family Affairs is to prepare a publication to describe families in modern Ireland, detailing supports available and outlining developments over the past decade, with a view to completion by the **end of 2007**.

Over €10m has been allocated in 2007 to the Family Support Agency for the scheme of grants to voluntary organisations providing marriage, child and bereavement counselling and related services. At the end of May 2007 over €9.9m was approved for payment to 651 groups.

The NDP 2000-2006 target of 100 Family Resource Centres included in the Family Support Agency's Family & Community Services Resource Centre (FRC) programme by end 2006 has been achieved. **An additional 6 Family Resource Centres have been approved for inclusion in the programme in 2007.** The FRC programme will continue to be expanded through the support provided under the new NDP 2007-2013.

A National Policy for Children's Services is being developed and will be published by end 2007. The OMC has engaged three consultants who were previously involved in the Review of Family Support Services to work on this policy. The principle of having social services provided on the basis of the child being supported within the family, within

the local community will be at the core of the national policy. The purpose of the policy document is to set out the strategic direction and key goals of public policy in relation to Children's health and social services.

### *Family Support Services*

Discussions are taking place between the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive relating to Family Support Services.

### *Teen Parent Support Initiative*

As reported in the last progress report, €1 million was included in the Budget to consolidate existing Teen Parent Support Project (TPSP) services. The HSE will develop the linkages between TPSP and first-line preventative and family support responses delivered locally within community settings in the context of the wider PCCC service transformation underway.

### *Children as Carers*

The Office of the Minister for Children will commission a study of children as carers.

### *Children Act 2001*

All remaining provisions of the Children Act 2001 were commenced in July 2007. The Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2007, which, inter alia, makes changes to the name and functions of Special Residential Services (SRSB) was partially commenced.

The OMC is preparing legislation to allow for a statutory High Court scheme, targeting children in court cases where special care orders are under consideration. The Minister has sought the approval of the Government to draft this Bill.

### *HIOA*

The Health Act, 2007, provided for the establishment of the Health Information & Quality Authority (HIOA). HIOA was formally established and launched in May 2007.

### *Youth Homelessness Strategy*

A HSE report, reviewing the implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy, was submitted to the OMC and a group has also been established by the HSE to consider the report. The OMC, in its review of the extent of the implementation of the YHS, is liaising with a view to determining future policy in this area.

### *Links between the Youth Homeless Forum and the Adult Homeless Forum*

The OMC is in discussions with the Department of Environment and Local Government to examine this recommendation.

## 30.3 Innovative Measures

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

### 30.3.1 Establishment of the New Irish Youth Justice Service

JELR

The new Irish Youth Justice Service will facilitate reform of the youth justice area and provide the leadership necessary to implement the key remaining provisions of the Children Act 2001. The co-location of the Irish Youth Justice Service in the OMC will facilitate a cross-cutting and proactive approach to both the reform process and the implementation of the Act at the earliest possible date.

#### PROGRESS

##### *Children Act 2001*

The commencement of all the provisions of the Children Act 2001, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act, has now been completed.

##### *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*

A national youth justice strategy is currently being developed and will be completed by end 2007. This strategy will cover the period 2008 to 2010 and is being prepared in consultation with key stakeholders.

##### *Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)*

The recent announcement by Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform establishing 12 new projects brings the total number of projects operating throughout the country to 93. This is a significant step in meeting the target of 100 projects established before the end of 2007. It is also in line with the target set out in the National Development Plan and the commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the number of projects to 168 during the lifetime of the Government. An allocation of €120m is being made under the NDP 2007-2013 for the expansion of these projects and the development of other programmes for children who offend.

##### *Redevelopment of New Facilities for Offending Children sentenced to Detention*

An expert group including representatives of the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Department of Education and Science, the Office of Public Works, the Irish Prison Service and the Children Detention Schools was set up in April, 2006 to initiate and oversee the planning needed to modernise and redevelop the children detention schools. The Group submitted its first progress report in December 2006. The Group submitted an interim report to the Minister for Children in September 2007 on progress made in developing the detention school service.

A process of modernisation is ongoing to ensure the continued use of existing detention facilities until such time as the redevelopment is completed. Mr. Brendan Smith, T.D., Minister for Children recently opened Cuan Beag, the newly refurbished Girls Remand and Assessment Unit at Oberstown. Since March 2007, girls under the age of 18 years are no longer allowed to be detained by order of the Courts in an adult prison. This will be extended to all children under 18 years following the development of the necessary children detention school places.

### **30.3.2 Integrated Services and Interventions for Children at Local Level** **HC**

A cross-departmental team chaired by the OMC is developing an initiative to test models of best practice which promote integrated, locally-led, strategic planning for children's services. The objective of this initiative is to secure better developmental outcomes for disadvantaged children through more effective integration of existing services and interventions at local level. As an initiative for prevention and early intervention in children's lives, the aim will be to avert children succumbing to the risks associated with disadvantage as well as giving them the resilience to overcome those risks. As such, the initiative will focus on children who are at risk of suffering from multiple disadvantage relating to poverty and social exclusion, including children of migrant and Traveller communities, and to vulnerable families including due to substance abuse.

#### **PROGRESS**

The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme for Children was established in September, 2006. The Programme has a fund amounting to €36m in total, half of which is being provided by Government and half by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

**Recruitment of staff is almost complete and the first of a phased programme of activities is due to commence before year end.**

**The development and commissioning of an appropriate evaluation framework is continuing with input from an International Panel, OMC and Atlantic Philanthropies.**

### **30.3.3 Children's and Young People's Participation** **HC**

The OMC will establish a Comhairle Na nÓg Implementation Group to ensure the development of effective Comhairli na nÓg throughout the country. The Implementation Group will include representatives from Government departments, local government, the youth sector and organisations representing hard-to-reach children and young people and will report to the Minister for Children, and;

The establishment and operation of democratic student councils in schools, in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and the National Children's Strategy, will be promoted. In addition, the OMC will continue to undertake specific participation projects in partnership with statutory bodies, Government Departments and non-Government organisations. The OMC is committed to ensuring that the hard-to-reach children and young people are included in participation structures and projects.

## PROGRESS

A new enhanced grant programme of activity scheme was put in place to support a programme of activities to develop each Comhairle na nÓg. Under the scheme 23 projects were funded by the OMC providing over €300,000 to support increased participation of young people at local level. In addition the annual grant from the OMC towards all 34 Comhairlí na nÓg was doubled to €5,000 in 2007.

The OMC is providing funding for the publishing and dissemination of the new resource for the CSPE curriculum entitled '*Giving Children and Young People a Voice*'. A new student council support service has been established in the CDVEC and a student council coordinator appointed by the Department of Education and Science.

## 30.4 Governance Framework

HC

The OMC (Office of the Minister for Children) brings together the key areas of policy for children's services (other than health and school age education services) in one structure. The key areas of policy within the OMC are Child Welfare and Protection, Childcare, Early Years Education, Youth Justice and the National Children's Strategy.

The co-location of each of these areas within the OMC will bring a cohesive approach to the delivery of services based on the recognition that they are fundamentally interlinked and must be responded to on this basis to secure the best outcomes for children and young people.

### *Monitoring Progress*

At national level there will be an Implementation Group chaired by the OMC involving the relevant Departments, the HSE, representatives of local authorities, the education sector and other key agencies as required, which will link with the Expert Advisory Group on Children being established by the HSE.

At local level a multi-agency Children's Committee will be established within each of the City/County Development Boards. These committees will be chaired by the HSE who are best placed to drive this initiative to achieve coordinated and integrated services.

The establishment of effective systems and strategies to enable the OMC to meet commitments under the National Children's Strategy will be a key challenge in the initial strategic timeframe which is set to conclude in 2010.

A second ten-year National Children's Strategy will then be developed, in conjunction with stakeholders, in the light of the experience gained under the first ten-year strategy (which covers the years 2000 to 2010) to follow on immediately from the existing strategy, informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As the Government Office with overarching responsibility for tackling poverty, the Office for Social Inclusion will also work closely with the OMC in promoting the social inclusion agenda in relation to children and their families and in identifying and driving strategic responses in this area.

### *Research and Data*

The OMC will continue to undertake research and data development to assist good policy formulation including overseeing the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland (NLSCI). In addition, the findings from other national studies such as Health Behaviours in School-going Children, and tools such as the National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators, will assist in monitoring the impact of services and programmes in terms of child outcomes, including children at risk and needing preventative services, and in planning and evaluating policies, programmes and resource allocations.

A new National Data Strategy to support the planning and delivery of policy and services in relation to early childhood care and education and school age childcare will be developed by the OMC in liaison with the HSE and CECDE and other relevant agencies. The strategy will identify additional key areas where data is required to inform policy and, in the longer-term, to evaluate both the impact of investment on the quality of life experienced by children and where specific targeting of resources is most needed.

## **PROGRESS**

### *National Children's Strategy Implementation Group*

The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG), was established in November 2006. **To date it has met on 8 occasions.** The Group has agreed 4 CSC's (see below) and an 8-step approach for the establishment of the Committees, with the objective of developing County Level plans for Children's Services.

Mapping of decision making structures for each sector has been ongoing. Identification of communications and training needs to support change management is also underway.

### *Children's Services Committees*

Following the inaugural meeting of the National Implementation Group on 15th November, 2006, it was agreed that four Children's Services Committees would be initiated in the following CDB areas, Donegal, Dublin City, South Dublin and Limerick City. **All four Committees have commenced their work.**

### *Establishment of effective systems and strategies to enable OMC to meet commitments*

The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG) and the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC) are key governance structures for the oversight of the implementation of the NCS. A new monitoring reporting process is being developed to support a greater focus on on-the-ground implementation and in particular, the integration of services.

### *A Second Ten-Year National Children's Strategy*

This action to be progressed from 2009.

### *Research and data - Longitudinal Study on Children in Ireland (NLSCI)*

Fieldwork for the study on nine-year-old cohort is ongoing.

Fieldwork for the study on infant cohort will commence once ethical approval is secured.

A dedicated independent Research Ethics Committee (REC) is being set up for the NLSCI. The first meeting of the REC took place in October 2007.

Background documents are being prepared to support the development of the data strategy including a review of existing data sources and the identification of data needs.

## **31 People of Working Age**

### **31.2 Priority Actions**

#### **31.2.1 Employability**

**ES**

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver policies that are focused on ensuring that Ireland has a fully-trained, well-educated workforce in order to achieve the vision of a socially cohesive, knowledge-based innovation-driven economy whilst significantly increasing the skills levels of those in employment and consequently reducing the number of low skilled in the workforce.

In the context of enhancing employability, the achievement of a balance between flexibility and security is important. This involves a smooth transition between jobs without a prolonged absence from the workforce; the ability of employees to continuously develop their skills and competencies through lifelong learning and up-skilling; supports for those with caring responsibilities and greater flexibility in work organisation, such as multi-tasking and more adaptable work schedules and practices.

### *Actions to be taken*

- ▶ Increasing participation in Lifelong Learning is being prioritised, in particular, among the workforce categorised as low-skilled/low paid by enhancing opportunities to access education and training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications to equip all individuals with the skills, capacity and potential to participate fully in the knowledge-based society and progress to better quality jobs;
- ▶ Focusing on helping adults from disadvantaged communities including those in rural areas, to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills and tackling barriers/disincentives to lifelong learning. The parties will work to ensure that life-long learning provision is flexible and addresses the various needs of learners;
- ▶ Providing additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education;
- ▶ Providing targeted support for employees participating in part-time courses at third level (see Section 7.9 in Part 11);
- ▶ Formulating a National Skills Strategy which will put in place a strategic framework for the implementation of skills and training strategy into the medium term. This strategy will recognise the respective roles of the public, and private sectors with the emphasis of the former on where the market fails, including the low-skilled;
- ▶ FÁS will continue to review the curricula, assessment process and delivery mechanisms for apprenticeships and continue to progress additional occupations towards formal apprenticeship training and qualification;
- ▶ Prioritising adult literacy in the area of adult education. The annual student cohort availing of the general national literacy service delivered by the Vocational Education Committees will be significantly increased by the provision of an extra 7,000 places by 2009. There will be a particular focus on increasing the number of migrants receiving an English language service (ESOL). Having regard to developments generally in adult literacy and its expanding role, the family literacy project under DEIS, the implementation plan of the national adult literacy advisory group published by NALA and the role of the VECs, consideration will be given to the appropriate support structures in this area;
- ▶ Guidance/counselling will be provided to literacy and language learners and the needs of migrants will be considered in the context of the Educational Equality Initiative. Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area;
- ▶ A Family Literacy Project will also be put in place under the DEIS initiative;
- ▶ The Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) will be expanded by 2,000 places by 2009. The BTEI (part-time) will continue to be built on existing provision under the adult literacy services, community education, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Programmes, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area, and;
- ▶ Having regard to developments in the PLC sector, including the McIver report, concrete prioritised proposals in relation to PLC provision and focused in particular on the larger PLC providers will be prepared and will be the subject of further negotiations between management and unions. The level of resources for the PLC sector will be determined in the light of resources generally and the implications for other areas of education. The union side will engage positively in relation to commitments on future working arrangements and developments in the

sector. Student numbers will be subject to audit on an ongoing basis. The scope for rationalisation of provision will also be examined having due regard to ensuring appropriate provision on a geographic basis and the necessary critical mass for delivery of a quality education service.

## PROGRESS

A conference of Further Education providers was hosted by the DES with a view to determining how access might be enhanced and barriers removed in facilitating people with disabilities to enroll on Further Education programmes. A seminar for education providers and other interested parties on how best to cater for people with intellectual disabilities was held in June 2007.

**Following on from this, Further Education Section in the DES is preparing a scoping paper setting out the basis on which it should proceed with the formulation of a policy on catering for the educational needs of people with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, in further and adult education. The scoping paper will serve as a discussion document for the purposes of consultation with interested parties, leading to the production of a policy document on disability in the Further Education sector.**

The number of places in the adult literacy service at present is 40,000, about 12,000 (30%) of whom are migrants whose literacy programme includes learning English. An increase provided in the 2007 Estimates in the budget for Adult Literacy and Community Education will allow for 3,000 additional literacy places in 2007. VECs were asked to apply for increases in their literacy budgets to provide at least 3,000 places overall, having regard to the numbers of additional students for which they could realistically cater. The DES considered the applications received from VECs. It issued additional funding to the VECs to enable the expansion of the adult literacy service to meet the additional capacity provided for in "Towards 2016".

Arrangements for the initiation of the DEIS family literacy project are proceeding. In 2007, in the initial phase of the project, family literacy will be piloted in seven areas. **The DES has received seven applications for funding from these areas. These applications will be considered by the DEIS Family Literacy Working Group and approvals will issue to the successful applicants.**

The Reception and Integration Agency, in conjunction with the DES, has commissioned an independent study to assist in the development of a national English language policy for adult newcomers i.e. all legally resident immigrants. **The consultants appointed are meeting relevant stakeholders to obtain their views and experience as part of the process of preparing their report.**

Guidance counselling is available almost nationwide for participants on certain Further Education programmes. Adult literacy is one of these programmes. Migrant workers who are learning English on the literacy programme are entitled to guidance. An additional €1m is being made available in the 2007 Estimates to further expand the adult education guidance initiative. **An additional €1 million over 2006 has been made available in the 2007 estimates to further**

expand the service. Heretofore, increases have been used to set up new guidance projects. However, in response to advice from guidance providers, who are mainly but not invariably VECs, it was considered that this 2007 money could best be used to consolidate existing projects through expansion and to give the two counties currently without a service (Louth and Waterford), the opportunity to apply for a service. The selection process was overseen by the National Centre for Guidance in Education. A selection committee was established to examine the applications and make recommendations for the allocation of the additional €1 million. They recommended that projects be sanctioned in the two VEC areas that do not have projects namely, Louth and Waterford. They also ranked applications from applicants in order of merit and additional funding was approved for the expansion of the first 12 ranked projects for the employment of an additional Guidance Counsellor.

### 31.2.2 Access to Employment

ETE

The Government and the social partners recognise that employment is a major factor for people exiting out of poverty and that it also influences quality of life and social well-being.

The parties share the view that there should be a greater focus on activation and participation through an integrated approach across relevant programmes including:

- ▶ The National Employment Service and the Local Employment Services;
- ▶ The National Employment Action Plan, the High Supports Process, the Bridging/Foundation Programme, the Pathways to Employment processes;
- ▶ The Social and Family Support Service and;
- ▶ Other new and existing training and employment programmes.

These processes and programmes will explore the use of innovative approaches and will increasingly focus on the long-term unemployed, the unemployed who are 16-24 years old, people who have completed the NEAP process but who remain unemployed and those furthest from the labour market, including certain women workers and people with disabilities.

The parties agree that the actions to be considered as a priority over a three-year period will include:

- ▶ Applying the National Employment Action Plan referral process earlier than the current 6 months;
- ▶ Extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to other groups such as lone parents and those with disabilities, with due regard to the special needs of those groups. The NEAP will be operated in a supportive and positive manner working in an inclusive way with the customer;
- ▶ Introducing an active case management service for social welfare customers of working age, including collaboration to ensure that customers, agencies and service providers in this area engage actively with each other. This will place activation on a level with service delivery and control as a central part of the core business of the

Department of Social and Family Affairs. Changes will be implemented in a positive and supportive manner;

- ▶ Following the consultation process on the Government's Discussion Paper on Lone Parents, proposals will be brought forward aimed at supporting lone parents into employment. This will address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes and positive opportunities for customers, and
- ▶ Funding for the Community Services Programme which targets, in particular, people with disabilities, Travellers, lone parents and people seeking to move from part-time CE to full-time work will be further increased, building on the additional investment in 2006. In this context, there will be consultation with the social partners in relation to its development and targeting. The programme will be kept under review to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that it is co-ordinated appropriately with other relevant programmes.

## **PROGRESS**

**FÁS is in discussion with the Department of Social and Family Affairs in relation to developing a joint proposal for early activation of 18-20 year old Jobseekers Allowance recipients and claimants with a view to assisting them enter/re-enter the workforce, in the shortest possible time-frame, thus reducing any unavoidable social welfare dependency.**

The period after which intervention takes place under the National Employment Action Plan referral process has been reduced from 6 to 3 months on the Live Register for all age groups.

In addition to the above, FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs are revising their Memorandum of Understanding and Framework for Co-operation to further support the activation process. Following extensive consultation, culminating in a joint FÁS and Department of Social and Family Affairs seminar held to review this Memorandum, a revised draft was prepared by FÁS. This is currently being considered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The potential for extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to other groups is being examined by the Interdepartmental Group with responsibility for the NEAP process, which includes representatives of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and FÁS.

Four Lone Parents voluntary activation initiatives were implemented by FÁS in - Cork City, Tallaght, Ballymun, Dublin Inner City - to test approaches and to identify barriers in activating individuals in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment. A follow-up survey of those who did not engage in the process will be completed in August 2007 (Interim Report July 2007), with a view to informing further activation of this group.

**A Social Partnership Group is in the process of being established to advance consultation on activation of people of working age. It is intended that this group will meet before the end of November 2007.**

A sub-group of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion is currently working on an implementation plan to progress the non-income recommendations contained in the discussion paper Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents.

Work on the development of this implementation plan is progressing. To further inform the process, the Department of Social & Family Affairs with the co-operation of FÁS, the Office of the Minister for Children and the Department of Education and Science **is currently testing the non-income proposals** in both an urban and rural setting. These tests **are focusing** on identifying and resolving the practical and administrative issues that may arise. They will allow for operational and logistical co-ordination between the relevant department and agencies to be considered and developed and will facilitate the development of the new scheme.

An extra €10 million was provided for the Community Services Programme in the 2007 Estimates. Applications for new projects were sought in 2007, to draw down this additional funding in 2007. 126 new projects were requested to provide business plans, based on their applications. Funding contracts will issue to the majority of these projects in the next two months. A further request for applications from new projects has been issued this month. It is expected that decisions on new projects to be funded from 2008 will be made later this year.

### 31.2.3 Income

SFA

The Government and social partners are committed to working together to sustain an acceptable standard of living for all people of working age in particular by:

- ▶ Ensuring that social protection adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour force or out of it. It will facilitate labour market participation, mobility and transition. Reforms will be introduced that aim to provide those most marginalised with the confidence and supports necessary to accept the risks involved in taking up employment. This will involve the provision of extended information and supports dealing as far as possible with the financial and non-financial barriers to employment, in particular those which present poverty traps and encourage dependency;
- ▶ Other elements of social protection will be examined to ensure that atypical working, the reconciliation of work and family life and those working on low incomes are supported;
- ▶ The standard means test for SWA rent supplement (and other secondary benefit payments) will be kept under review with a view to providing enhanced financial incentives to take up part-time employment, training, education or other progression options, and minimising where possible, the impact of the withdrawal of social welfare. However, the overall emphasis will be on the provision of appropriate long-term housing solutions rather than on moving retention thresholds at which some or all of the social welfare payment is lost;
- ▶ Achieving the NAPS target of €150 per week in 2002 terms for lowest social welfare rates by 2007. The value of the rates to be maintained at this level over the course of the agreement, subject to available resources, and;
- ▶ Other elements of social protection will be examined to ensure that the reconciliation of work and family life is supported.

## PROGRESS

As outlined in the last Progress Report, in Budget 2007, a daily earnings disregard of €20 per day was introduced for persons in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and Farm Assist who have child dependants and the daily disregard for persons without children was increased to €20 per day, from €12.70. Both measures are designed to encourage labour market participation and to remove the anomalous treatment of different family types. It was also announced that the assessment of spouse's earnings for Jobseeker's Allowance, PRETA (Pre-Retirement Allowance), Disability Allowance and Farm Assist would be reformed in order to encourage spouses/partners, mainly women, to take up or increase their level of employment and to claim in their own right. These new arrangements were provided for in the Social Welfare & Pensions Act, 2007 and came into force in late September 2007.

In Budget 2007, entitlement to BTWA (Back to Work Allowance) was extended to those who are in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for 2 years or more at a weekly rate of less than €50.79 (single) or €78.72 (couple). This improvement to the BTWA scheme **was** effective from March 2007.

In Budget 2007 in recognition of the special difficulties which some people can face when attempting to equip themselves for the modern labour force, the qualifying period for access to the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme has been reduced from 3 to 2 years in respect of persons in receipt of Illness Benefit.

In addition, Budget 2007 provided for earlier access to the BTEA scheme for persons who lose their employment and who have an entitlement to statutory redundancy. This enhancement to the BTEA scheme recognises the need to re-train people who are made redundant at the earliest possible time in order to access the changing labour market. Both enhancements to the BTEA scheme came into effect from the beginning of the new academic year i.e. September 2007.

In relation to maternity benefit, with effect from January 2007, the ceiling applied to reckonable earnings was increased from 75% to 80% and the duration **was** increased from 22 weeks to 26 weeks with a further four week increase in entitlement to statutory unpaid leave, effective from 1st March 2007.

An inter-Departmental group was requested to study the treatment of part-time and other atypical workers within the Jobseekers Benefit and Jobseekers Allowance schemes. The group has reported and its recommendations are feeding into ongoing policy discussions in the Department.

Issues relating to the operation of the Homemakers Scheme, including the operative date and the use of credited contributions instead of the disregard system will be discussed and decided on in the context of the Government Green Paper on pensions and the related consultation process.

Issues relating to longer working by older workers is discussed in the context of the Government Green Paper on pensions which was launched on 17th October 2007.

Budget 2007 provided for improvements in the disregards that apply to assessing additional income for rent supplement purposes. From June, the first €75 of additional income, that is, income above the standard rate of supplementary welfare allowance appropriate to a person's circumstances, is disregarded for rent supplement purposes, with any additional income above €75 is assessed at 75%. These measures are positive steps in assisting tenants in achieving a long-term housing solution for their needs while also increasing the financial return from employment for those returning to work or moving to full-time employment.

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) gives local authorities specific responsibility for meeting the long-term housing needs of people receiving rent supplement for eighteen months or more. These individuals' needs are met through a range of approaches including the traditional range of social housing options, the voluntary housing sector, and in particular, a new public/private partnership arrangement to provide rental housing to households with long-term housing needs. To date some 4,840 rent supplement recipients have been transferred to RAS and a further 3,600 recipients to other social housing options.

RAS is being fully supported by the provisions of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2007 in that recipients of rent supplement, who have been accepted as eligible for accommodation under the RAS, are entitled to take up full time employment and remain eligible for rent supplement, subject to satisfying the other eligibility conditions. This measure replaces existing retention arrangements where the new provisions are more beneficial. This will allow the local authority the opportunity to source suitable accommodation while allowing the tenant the opportunity to avail of a full-time employment or training position.

Measures introduced by the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2007 ensure that persons aged 65 or over who are in receipt of a rent or mortgage interest supplement, with income equivalent to the value of a State Pension (Contributory), appropriate to their circumstances, now only make the minimum contribution of €13 per week towards their rent.

The 2007 Act also provides for an improvement in the assessment of capital for rent & mortgage interest supplement and supplementary welfare allowance.

In Budget 2007, the lowest rate of welfare payments was increased by €20 per week (12.1%), bringing the lowest rate to €185.80 per week and, thereby, fulfilling the NAPs target. **In the new Programme for Government, the Government is committed to maintain the value of the lowest rate of social welfare payments as agreed in the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.**

### 31.2.4 Improving Health Outcomes for People of Working Age

HC

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver tangible improvements in the health outcomes for people of working age over a ten-year period. Our approach to health services for people of working age will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (2001) and the Primary Care Strategy: 'Primary Care, a New Direction' (2001).

Actions to be pursued as a priority over a three-year timeframe will include:

- ▶ Planning and implementing a programme of re-organisation and re-alignment of existing resources in order to deliver a person-centred primary care service through multidisciplinary teams and networks, serving defined populations. New service arrangements will facilitate the delivery of services on an integrated basis, both within the primary and community sector and across the health services as a whole;
- ▶ Ensuring that service development and delivery are informed by needs assessment, undertaken at national, local and other levels as appropriate. Communities and service users will be enabled to participate in this process;
- ▶ Developing primary care services drawing on the Primary Care Strategy. This will entail ongoing investment to ensure integrated, accessible services for people within their own community with a target of 300 primary care teams by 2008, 400 by 2009 and 500 by 2011. A review of these targets will be undertaken in 2008;
- ▶ Further developing, as a priority, out-of-hours GP services with a view ultimately to having those services available to the whole population;
- ▶ Reviewing all existing eligibility legislation and drafting legislation that clarifies and simplifies eligibility and entitlements to health services, in line with the goals of the National Health Strategy;
- ▶ Delivering tangible reductions in waiting times for public patients, through the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), with the goal that no public patient will wait longer than three months for treatment following referral from an outpatient Department;
- ▶ The Health Strategy contained a commitment to increase total acute hospital bed capacity by 3,000 by 2011. An additional 900 in-patient beds/day places are largely in place with a further 450 acute beds/day places to be put in place under the Capital Investment Framework 2005-2009. An initiative to provide an additional 1,000 beds for public patients in public hospitals was launched in 2005. In light of developments since the publication of the Health Strategy the HSE will carry out a review of the acute hospital bed requirements up to 2020;
- ▶ Developing a high-quality community-based mental health service in accordance with the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, A Vision for Change. A monitoring committee has been appointed to monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations;
- ▶ Ensuring that people who are not able to meet the cost of GP services for themselves and their families are supported appropriately, either by means of a medical card or a GP visit card, depending on their means;
- ▶ Reviewing the eligibility criteria for assessment of medical cards in the context of medical, social and economic/financial need. The review will clarify entitlement to a medical card;
- ▶ Developing a strategic integrated approach to rehabilitation services within the context of the Multi-Annual Investment Programme with a view to supporting people back into employment as appropriate through early intervention and enhanced service provision;

- ▶ Working in partnership to develop specific community and sectoral initiatives to encourage healthy eating and access to healthy food and physical activity among adults, with a particular focus on adults living in areas of disadvantage;
- ▶ Further developing palliative care throughout Ireland, with particular reference to the Baseline Study on the provision of Hospice/Specialist Palliative Care Services, and;
- ▶ The HSE Corporate Plan for 2005-2008 commits it 'to develop a consistent approach to access to service throughout the country, based on identified need'. The 2007 Plan will, specifically, include a section devoted to Consistency and Social Inclusion which is to contain details of initiatives being pursued by the HSE.

## PROGRESS

### *Re-organisation and re-alignment of existing resources*

The HSE will be continuing the rollout of primary care team developments in line with *Towards 2016* objectives and having regard to the Executive's overall budgetary situation.

### *Needs Assessment*

A needs assessment workbook has been developed by the HSE for use in each Local Health Office area by the Primary Care Teams. The workbook provides guidance on the involvement of the community and service users generally in the needs assessment process. The results of the needs assessment process will help to inform the development of new service initiatives.

**A Development Officer has been appointed to each Local Office to progress general reform of the Primary, Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) pillar of the health services. Part of the development officer's responsibility is to undertake needs assessment.**

### *Primary Care*

Additional funding of €10m was provided in 2006 to the HSE to enable the establishment of up to 100 Primary Care Teams, to include some 300 additional frontline professionals. A further €20m was provided to the HSE in 2007 to meet the full year costs of the 2006 developments and to enable a further 100 teams to be established.

### *Out-of-hours GP services*

The North Dublin GP Out-of-Hours Service commenced in late 2006 covering the whole of North Dublin City and County serving a population of approximately 500,000. In its first 10 months in operation it provided services to approximately 44,000 people.

### *Eligibility Legislation*

It is intended that a draft scheme of a Bill will be submitted to Government by end 2007

### *Waiting times*

In 2002, waiting times for admission ranged from 2 to 5 years. In 2007, for the most common surgical procedures, waiting times are down to 2 to 5 months.

### *Bed Capacity*

Since the Publication of the Health Strategy in 2001 the average number of in-patient beds and day places available for use in the 53 public acute hospitals has increased by over 1,200.

In addition the current National Development Plan will provide an additional 458 beds.

The 2006 and 2007 Estimates for the HSE included financial provision of €95m to open new facilities providing over 170 of the additional beds.

Under the co-location of Private Hospitals on Public Hospital Sites initiative 1,000 new public beds will come on stream by having the private sector build private hospitals on the sites of public hospitals thereby freeing up beds for public patients. The HSE has approved the successful bidder status on 6 sites to proceed to the next stage. Two further proposals are also being considered.

A Review is being undertaken by the HSE with the support of external consultants to advise on future bed capacity need. The process is at an advanced stage.

### *A Vision for Change*

The Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, '*A Vision for Change*' sets out almost 200 recommendations. Implementation of the majority of the recommendations is a matter for the HSE. In July 2006, the HSE established an implementation group to ensure that mental health services develop in a synchronised and consistent manner across the country. **The HSE has** appointed a full time Project Manager to develop an implementation plan for '*A Vision for Change*'. This plan will be available in the near future and will include a timed and prioritised set of short, medium and longer term goals designed to implement key recommendations.

In addition, the Independent Monitoring Group was appointed in March 2006 to monitor and assess progress on the implementation of all the recommendations in '*A Vision for Change*'. The Group submitted its first annual report to the Minister in May 2007.

Funding of €26.2m was provided in 2006 to develop mental health services in line with '*A Vision for Change*'. A further €25m has been allocated in 2007.

### *Support for those who cannot meet the cost of GP services*

As of October 2007, 119,351 more people (1,264,434) have medical cards than in January 2005 (1,145,083). As of October 2007, 73,644 people held GP Visit Cards. 31.56% of the national population qualify for free GP services.

### *Eligibility criteria for assessment of medical cards*

The Programme for Government commits to:

- ▶ Indexing the income thresholds for medical cards to increases in the average industrial wage
- ▶ Doubling of the income limit eligibility of parents of children under 6 years of age, and trebling them for parents of children under 18 years of age with an intellectual disability
- ▶ Allowing people with disabilities to work without losing key essential medical card cover after 3 years
- ▶ Implementation of an annual publicity campaign and making applications easier so as to increase uptake amongst those who are eligible for medical cards/GP visit cards.

The Department is at present considering the steps required to enable these commitments to be implemented.

### *Action Plan for Rehabilitation Services*

The Department of Health and Children is considering approaches for developing and implementing a Strategy for Rehabilitation.

### *Healthy Eating*

Through the Healthy Food for All (HFfA) initiative a toolkit focusing on models of good practice for healthy eating at community level is being prepared and Health Promotion Policy Unit (HPPU) will support this through printing the toolkit. The HPPU is also represented on the HFfA Advisory Group.

HPPU continues to meet with the Nutrition and Health Foundation on a quarterly basis.

### *Palliative Care*

Regulations to enable Nurse Prescribing in palliative care settings have now been made. These regulations will enable nurse prescribing in palliative care settings.

On foot of the Report of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care, the National Council for Specialist Palliative Care was established in November 2005.

The National Council is comprised of representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies and its remit is to offer advice on the ongoing development and implementation of national policy on palliative care services in Ireland.

The provision of an additional €5m in Budget 2007 will allow for further improvement in specialist in-patient palliative care services, home and community services, paediatric care, and database and service intelligence needs. The HSE is continuing to work with the newly established Development Committees to determine priorities and allocations.

The Health Service Executive has agreed to develop a national capital and revenue plan for palliative care services, for the period 2009-2013. It will submit its draft plan to the Department of Health and Children by the end of March 2008.

A Working Group on Children's Palliative Care was established by the Department in April 2007 to develop policy in the area. An initial draft of their policy document is expected by December 2007.

### *HSE Corporate Plan 2005 - 2008*

The HSE National Service Plan (NSP) for 2007 was approved by the Minister on 7th February 2007. It includes a section on Consistency and Social Inclusion which identifies some specific initiatives being pursued to ensure geographical equity and equity of access to treatment and care. One initiative in particular is the establishment by the HSE of a project group which will prepare action plans in relation to health inequalities.

## **31.2.5 Caring Responsibilities**

**SFA**

The Government and the social partners recognise the importance of helping families to balance their work responsibilities with their family, caring and other commitments and acknowledge, in particular, the important role played by family carers.

### *Actions to be taken*

In order to achieve this objective, priority actions will include:

- ▶ Work of the National Framework Committee for Work-Life Balance Policies, initially established under the PPF, will continue. The Committee will continue to support and facilitate the development of family friendly policies aimed at assisting in the reconciliation of work and family life at the level of the enterprise. The activities of the Committee will continue to be supported by a specific budget;
- ▶ Expanding the income limits for the Carer's Allowance so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify and implementing significant increases in the value of the respite care grant for carers, subject to available resources. Significant progress has been made on both commitments in recent Budgets. The earnings disregard for a couple is currently set at €580 per week. The gross average industrial earnings for 2005 was €580.76. The aim should be for the level of the disregard to keep pace with gross average industrial earnings;

- ▶ Continuing to review the scope for further development of the Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and the Respite Care Grant having regard to the recommendations of the Equality Authority Report 'Implementing Equality for Carers'; the Carer's Association Report 'Towards a Family Carer's Strategy'; and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs Report on the Position of Full-Time Carers and other available research;
- ▶ The Department of Social and Family Affairs, in the context of its Sectoral Plan will work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS to progress issues associated with training for carers;
- ▶ The Department of Social and Family Affairs will lead the development of a structured consultation process to inform future policy in this area. This will involve an annual meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies;
- ▶ Examining the potential for improved support services to carers. Consideration will also be given to enhancing economic and social inclusion supports to people whose caring responsibilities have concluded;
- ▶ Continue to support information and awareness campaigns.
- ▶ A National Carers' Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by end-2007. There will be appropriate consultation with the social partners.

## PROGRESS

The National Framework Committee has **recently established** a Panel of Consultants to assist organisations introduce or enhance work life balance arrangements. **Advertising of the Panel will commence shortly with organisations being** invited to apply for assistance.

**Applications will be considered for up to 5 days consultancy which will be provided by the Panel, the cost of which will be borne by the Committee. The support provided will cover:**

- ▶ **advice on developing a work life balance policy/enhancing existing policies;**
- ▶ **advice on implementing work-life balance arrangements on a partnership basis; and / or**
- ▶ **training for management and employees in designing and operating such arrangements.**

Budget 2007 increased the earnings disregard in the carer's allowance means test to €640 per week for a couple from April 2007. This means that a couple with two children can earn in the region of €36,200 and still qualify for the maximum rate of carer's allowance as well as the associated free travel and household benefits. This measure surpasses the commitment in *Towards 2016* to ensure that those on average industrial earnings can continue to qualify for a full carer's allowance.

The primary objective of the social welfare system is to provide income support and as a general rule only one weekly social welfare payment is payable to an individual. Persons qualifying for two social welfare payments receive the higher payment to which they are entitled. This has been a cause of particular concern to people in receipt of a social welfare payment when they become carers. For that reason Budget 2007 provided for a fundamental structural reform in this regard. This new measure means that people in receipt of certain other social welfare payments who are also providing

full time care and attention to a person **can now** retain their main welfare payment and receive another payment depending on their means, the maximum of which will be equivalent to a half rate Carer's Allowance. **The measure came into effect from 27 September 2007.**

Budget 2007 also provided for the level of the Respite Care Grant to be increased by €300 from €1,200 to €1,500 per year in respect of each care recipient with effect from June 2007.

In Budget 2007 the rates of Carer's Allowance were increased to €200 per week for those aged under 66 and to €218 per week for those aged over 66 with effect from January 2007.

With regard to Carer's Benefit, Budget 2007 increased the rate of payment by €20 to €200 per week with effect from January 2007. In addition, the earnings threshold was increased by €30 to €320 per week with effect from April 2007.

Initial discussions have been held between the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FAS to progress the issues associated with training for carers.

Carers have been identified as a priority theme under the "Economic and Social Disadvantage Category" in the Dormant Accounts allocation for 2007. It is intended that this allocation for carers will be used to fund appropriate training programmes.

The first annual consultation meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies was hosted by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on 21 November 2006. The issues raised at the consultation meeting informed the package of measures for carers announced in Budget 2007. **Stakeholders will be contacted shortly in relation to the next consultation meeting which is planned for November 2007.**

**The Department ran a major nationwide awareness campaign in September/October 2007 to advertise the new arrangements whereby people in receipt of certain other social welfare payments who are also providing full time care and attention to a person can now retain their main welfare payment and receive another payment depending on their means, the maximum of which will be equivalent to a half rate Carer's Allowance.**

All relevant departments and agencies will be involved in the development of the national carer's strategy and there will be appropriate consultation with the social partners. Departments are currently in discussions regarding the best way to advance the process.

## 31.2.6 Housing and Sustainable Communities

EHLG

The Government and the social partners endorse the important principles set out in the Housing Policy Framework: Building Sustainable Communities which provides a vision of the kind of high quality, integrated sustainable communities that are worth building. The parties agree to work together toward the delivery of this vision over a ten-year period. They recognise that the achievement of sustainable communities will be greatly aided by the implementation of spatial policy frameworks such as the NSS, Regional Planning Guidelines and the development plan process. Planning for future housing must also take account of the needs of a modern, dynamic and multi-cultural society reflecting a diversity of housing needs.

### *Actions to be taken*

The key proposals are aimed at:

- ▶ Ensuring the provision of good quality social and affordable accommodation (including the provision of housing under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts) in sustainable communities reflecting its important role in improving the life opportunities of the more vulnerable and disadvantaged people within our society. A key aim of housing investment will be to ensure that the system of housing supports is flexible enough to deal with the changing circumstances of the individual and family throughout the lifecycle, while ensuring equitable treatment and interventions that maximise individual choice and personal autonomy;
- ▶ Advancing particular actions to assist people with special housing needs. Actions relating to older people and people with a disability are specifically referred to in sections 32 and 33 respectively. Ensuring improved outcomes for all people with special housing needs will require greater inter-agency co-operation, so that a combined approach to the accommodation and care dimensions is taken:
- ▶ In the case of homeless people, it is proposed to amalgamate and update the Government's Integrated and Preventative Homeless Strategies taking on board the recommendations of the recent independent review of the strategies. The situation of homeless persons who are currently in long-term emergency accommodation is of particular concern. The revised strategies will have as an underlying objective the elimination of such homelessness by 2010 (recognising that this involves addressing the needs of up to 500 households). Particular emphasis will also be placed on improved co-ordination of service provision through the extension of joint agency approaches at local level to facilitate the development of a holistic response to the needs of homeless person. This will be achieved through the further development of a case management approach, based on individual needs assessment with provision for access to multiple services by all the statutory agencies involved. The involvement of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector will be strengthened through the establishment of a National Homelessness Consultative Committee including representatives of the social partnership C&V Pillar under the aegis of the Housing Forum, and;
- ▶ Social Capital can make an important contribution to healthy and sustainable communities.

## PROGRESS

A new statement of housing policy, *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* was launched in February 2007. The policy statement strongly endorses the vision of better quality housing in sustainable communities as set out in

Towards 2016. The statement sets out a vision to guide the transformation of the Irish housing sector over the next ten years, by delivering more and better quality housing responses and by doing this in a more strategic way focused on the building of sustainable communities. More detail on the document was provided in the last Progress Report.

As reported in the last Progress Report, the Department in March this year published new design guidance on housing delivery entitled Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities.

**In September 2007, the Minister launched *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments*. These documents form part of a suite of guidance documents which the Department is developing to promote quality in housing and neighbourhoods.**

**A review of Part L of the Building Regulations (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) is underway at present and the intention is, in keeping with the commitment in the Programme for Government, to strengthen these provisions to achieve a 40% improvement in the energy performance of buildings over current standards. A new draft Part L and Technical Guidance Document have recently been published for public consultation. It is proposed to make the new Regulations later this year with the view to them taking effect from 1 July, 2008. Work is proceeding to improve the standards in the private rented sector following on from the publication of *Action on Private Rented Standards* in 2006. A presentation on progress was made to the Housing Forum on 2 October 2007. This reflected the improvements that have been seen in both registration of tenancies with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) and enforcement by local authorities (44% increase in inspections in 2006), facilitated by increased funding which is now linked to performance. Work is underway on revising the Standards Regulations. Submissions have been received from stakeholders and revised regulations are expected to be available by end 2007. The Centre for Housing Research has conducted research work for the PRTB, including the preparation of good practice guidelines for local authorities that should be published shortly.**

### **Homelessness**

Work is **well underway** on the preparation of the revised Homeless Strategy under the aegis of the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness. The overarching goal of the new Strategy will be the elimination of the long-term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation by end 2010. It is expected that the revised Strategy will be published **before the end of 2007**.

The National Homeless Consultative Committee (NHCC) **was** established to provide input into the development of the revised Homeless Strategy and ongoing Government policy on addressing homelessness. The NHCC has met **five times** to date. A data sub-group of this body has been formed to facilitate data collection and management.

A health impact assessment and a poverty impact assessment of the revised Homeless Strategy have commenced. **Consultation events have been hosted, with relevant parties being invited to view and discuss draft versions**

of both assessments.

### *Special Housing Needs*

A working group has been established to progress work on the development of protocols to deal with co-operation between the HSE and housing authorities to provide a strategic framework for inter agency co-operation at local level.

- ▶ A protocol governing liaison between the HSE and the housing authorities on the assessment of the accommodation needs of people with a disability was developed in June 2007 and is being implemented by the local authorities and the HSE.
- ▶ Work is ongoing on the development of a protocol governing support costs for social housing projects provided for people with disabilities, is being developed and will be in place by quarter 3, 2007.

The special housing needs of the elderly and disabled are also being addressed through the disabled persons grant scheme.

**A revised framework of housing adaptation grant schemes to assist older people and people with a disability with their accommodation needs will be implemented on 1 November 2007. The revised schemes will ensure that the available funding is targeted to lower income households and those whose need is greatest.**

**A cross-departmental team has been established to develop and oversee policy in relation to sheltered housing for older people and agree local structures and protocols for integrated management and delivery of housing and related care services.**

**A national housing strategy for people with a disability is being developed. The strategy is to be progressed through the establishment of a National Group under the aegis of the Housing Forum, headed by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and involving the Department of Health and Children, the HSE, social partners and other relevant stakeholders including the National Disability Authority. The strategy will support the provision of tailored housing and housing supports to people with a disability and have particular regard to adults with significant disabilities and people who experience mental health issues. The first meeting of the National Group will be held in October.**

## **31.2.7 Equality/Equal Opportunities**

**JELR**

The achievement of a fairer society and equality for all citizens is a key principle of the partnership approach. Policies and programmes at each stage of the lifecycle will be implemented having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The achievement of true equality necessitates a holistic approach and a society-wide understanding of the complementary roles and skills of both men and women. In particular, the Government is committed to promoting gender equality across all stages of the lifecycle through a range of measures including the forthcoming National Women's Strategy.

### *Actions to be taken*

Key priority actions to be pursued include;

- ▶ Implementing policies to increase employment levels with the goal of exceeding the EU Lisbon employment rate targets for 2010 of 70% overall, 60% for females and 50% for older workers;
- ▶ Further support linked, as appropriate, to the forthcoming National Development Plan for innovative actions building upon the achievements of the NDP Equality for Women Measure. This will also link with the gender equality focused initiatives to be developed under the National Women's Strategy 2007 - 2016;
- ▶ Focusing on actions by the social partners to encourage greater numbers of women to advance to the higher levels within their chosen careers through training and cost effective reviews of equality policies within organisations;
- ▶ Further exploring the causes of the gender pay gap in order to reduce it further;
- ▶ Reviewing as necessary existing equality legislation with a view to establishing best practice in relation to positive action, particularly in access to employment, across all nine equality grounds;
- ▶ Reviewing expenditure on the equality infrastructure provided by the Equality Acts to reduce the incidence of discrimination. A particular priority will be the removal of the current backlog of cases before the Equality Tribunal;
- ▶ Continue to encourage companies and organisations to meet proactively the challenges of diversity and equality, and;
- ▶ Collecting data to support policies for the promotion of equality of opportunity across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation.

## **PROGRESS**

### *Employment Rate for Women*

The target rate of 60% employment rate for females has been achieved in the second quarter of 2007, however it is imperative that efforts continue to ensure that women have the opportunity to avail of employment opportunities.

### *National Women's Strategy*

**The National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016 was published in April of this year to foster greater gender equality.**

The Inter-Departmental Committee which was responsible for the drafting of this report, has been reconstituted as the National Women's Strategy Implementation Committee. This Committee first met on 24 October 2007 and will meet regularly thereafter to oversee progress on the implementation of the key objectives and the 200 actions which are included in the Strategy.

### ***Equality for Women Measure***

The Equality for Women Measure of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan is coming to a close. Work is underway at present on the design of a strategically focused successor Measure in the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, within the 2007 – 2013 NDP and the new Human Capital Investment Operational Programme.

The Measure will continue to receive European Social Funding because of the strong emphasis placed on the promotion of true gender equality by both the European Union and the Irish Government.

5) Section 31.2.7. Equality/Equal Opportunities, priority action 8. Collecting data to support equality policies.

#### **PROGRESS**

As reported in the last Progress Report, the Working Group on Equality Proofing have established a Data sub-group to identify key data sources (e.g. QNHS, Census, PPS-related data holdings) relevant to the 9 protected grounds under Irish anti-discrimination legislation, including demographic information across all grounds and within key domains (e.g. health, accommodation, education, employment). Within each such domain, policy-related data is to be prioritised.

**The report of this group is expected to be published shortly.**

As part of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All the CSO, are issuing a special equality-related data release.

**This is expected to be released in November, 2007.**

As reported in the last Progress Report, the Government has approved the report of the Working Group on Insurance-related issues in the Gender Non-Employment Directive (2004/113/EC), which analysed data on gender and insurance. The Government has approved draft proposals for implementation of the recommendations, which will permit exceptions in the area of motor insurance, life assurance, pensions and annuities.

**Legislation is being prepared to give effect to the recommendations in this report.**

6) Section 32.2.6. Promoting education and employment for older people.  
Priority Action 6. Public information campaigns on ageism.

#### **PROGRESS**

As part of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All the Equality Authority launched a poster campaign “Say no to Ageism week” in June 2007 to raise awareness of ageism.

## 31.3 Young Adults (18-29)

The Government and social partners recognise that young adults (18-29) face particular needs and challenges which must be addressed.

### 31.3.1 Education, Training and Employment

ES

The parties agree to work together to address the particular education, training and employment needs of young adults by:

- ▶ Investing in further support measures in the areas of further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular: socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, members of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities, mature students, lone parents and students with a disability. These measures will include; needs assessment, technology support, community based strategies, childcare supports and access routes, and;
- ▶ Focusing specifically on young people as part of the increased training for the low-skilled in employment, FÁS will continue to work in partnership with the Community Training Centres to provide early school leavers with basic skills and work experience and to assist with progress to further training and development.

#### PROGRESS

The Access Office and the HEA are contributing to the achievement of objectives in *Towards 2016* through a number of initiatives which are set out below:

#### *Evaluation of Access Programmes*

In October 2006 the National Office published an evaluation of access programmes in higher education in Ireland. The evaluation will guide institutions over the coming years in the process of improving their support structures and strategies for students from under-represented groups. This process will be facilitated and monitored by the National Office. The evaluation firstly proposes a framework for successful access programmes based on four criteria: policy, targeting, partnership and practice. Secondly, it also identifies specific examples of good practice in the structure and content of existing access programmes. Thirdly, the evaluation presents an eight-step implementation plan that will be pursued in partnership with the higher education institutions over the coming months.

#### *Strategic Innovation Fund*

In October 2006, details were announced by the DES/HEA of allocations under Cycle I of the Strategic Innovation Fund. The Fund was established by the Government to promote collaboration, support change and enhance quality in Irish higher education. €10.2m was allocated for projects to promote access and lifelong learning in Cycle I. This funding, together with subsequent funding from future calls, will sustain higher education institutions in welcoming and supporting students from groups traditionally under-represented in higher education.

Higher education institutions were invited in August 2007 to make proposals for funding under Cycle II of the Strategic Innovation Fund. A total of €130 million will be available for allocation for various support headings, including access and lifelong learning, under Cycle II.

### *Fund for Students with Disabilities*

The Fund for Students with Disabilities is one of three student support funding programmes managed by the National Office. The most recently available figures show that the Fund is continuing to benefit more students year-on-year. 2,444 students with a disability were approved for funding in 2006-7, an increase of over 20% from the previous year. The gross allocation for 2006-7 was €9.98m, an increase on the €8.12m gross allocation for 2005-6.

### *Whole-Community Projects*

Two new pilot community projects commenced in the latter part of 2006, funded by the National Office. These aim to achieve equity of access to higher education using a whole community approach. One project is in County Offaly, the other in Clondalkin. The projects will run for three years.

### *Study on the Costs of Going to College for a Diverse Range of Students*

In October 2006, the National Office commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute to undertake a study of the cost of going to college for different kinds of students, including those with childcare and family responsibilities. An interim report was submitted to the National Office and it is expected that the final report will be submitted in late 2007.

### *Information Campaign on Financial Support*

Work is at an advanced stage on co-ordinating information for students, parents and communities on the financial supports available to them in further and higher education. These supports include the maintenance grant, the Student Assistance Fund, the Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Back to Education Allowance and the Millennium Partnership Fund. A website has been developed which will form the centrepiece of the information campaign. The website, to be called , will be promoted through a targeted advertising campaign.

### *Work on a new Action Plan for the National Office*

Work has begun on a new Action Plan for equity of access to higher education for 2008-13. In March 2007 a workshop was convened with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to develop an outline for the new plan.

### 31.3.2 Health and Social Services

HC

The parties share the view that young adults have a range of particular health-related needs.

#### *Actions to be taken*

The parties agree to address these needs through the following priority actions:

- ▶ Combating substance misuse through a concerted focus on supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research. Specifically, rehabilitation is being added as a fifth pillar of the National Drugs Strategy, in line with a commitment given in the mid-term review of that Strategy, and a Working Group is developing an integrated rehabilitation provision. Also in line with the mid-term review, the Department of Health & Children is exploring the potential for better co-ordination between the areas of drugs and alcohol with the aim of improving synergies. Additional funding is being provided in 2006 to develop facilities and services for young people;
- ▶ Ensuring a greater focus on reducing alcohol related harm including implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on Alcohol, established under Sustaining Progress, taking account of the recommendations of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol;
- ▶ Ensuring implementation of the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention, 2005-2014. Specifically this will involve:
  - Working intensively to co-ordinate suicide prevention activities across the country;
  - Disseminating research and best practice and, where necessary, commissioning and supporting new research, and;
  - Consulting with those working to reduce suicide and those responding to suicide, to ensure their voice is heard in planning future suicide prevention initiatives.

#### **PROGRESS**

**The Group on Alcohol and Drugs held its third meeting on 3rd October and its next meeting is scheduled for 21st November. The membership of the Working Group has been expanded to include the Social Partners, following representations from the Community and Voluntary sector in the drugs area. The Implementation Group, examining the recommendations of the Working Group on Alcohol established under Sustaining Progress, last met on 21 September 2007 and the Group is expected to consider a draft report on its work at its next meeting in December 2007.**

As outlined in the last report, €1.2 million was allocated to the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) in 2006 for suicide prevention initiatives and research. An additional €1.85 million was allocated in 2007 to develop services and actions in line with the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention. This brings the total allocation for suicide prevention initiatives in 2007 to €8 million.

**An all-island positive mental health awareness campaign was launched on 9th October 2007. This awareness campaign was developed using the findings from the Mental Health Awareness and Attitudes Survey conducted by the NOSP.**

In light of increased information around suicide prevention rates it has been agreed with NOSP that an interim target for a 10% reduction in suicide be achieved by 2010. In addition, a target of 5% reduction in repeated self harm by 2010 and a further 5% by 2016 have been agreed.

### 31.3.3 Housing and Accommodation

EHLG

The parties recognise that young adults in the 25 to 34 age bracket are the key household formation group and they acknowledge the particular challenges faced by them in accessing quality housing/accommodation in the current market environment.

#### *Actions to be taken*

The parties agree to work together to tackle these challenges as a priority by:

- ▶ Policies and investment to address the accommodation needs of young adults as set out in Chapter 2 of Towards 2016, in particular:
- ▶ Implementing the Rental Accommodation Scheme to help to provide the necessary springboard to accessing employment, training or education opportunities which may lead to broader accommodation options for the individual in the future;
- ▶ Commencing a pilot project on affordable homes for renting, as outlined in the Housing Policy Framework, which should further expand the choices available to this age group, and;
- ▶ Developing proposals to provide a more comprehensive and objective means of assessing need, associated with a focus on the provision of housing advice to allow housing supports to be tailored to reflect the changing accommodation needs throughout a person's lifecycle.

#### **PROGRESS**

Funding of €25 million has been put in place for 2007 in order to target 5,000 transfers from rent supplement to RAS/social housing (achieving cumulative end of year figure of 10,000 transfers) and secure 350 units in new supply for RAS.

**In June 2007, new provisions in relation to returning to work while being in receipt of Rent Supplement, took effect under the Social Welfare and Pensions Act. Rent Supplement was not previously payable to a person in full-time employment.** Section 24 provides that where a person has not been engaged in full-time employment in the previous 12 months and, during that time, in receipt of Rent Supplement, he or she may continue to receive Rent Supplement if he or she engages in full-time employment, provided that the person is included on a waiting list for accommodation under the Rental Allowance Scheme operated by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Consideration is being given how the range of existing affordable housing mechanisms might be improved or expanded by new initiatives.

Implementation of the revised housing needs assessment process has begun with housing authorities being put on notice of the revised arrangements in May 2007. Full implementation of the new approach to assessing housing need is subject to the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2007. This and other aspects of the social housing reform programme are being advanced in consultation with the social partners through the Housing Forum.

### **31.3.4 Motor Insurance for Young People**

**Transport**

The Government will commission an independent review of the effectiveness of the policy measures introduced on foot of the MIAB report designed to reduce motor insurance costs to look at the impact of these measures on young drivers and make recommendations on how to reduce the cost of insurance for young drivers.

#### **PROGRESS**

**The consultancy contract has been awarded to PA Consulting Group and work on the review has commenced.**

## **31.4 Innovative Measures**

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

### **31.4.1 Integration of Migrant Communities**

**JELR**

A new framework will be finalised to address the broader issue of integration policy. The Government will develop a comprehensive strategy for all legally resident immigrants following consultation with relevant stakeholders including the social partners which will build on and be linked with progress already achieved in the areas of social inclusion and anti-racism. Appropriate co-ordinating mechanisms to implement such a strategy will be developed and the scope for a role for civil society organisations will also be explored.

A range of strategies will also be pursued as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism. Furthermore, racism in the workplace will be proactively addressed in the context of the Anti Racist Workplace Week in keeping with best international practice in this area.

## PROGRESS

The implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism is continuing. In order to ensure that the plan is fully implemented by December 2008, an application has been made for an increase in funding. **A report on core-funding for groups working with minority communities has been finalised and consideration is being given to its publication and implementation.**

The Strategic Monitoring Group, the Equality Authority and the Irish Management Institute (IMI) have established a BIZLAB model to promote the business case for diversity through research, to explore and identify the primary issues in management of cultural diversity and establish a business case for investment in diversity management. The first paper has been published and companies have been identified for further research. **Participants in the Cultural Diversity Bizlab are from a broad range of sectors which include Restaurants; Medical; Financial/Retail; Community Development; IT; Transport; Biotech; Construction and Manufacturing.** The group held its inaugural meeting in June 2007 and will continue to meet at regular intervals. It is expected that this research will be completed in the last quarter of 2008.

Research on the adequacy of Ireland's racist crime legislation is expected to be published in early 2008. The University of Limerick is carrying out this research and is currently working on the final draft. The intercultural health strategy is expected to be launched by the HSE before the end of 2007. Intercultural projects in the education sector, including youth work, are continuing.

A seminar was held in September to highlight achievements to date under NPAR and to look at the future focus. The seminar was attended by up to 100 people representing government departments, non-government bodies and civil society. Informative presentations were given on the National Health Intercultural Strategy, the FAI intercultural programme, Anti- Racism and Diversity Plans being developed in Local Authorities, initiatives in the Garda Síochána, progress in the Education Sector and the Business case for Diversity.

A review of Anti-Racist Workplace Week has been completed. The review examined the week's impact to date and explored what its future direction might be. The findings show that the initiative has been very successful to date and concluded that there was still a need for such an initiative that focuses on the workplace environment. However the conclusions also state that there is a need for a fresher model that should focus more on celebrating diversity and integration. The Anti Racist Workplace Week will take place this year from 5 to 11 November. The partner organisations will consider the review and explore what initiative or product should replace Anti-Racist Workplace Week from 2008 onwards.

There is also a distinct and separate response in this Agreement to tackle exploitation of migrant and other vulnerable workers.

As reported in the last Progress Report, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service has held a major seminar in conjunction with the UNHCR on 1 February of this year to explore strategies in moving towards a cohesive society. A follow-up workshop on developing integration policy will be held in December 2007.

**In June 2007 the Taoiseach appointed a Minister of State with responsibility for the development of Integration policy based in the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with links to the Departments of Justice Equality and Law Reform and Education and Science. The Office of the Minister for Integration is currently being established and staff from the integration side of the Reception and Integration Agency have already been co-located with the new Minister. The Office will be involved in setting up new funding lines to address integration priorities; developing “principles” of integration; bringing Departments together to coordinate integration activities and helping all parties (local communities/local authorities/trade unions/religious groups etc.,) to play their part in building an integrated Irish society.**

**The Minister for Integration also intends to establish a Task Force on Integration to identify key issues affecting immigrant communities; consult widely with immigrants and Irish people; visit communities; examine previous research and report back with recommendations. This Task Force is expected to be set up in 2008 and its recommendations will inform and drive policy development in the integration area.**

### **31.4.2 Social and Economic Participation**

**SFA**

A programme of investment under the NDP 2007-2013 will be introduced to promote participation through activation measures aimed at people of working age. This will work towards providing a single transparent system with a primary focus on the customer and a route map starting with the first point of engagement with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. This will provide an active outcome-focused individual case management of all social welfare customers of working age who are not progressing into employment or accessing training or employment opportunities. There will be consultation with the social partners on how this will be implemented.

#### **PROGRESS**

Implementation of this NDP commitment has significant implications for the Department of Social and Family Affairs. In preparation for that, DSFA is reviewing its current activities to:

- ▶ Identify and disseminate best practice in its Social and Family Support Service
- ▶ Improve activity recording in SFSS
- ▶ Identify improvements needed in data exchange arrangements, mainly with FAS
- ▶ Quantify the potential caseload for activation supports in each administrative area;
- ▶ Identify the types of actions to be undertaken at local and at central support offices
- ▶ Establish a reasonable caseload per person to be deployed on activation work
- ▶ Identify appropriate metrics to measure outputs and outcomes

- ▶ Identify gaps in the current geographic coverage and
- ▶ Identify policy changes that need to be considered to support activation.

**DSFA is also commencing a project supported by the ESF aimed at people with disabilities. It will be undertaken by a cross-agency team lead by DSFA. The high level objective of the proposal entitled “*Supporting Economic Participation by People with Disabilities*” is to develop and test a comprehensive employment strategy based on individual case management of people on disability welfare payments that will have the capacity to increase their rate of employment. Nominations have been sought for the Steering Group from Government Departments and Agencies with appropriate responsibility in this area to oversee the project.**

Plans for new approaches to supporting lone parents are dealt with elsewhere in this document.

Enhanced supports for people on the Live Register will build on the national Employment Action Plan (NEAP) arrangements currently in place. There will be a particular focus on people who have been through the NEAP and who are still on, or who have since returned to, the Live Register.

DSFA is also completing a project on customer profiling with the ESRI, the objective of which is to identify metrics other than duration of unemployment to target additional supports for people at risk of becoming long-term unemployed and to do so much earlier than is possible at present.

A review of work incentives within current social welfare means test provisions has been commissioned by DSFA following consultation with the social partners. Among other things, this will report on the transparency of the social welfare system in facilitating entry into and progression within the workforce, it will identify remaining financial and other barriers facing people of working age who wish to move from welfare to work and will make recommendations for actions to address these barriers to achieve more effective welfare to work transitions. **A draft of this report is expected in the coming weeks.**

**Invitations have issued to the Social Partnership pillars to form a group to oversee developments in this area.**

### **31.4.3 Exploitation of Information and Communications Technology**

**TAO**

A strategic framework on eInclusion is currently being developed by the eInclusion Stakeholders Group. Its priority areas for action are access and connectivity, skills, awareness and content. In this context, a national eInclusion strategy will be developed so that everyone has the opportunity, through encouragement, awareness, support, enablement and participation, to exploit ICTs to improve their quality of life, and the cohesiveness and well-being of their communities. It will be developed in line with the NAPinclusion and the i2010 Initiative – ‘a European Information Society for growth and employment’. The role of intermediaries, including community & voluntary organisations, in reaching the late adopters of technology will be critical to the implementation of this Strategy.

## PROGRESS

The new Knowledge Society Action Plan - “**Future Inclusive**” will be published in late 2007. **Since the last Progress Report, the draft plan has been expanded to incorporate a number of new initiatives. It is intended to submit the draft Action Plan to Government prior to publication.** The main focus of the plan will be on inclusion and Technology in Government.

### 31.4.4 Travellers

JELR

An integrated approach to providing services and supports to Travellers will be developed in line with the recommendations of the Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, taking account of the Second Progress Report of the Traveller Monitoring Committee. The Government and social partners agree to give concentrated attention to achieving progress on this approach, including opportunities for Travellers to participate in employment in the public, private and voluntary sectors and to support measures to improve communication between Travellers and the general population.

## PROGRESS

Traveller Interagency Groups have been established under the supervision of City and County Development Boards to support improved integration of service delivery. A project fund to support selected actions developed by the Interagency Groups is being administered by Pobal. Pilot work on developing access to employment is being coordinated through FAS, with a view to application nationally. The Department of Finance has piloted a Traveller Internship Programme in the Civil Service. An evaluation of this programme was published on 24 October and this will help in the design of further initiatives.

The High Level Group will continue to report on developments to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

An Independent National Traveller Monitoring Committee (NTMAC) has been established which includes statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. This replaces the Traveller Monitoring Committee which examined implementation of the 1995 Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community. The NTMAC has a wide ranging remit and is mandated to report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform every two years. The NTMAC should be well placed to address important underlying issues including the development of positive communication between Travellers, state agencies and the wider settled community.

## 31.5 Governance Framework

SFA

Given the complexity and range of issues, there is a need to identify the appropriate institutional structures to enable us to respond in a coherent and effective way to the challenges which face people of working age and to enable us achieve the outcomes we have identified for this lifecycle group.

### *Monitoring Progress*

Through the Housing Forum the social partners will have a particular role in inputting to policy development in relation to housing and accommodation issues and evaluating outcomes over the period of the agreement.

A structured consultation process on carers' issues will be led by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which will involve an annual meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies.

The eInclusion Stakeholders Group will develop, implement, communicate, and monitor progress on a new national eInclusion strategy which will address those in each lifecycle stage that are digitally excluded. Its membership includes Social Partners, representatives from Government Departments and Agencies, academics, and those engaged in the delivery of eInclusion projects and programmes at local and EU level.

The C&V Pillar will be consulted on the health aspects of this agreement and on their perspectives on the ongoing reform of the health system and the HSE. It is envisaged that this structured consultation will involve quarterly meetings between the C&V Pillar, the Department of Health and Children, the HSE and other Departments as relevant.

### *Research and Data*

The Office for Social Inclusion will continue its work on developing a data strategy to ensure that robust and reliable data is available in a timely manner to enable effective monitoring of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion. The availability of comprehensive data will also assist the formulation of effective evidence-based policies. The Office will also work on the further development of indicators and measures to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation process.

The implementation of the National Health Information Strategy recommendations in respect of the use of a system of a unique patient identifier and the development of an electronic healthcare record will contribute to establishing a holistic picture of individual needs as well as providing data to aid the development of high quality and cost effective health services to address those needs. The development of a system of unique identification for the health service will be considered in the context of a public service wide approach to the development and use of unique identifiers, proposals for which will include discussion with the health sector. This process will inform the preparation of a Health Information Bill which will provide a legislative framework for health information governance.

## **PROGRESS**

### *Carers' Issues*

As outlined in the last Progress Report, the first annual consultation meeting was hosted by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on 21 November 2006. The issues raised at the consultation meeting informed the package of measures for carers announced in Budget 2007.

Stakeholders will be contacted shortly in relation to the next consultation meeting which is planned for November 2007.

### *Research and Data*

The Office for Social Inclusion will continue its work on **promoting the development of** a data strategy to ensure that robust and reliable data is available in a timely manner to enable effective monitoring of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion

A set of social portraits has been developed to inform the NAPinclusion and form an integral part of the OSI data strategy. To date two social portraits have been published: the first on older people and the second on children, **while a third portrait dealing with people of working age will be published around the end of this year.** Further reports in this series will cover people with disabilities and communities, which will include specific vulnerable groups such as Travellers, migrants and ethnic minorities and the homeless. The social portraits also identify those areas and groups in respect of which there are data and information gaps and what is needed to fill these gaps. The set will be revised periodically to ensure that the data remains current.

The issue of **research and data** is also **being** progressed by the reconstituted Technical Advisory Group, **which held its first meeting on 9 October 2007.** Among the issues discussed at this meeting were **data gaps, research regarding social inclusion and poverty measurement and indicators.** An update on this group can be found in the data/information section of the Implementation Arrangements chapter.

TAO

### *National Inclusion Strategy*

The new Knowledge Society Action Plan will be published in late 2007. Inclusion is **one of the two key focus areas in the plan.**

### *Reform of the Health System*

Three structured consultation meetings have been held with the C&V Pillar. A fourth meeting is scheduled for December 2007.

The development of proposals for a public service wide approach to identity management to facilitate access to public services is underway. The health sector is participating in this process.

The HSE has commissioned external consultants to complete a strategic review on establishing a national client index, including the technical systems/ processes/ organisational arrangements needed to support patient registration and integrated health and social care processes. This review will be completed by the end of November 2007 and will inform the approach to establishing such an index. The NHIS notes that a complete, accurate and up-to-date client index is an essential requirement for a unique health identifier.

The unique health identifier is necessary to facilitate the introduction of an electronic healthcare record. Work on developing proposals for legislative framework for information governance has commenced. The Health Information and Quality Authority has a remit in relation to health information development, including the setting of standards. The new Authority will, in addition to the Department of Health & Children and the HSE, have a role in relation to developing the unique health identifier and an electronic health record.

## 32. Older People

### 32.2.1 Pensions/Income Supports

SFA

The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland which provides the supports, where necessary, to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, as well as to live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for older people in Ireland in the context of increased longevity and greater possibilities and expectations for quality of life of older people:

- ▶ Every older person would be encouraged and supported to participate to the greatest extent possible in social and civic life;
- ▶ Every older person would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living;
- ▶ Every older person would have adequate support to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This will involve access to good quality services in the community, including: health, education, transport, housing and security, and;
- ▶ Every older person would, in conformity with their needs and conscious of the high level of disability and disabling conditions amongst this group, have access to a spectrum of care services stretching from support for self-care through support for family and informal carers to formal care in the home, the community or in residential settings. Such care services should ensure the person has opportunities for civic and social engagement at community level.

#### *Actions to be taken*

The Government and social partners agree to work together over a ten-year period to enhance pension provision and income supports including:

- ▶ Future policy in this area will be considered in the context of the National Pensions Review, the outcome of the further work requested in relation to mandatory pensions, the publication of a Green Paper by the Government on pension policy and the views expressed by stakeholders including social partners (See section 8.8 in Part II of Towards 2016);

- ▶ Enhancement of social welfare pensions over the period, having regard to available resources, building on the existing Government commitment for a rate of €200 per week for social welfare pensions to be achieved by 2007;
- ▶ To increase the level of qualified adult allowance for pensioner spouses to the level of the state non-contributory pension;
- ▶ To provide an adequate income in retirement which, as far as possible, is related to pre-retirement income. The target income level suggested in the National Pensions Policy Initiative (1998) was 50% of pre-retirement earnings from all sources, including social welfare supports, private and occupational pensions and savings and investments;
- ▶ Enhance the level of occupational or private pension coverage. The National Pensions Policy Initiative also suggested that 70% of those at work who are 30 years and over needed an occupational or private pension to supplement the social welfare pension if they are to meet the income target. At present just under 59% have the necessary coverage;
- ▶ The role and economic contribution of spouses working on the farm will be recognised within the social insurance system through improved information services on the social welfare implications of families working together; and
- ▶ Following the conclusions of a PPF Working Group on Administrative Individualisation facilities were introduced in October 2002 to allow new pension claimants to have the qualified adult portion of their pension paid direct to their spouse or partner. It is agreed to finalise, without delay, the current examination of the administrative and legal implications of enhancing these arrangements to provide for an increase in the number of personal payments being made through the direct payment of the qualified adult allowance.

## PROGRESS

**The Green Paper on Pensions was published on 17th October 2007. The National Pensions Review and the further report undertaken by the Pensions Board – Special Savings for Retirement – have been major inputs to the Green Paper. An extended consultation process, lasting until mid 2008, will follow publication and the Government is to respond by developing a framework for long-term policy.**

In Budget 2007, the State Pension (Non-Contributory) personal rate of payment was increased by €18 per week (9.9%), bringing the weekly rate to €200 and, thereby, achieving the Government commitment. The State Pension (Contributory) personal rate of payment was increased by €16 per week (8.3%), bringing the weekly rate to €209.30. The new Programme for Government envisages **that the basic State Pension will increase to at least €300 per week by 2012.**

In Budget 2007, the maximum qualified adult rate for contributory pensioner spouses was increased by €23.70 per week (15.9%) bringing the weekly rate to €173 or 86.5% of the target rate. In the new Programme for Government, the Government is committed to increasing the rate of the Qualified Adult Allowance to that of the State Pension (Non-Contributory).

The manner in which the target income level suggested in the National Pensions Policy Initiative (1998) is to be achieved will be considered in the context of the Green Paper referred to above, the consultation process that will follow and the framework for future policy, which the Government will publish at the end of the process.

**Statistics from the Quarterly National Household Survey Q4 2005 show that pensions coverage for the target group has improved to about 62%.** The manner in which **the overall target** is to be achieved will be considered in the context of the Green Paper referred to above, the consultation process that will follow and the framework for future policy, which the Government will publish at the end of the process.

An information leaflet is currently being developed between the Department of Social & Family Affairs and the Revenue Commissioners to set out the social welfare and tax implications of families co-working in a shared business. It has been agreed with the farming representatives that their views and input will feed into this process to ensure the new publication meets with their information needs and is customer orientated. It is hoped to publish the new information leaflet in the second half of 2007.

### *Individualisation*

In October 2002 facilities were introduced to allow new pension claimants to have the qualified adult portion of their pension paid directly to their spouse/ partner. Budget 2007 provided for further enhancements to individualisation by extending direct payments to qualified adults for all new claims to State Pension Transition, State Pension Contributory and State Pension Non-Contributory pensions **and this has been implemented from 24 September 2007. Two payments now issue to all new claimants with a Qualified Adult from that date, one to the claimant and the other to the Qualified Adult, paying each their relevant portion of the pension. Payment can be made as one only at the request of the Qualified Adult.**

## **32.2.2 Long-Term Care Services for Older People**

**HC**

The Government and social partners agree to work together to develop an infrastructure of long-term care services for older people, responding to the demographic trends facing the country, and that the following principles should inform the development of policy in this area:

- ▶ All relevant public services should be designed and delivered in an integrated manner around the needs of the care recipient based on a national standardised needs assessment. Care needs assessments should be available in a timely, consistent, equitable and regionally balanced basis;
- ▶ Access to joined-up, user-friendly, customer-focused service consistent with individual needs;
- ▶ The use of community and home-based care should be maximised and should support the important role of family and informal care;
- ▶ The continued development of sheltered housing options, with varying degrees of care support will be encouraged;

- ▶ Where community and home-based care is not appropriate, quality residential care should be available;
- ▶ There should be appropriate and equitable levels of co-payment by care recipients based on a national standardised financial assessment;
- ▶ The level of state support for residential care should be indifferent as to whether that care is in a public or private facility;
- ▶ No current resident of a nursing home, public or private, should be put at a disadvantage by whatever new co-payment arrangements for residential care are introduced;
- ▶ Information about entitlements and benefits should be clearly set out and communicated to older people, and;
- ▶ The financial model to support any new arrangements must be financially sustainable. Further data collection and evaluation is required on different options and may be a combination of different options including co-payments, additional sources of funding beyond existing taxation sources, a social insurance type arrangement and/or a pre-funding mechanism.

### *Actions to be taken*

The Government and social partners parties agree that the following early steps will be taken to progress this work within the next two years:

- ▶ Additional resources of €150 million in a full year (€110 million in 2006 and €40 million more in 2007) are being allocated to Services for Older People and Palliative Care. Reflecting the new emphasis on home and day care, almost three quarters (€109 million) of the €150 million is being committed to community care supports;
- ▶ The HSE will develop a national standardised care needs assessment which will be completed by the end of 2006, as well as a standardised financial assessment process for the extra 2000 home care packages;
- ▶ A needs analysis of residential care requirements for older people is being undertaken to inform policy in this area and will be completed by September 2006;
- ▶ A planning exercise on staffing requirements for future developments will be undertaken and will be completed during 2007;
- ▶ National protocols for case management for home care packages will be developed by the HSE by end of 2006;
- ▶ A steering committee will be set up to begin the preparatory work of evaluating the effectiveness of the additional home care packages;
- ▶ Work will be taken forward to produce draft guidelines for standards in long-term residential units, both public and private. It is intended to have this draft document prepared and circulated to interested parties, including the social partners, for consultation in Summer 2006. Once agreed, these will be widely disseminated;
- ▶ Under the Health Bill 2006, the Social Service Inspectorate will have an inspectorate role for public and private nursing homes;
- ▶ The HSE has developed a standardised approach to inspection and reporting of private nursing homes across the system which included the development of standardised documentation in all HSE areas. The HSE has begun implementing the new standardised approach in all areas, and;

- ▶ The National Implementation Group on Elder Abuse has been established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report on Elder Abuse. A total of €2m is being allocated to address the issue of elder abuse over 2006 and 2007.

This work will inform future decisions on the structure and financing on long-term care for older people.

The Department of Health & Children will establish a structured consultation with social partners on the development of policy in relation to long-term care issues for older people on the basis of the principles and actions outlined above.

## PROGRESS

### *National Standardised Care Needs Assessment*

The HSE has developed a national standardised care needs assessment and advises that the standardised care needs process is on target to be rolled out by end 2007.

The national standardised care needs assessment which is being rolled out will be carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals. The assessment will recognise that some people may require more assessment by a wider range of health care professionals than others. The HSE advises that the standardised care needs process is on target to be rolled out by end-2007.

### *Community and Home-Based Care*

The additional community supports provided for in Budget 2007 include:

- ▶ 2,000 extra home care packages
- ▶ 780,000 extra hours of home help
- ▶ 1,100 extra day places
- ▶ 800 extra residential care beds.

### *Sheltered Housing*

An additional €0.5m is being allocated to progress the development of sheltered housing for older people. The Cross Departmental Taskforce (CDT) on Sheltered Housing was officially launched on Wednesday 3rd October. The CDT which is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, will develop a detailed policy governing sheltered housing provision for Older People.

### *Residential Care*

The Minister published draft National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People on 25th January 2007. The standards will apply to all residential settings (public, private and voluntary) where older people are cared for and for which registration is required. The draft standards are based on legislation, research findings and best practice.

The draft standards were formally referred to Health Information & Quality Authority (HIQA) for consultation and finalisation. HIQA undertook a public consultation which closed on 17th September 2007. The results of the consultation are currently being finalised. The Authority will then submit final draft standards to the Minister for approval. Following this it is expected that the Minister will make Regulations to give statutory effect to the standards.

A new nursing home support scheme, *A Fair Deal*, was approved by Government and announced in December 2006. The scheme will come into effect on 1st January 2008 and will ensure the same level of State support for public and private nursing home residents. There will be appropriate and equitable levels of co-payment by care recipients based on the principle of ability to pay. A national standardised financial assessment will be used to calculate the care recipient's co-payment.

The Draft Heads of Bill for the Nursing Home Support Scheme were submitted to Government at the end of October and approval was given for the drafting of the Bill. The Bill will include the principle that no current resident of a nursing home, public or private, should be put at a disadvantage by whatever new co-payment arrangements for residential care are introduced.

### *Information campaign*

A guide to services for older people was published in the first quarter of 2007 and distributed to over 400,000 pensioners, including pensioners outside the country. An information campaign was conducted and in excess of a further 50,000 booklets were distributed. Fact sheets, wall charts and guidelines were issued to information givers.

Two locally based pilot projects were established by the Citizens Information Board to develop integrated inter-agency strategies to meet the information needs of older people that might be replicated nationally.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs in partnership with the Department of Social Development and the Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland hosted a joint North / South Information Seminar in October 2007 the theme of which this year was 'Supporting People in Older Life'. The purpose of this seminar was to alert key front line service deliverers on both sides of the border to the initiatives and schemes available to support people in older life.

### *Long term Care*

As outlined in the last Progress Report, a Working Group chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach was established in January 2005. The objective of this Group was to identify the basic policy options for a financially sustainable system of long term care. The report of the Working Group was submitted to Government for consideration and influenced the developments announced, both in the Health and Social Welfare areas, in Budget 2006 and Budget 2007.

The additional supports provided for in Budget 2007 include:

- ▶ 2,000 extra home care packages
- ▶ 780,000 extra hours of home help
- ▶ 1,100 extra day places
- ▶ 800 extra residential care beds.

The HSE in conjunction with Prospectus undertook a needs analysis of residential care requirements for older people. This was submitted to the Department of Health & Children in Autumn 2006. The Department of Health and Children is currently working with the HSE regarding the development of additional bed capacity.

### *Staff Requirements*

A joint HSE/Department of Health and Children working group is currently examining a planning exercise on staffing requirements for future developments. It is anticipated that the group will report to Government by end of 2007.

### *Home Care Packages*

The HSE drew up national guidelines for home care packages (HCP), which were recently approved in principle by the Department. The implementation of these guidelines in the first quarter of 2007 incorporates the case management and related protocols.

A Steering Group comprising of relevant Departments and the HSE was established in July 2007 to oversee an Evaluation of the HCP initiative.

### *Draft Guidelines for Standards in Long-Term Residential Units*

The Minister published draft National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People on 25th January 2007.

The draft standards were formally referred to Health Information & Quality Authority for consultation and finalisation. HIQA undertook a public consultation which closed on 17 September 2007. The results of the consultation are currently being finalised.

### *Nursing Home Inspections*

The Health Act was enacted in April 2007. HIQA was established on a Statutory basis in May 2007. The Health Act, 2007 also provides for the registration and inspection of all nursing homes - public, private and voluntary. Inspections will be carried out by the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services, part of HIQA.

A HSE Working Group produced a report in July 2006 on nursing home inspections and registrations and this currently underpins the inspection process. From July, the inspection reports were made available on the

HSE's website. €6m was made available at the end of 2006 for nursing home inspections (€3m in 2007 and again in 2008) to continue the work initiated in 2006.

The HSE has made important improvements to its nursing home inspections process since the Working Group report was completed. It has been working to standardise the reports and has engaged with the nursing home inspection teams and with the private nursing homes sector. It is now putting in place dedicated Nursing Home Inspection Teams.

HSE advises that in 2006 there were 437 private nursing homes in operation across the country and HSE completed 870 inspections.

### *Elder Abuse*

The Elder Abuse National Implementation Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis. The HSE has recruited 26 out of 32 senior case workers and is continuing to recruit to fill the rest of the posts. The HSE has sought expressions of interest for a national elder abuse research centre.

### *Structured consultation with Social Partners on long term care issues for older people*

Consultation has taken place with the Social Partners and has informed the ongoing policy discussion. It is intended that there will be further consultation as relevant policies are developed.

## **32.2.3 Housing and Accommodation**

**EHLG**

Good quality housing is important to supporting the independence of older people. In some instances, housing and care services delivered in an integrated manner are essential to allowing older people to live at home for as long as possible. In other cases, older people may need to move to alternative accommodation, including sheltered housing with varying levels of support. Therefore, the range of responses include:

- ▶ The availability of a mix of dwelling types of good design across all tenures.
- ▶ For older people on lower incomes, the availability of:
  - Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grants Schemes and the Special Scheme of Housing Aid for the Elderly, which allow people to remain in their own homes;
  - The provision of social housing including through downsizing schemes, and;
  - Specific sheltered housing options.

### *Actions to be taken*

Future actions will include:

- ▶ Ensuring that future Housing Action Plans address special needs in a more strategic manner and specify, in particular, the role of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector in meeting the associated accommodation requirements;

- ▶ Developing and implementing new protocols for inter-agency co-operation where there is a care dimension additional to accommodation needs;
- ▶ Reforming the grant schemes for older people in private housing to improve equity and targeting. This reform will build on the experience of a number of local authorities that have been able to prioritise spending through targeting of priority clients and standardised costs. The new arrangements will be more streamlined, cutting down on administration to make the schemes more accessible and provide a more seamless set of responses to the needs of people with a disability and older people;
- ▶ Services to provide enhanced home security, energy conservation and other measures for vulnerable older people will continue to be a priority activity within the Community Services Programme, and;
- ▶ Sustainable Energy Ireland and the Combat Poverty Agency are undertaking an action research project to improve heating systems and insulation in selected older private dwellings and to monitor the outcomes in terms of improved cost efficiency and household comfort and health levels. The results of this project will assist with the development of future policy in this area and may also be of relevance to the ongoing development of existing housing grant schemes to assist older people and people with a disability.

## PROGRESS

The main research methodology for the research referred to above project is a comprehensive pre and post-intervention household survey. The pre-intervention survey has been completed and remedial work **being carried out is almost complete**. The post-intervention survey is scheduled to get under way in the last quarter of 2007 and results are expected to be ready by March 2008. The final report will provide a detailed economic evaluation of the SEI 'Warmer Homes' scheme and Local Authority central heating programmes, with particular focus on household benefits in the form of reduced energy costs and improved health status.

### *Review of housing adaptation grants.*

**A revised framework of housing adaptation grant schemes to assist older people and people with a disability with their accommodation needs will be implemented on 1 November 2007. The revised schemes will ensure that the available funding is targeted at lower income households and those whose need is greatest.**

### *Sheltered Housing*

A cross-departmental team **has been established** to develop and oversee policy in relation to sheltered housing for older people and agree local structures and protocols for integrated management and delivery of housing and related care services.

## 32.2.4 Ensuring Mobility for Older People

### Transport

Accessibility of transport for older people is vital in terms of accessing health and other services, social networks and remaining active. The Government and social partners are committed to the further development of the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) which is making a very important contribution to supporting community-based living as follows:

- ▶ In developing proposals for the roll-out of the RTI from 2007, particular attention will be paid to the transport needs of rural communities that do not currently have access to public transport, having particular regard to the special transport needs of older people with disabilities, and;
- ▶ Funding for the RTI will be doubled by 2007 (based on the 2005 allocation of €4.5m). Thereafter, funding for rural transport services will be steadily increased; ultimately to a cash level of about four times the 2005 allocation. The Fitzpatrick Review of the RTI will be finalised shortly and, subject to available resources, consideration will be given to the findings of that Review.

## PROGRESS

- ▶ Following the Fitzpatrick Review, the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was launched in February 2007 as a new programme to mainstream the former pilot Rural Transport Initiative (2002-2006) on a permanent basis with significantly increased funding. In line with the Social Partnership Agreement - *Towards 2016*, the Government has made available some €9 million for the Rural Transport Programme in 2007 (compares with €4.5 million in 2005 and €5.1 million in 2006) which it is envisaged will lead to an increase in the frequency of existing services, extended coverage and additional groups of customers accessing rural public transport.
- ▶ It is intended to extend the RTP on a phased basis to ensure nation-wide rural coverage and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 – Transforming Ireland, commits some €90 million to the Rural Transport Programme over its full term.
- ▶ Addressing transport-related social exclusion is a basic principle of the RTP and the provision of transport services for older people and people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is a core element of the Programme. Indeed, all thirty-four community transport groups currently being funded under the RTP provide these services.

### 32.2.5 Ensuring Quality Health Services for Older People

HC

Our approach to health services for older people will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (2001) and Primary Care: A New Direction: A Health System for You (2001).

#### *Priority actions to be pursued include:*

- ▶ Ensuring that older people will be provided with the appropriate access to a full range of health services to suit their needs, including primary care, acute care and mental health care, and;
- ▶ Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children's residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published during the 2006 Autumn session.

## PROGRESS

As outlined in the last Progress Report, last year the government funded the largest ever expansion for older people with a full year cost of €150m. This year a full year package of €255m has been allocated for services for older people. In two years over €400m will be added to services for older people.

The Health Act was enacted in April 2007. HIQA was established on a statutory basis in May 2007. The Health Act, 2007 provides for the registration and inspection of all nursing homes - public, private and voluntary. Inspections will be carried out by the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services, part of HIQA.

### 32.2.6 Promoting Education and Employment Opportunities for Older People

ES

In the context of changing demographic patterns, a key objective for the Government and social partners is to maximise the opportunities for older people to participate in education, employment and other aspects of economic and social life.

This will include:

- ▶ Targeted adult and community educational opportunities. Older people will be further encouraged and supported to access further and higher education and appropriate targets will be set in the context of proposals on life-long learning and access to further and higher education;
- ▶ Older people will be encouraged and supported in actively involving themselves in areas such as family literacy projects, as set out in DEIS, and bringing their knowledge, skills and experience to bear in furthering the aims of such projects;
- ▶ The continued participation of older people in the labour market will be encouraged and facilitated to meet the challenge of an ageing society. A cultural mindset change will be promoted among both employers and employees to encourage older workers to remain in employment. Promotion of training and upskilling of employees, particularly for low-skilled/older workers, will take place to enhance employability in the context of the impact of globalisation. The preventive process will be extended to those aged 55-64 to facilitate unemployed older workers remaining attached to the labour market. This will tie in with the phasing out of the Pre-Retirement Allowance (PRETA);
- ▶ Training and advisory services, including those provided by FÁS, will assist older people who wish to return to the workplace;
- ▶ The exploitation of information and communications technology to improve the quality of life of older people and to assist them in independent living will be encouraged and supported. The national eInclusion Strategy Framework, currently being discussed by the eInclusion Stakeholders Group, will prioritise action in the areas of ICT access and connectivity, ICT skills, awareness of the potential of ICT and how they can be used to assist every older person in their home life, social life, and where appropriate their work life, and;

- ▶ Public information campaigns to tackle ageism serve a useful purpose in raising awareness. The Equality Authority, HSE and the National Council on Ageing and Older people will continue to promote such initiatives over the course this agreement.

## PROGRESS

**Apart from Youthreach for early school-leavers and VTOS for people of working age, there is no upper age limit for access to Adult and Further Education programmes. These programmes comprise: Post Leaving Certificate courses; Adult Literacy; Back to Education Initiative and Community Education.**

Consideration is being given to how best to implement these commitments in partnership with interested parties in the area of Further Education.

With effect from July 2006 the National Employment Action Plan referral process has been extended to new claims from persons aged 55-64 who reach 3 months on the Live Register.

**The phasing out of PRETA will be on a 'No new claims' basis, with effect from 4 July, 2007.**

## 32.3 Innovative Measures

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

### 32.3.1 Pilot Programmes of Care for Older People/ Home Support Packages

HC

Home support packages have already been piloted successfully in a number of HSE Areas. A total of 3,100 (2,000 from Budget 2006) home support packages are seen as pilots to test best models of delivery of these packages and to test their impact on the wider health system. Home support packages provide for a broad range of support personnel in addition to personal and social services. A Steering Committee is being set up to begin the preparatory work of evaluating the effectiveness of the additional home care packages. A key issue is effective integration between housing, care and other supports.

## PROGRESS

**The Steering Committee comprising of representatives of the Department of Health and Children, the HSE and other relevant bodies was established in July 2007 and is progressing the Evaluation process for the HCPs.**

### 32.3.2 Community Intervention Teams

HC

Community Intervention Teams will assist in preventing avoidable hospital admission and the facilitation of early discharge from hospitals. They will operate in addition to existing mainstream community services and they will address issues such as capacity to fast-track non-medical care or supports for an interim period, while mainstream services are being arranged for the patient.

#### PROGRESS

Four Community Intervention Teams (CITs) were developed in 2006. Expenditure on CIT's in the period up to 31st July is €1.5m. The four catchment areas comprise a total population of 850,000 approx.

The specific catchment areas are as follows:

- ▶ Cork City from May 2006 (University College Hospital, Mercy Hospital, and the South Infirmary)
- ▶ Limerick City from November 2006 (Mid-Western Regional Hospital, St. John's Hospital,)
- ▶ Dublin North from November 2006 (Mater Hospital)
- ▶ Dublin South from December 2006 (St. James's Hospital and AMnCH Hospitals – Adelaide & Meath incorporating the National Children's Hospital)

In a high percentage of cases, admission to hospital is avoided through the intervention of the CIT - current statistics indicate that only 11% of patients under the care of the CIT's were referred to hospital and the majority of these were admitted.

The current uptake is at 71% of target. The breakdown of hospital vs community referrals is 72% vs 28%. Target capacity is 3,900 or 75 cases per week.

### 32.4 Governance Framework

HC

The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Social and Family Affairs have lead roles in policy and achieving progress in relation to targets for older people. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government will actively engage on the issues involving older people from an accommodation perspective. The Department of Health & Children will establish a structured consultation with social partners on the development of policy in relation to long-term care issues for older people on the basis of the principles and action outlined above.

The Pensions Board will continue to play a key role in terms of the operation of the Pensions Act and advising on the future development of pensions policy. The Pensions Board will continue to engage actively with the Social Partners. A cross-departmental team on sheltered housing is being established by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to oversee progress in that area. There will be provision for consultation with social partners through the Housing Forum.

### **Monitoring Progress**

Information gaps relating to the service needs of older people are being addressed by the Department of Health and Children with the National Council on Ageing and Older People, HSE and various stakeholders.

As the implementation of this lifecycle approach for older people is further developed, there will be a need and scope for further learning and for the revision of goals and targets in the light of experience.

### **PROGRESS**

Consultation has taken place with the Social Partners and has informed the on-going policy discussion. It is intended that there will be further consultation as relevant policies are developed.

## **33 People with Disabilities**

### **33.2 The National Disability Strategy**

**JELR**

The Government and the social partners agree that the National Disability Strategy represents a comprehensive Strategy for this aspect of the life cycle framework and that implementation of the Strategy should be the focus of policy over the lifetime of the agreement.

The Government will publish a document in the second half of 2007 which will pull together for ease of reference the vision, mission and strategic objectives which have already been agreed and announced by Government under the Strategy. Implementation of the National Disability Strategy will also take account of linkages with other relevant national strategies and policies.

The Strategy includes the Disability Act 2005, six Sectoral Plans, Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the Citizens Information Act, 2007 and a Multi-Annual Investment Programme of close to €900m over the years 2006 to 2009.

It provides the framework for delivery of the long-term outcomes outlined above. The following Departments published their Sectoral Plans on 21 December 2006:

- ▶ Health and Children;
- ▶ Social and Family Affairs;
- ▶ Environment, Heritage and Local Government;
- ▶ Transport;
- ▶ Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, and;
- ▶ Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Each plan sets out, for each of these Departments and the public bodies under their aegis, the programme of measures to be taken in relation to the provision of services for people with specified disabilities.

The plans were launched by the Taoiseach and Government Ministers and laid before each House of the Oireachtas in July 2006. The sectoral plans were subsequently approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas in October 2006, thereby enabling the sectoral plans to come into effect.

The Plans include specific targets, where practicable, and timescales against which progress will be measured. They also address cross-departmental issues in a coherent manner.

## PROGRESS

Detailed consultations were undertaken with stakeholders in relation to each of the sectoral plans. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure a continued constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the Strategy as a whole (See Section 33.4).

Details of the Department's individual sectoral plans were provided in the last Progress Report.

## 33.3 Priority Actions

HC

The parties agree that future policy in relation to people with disabilities will be progressed through the National Disability Strategy with particular expression being provided through sectoral plans currently being developed and other relevant mechanisms. Key issues which will be addressed in these sectoral plans and other aspects of the Strategy include:

1. Assessment for, and access to, appropriate health and education services including residential care, community based care, and mental health services within the framework of the Disability Act, 2005 and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004. Developments will include:
  - ▶ Implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 and implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004;
  - ▶ Person-centred supports will continue to be developed for long stay residents in psychiatric hospitals, with a view to their movement back into community living.
  - ▶ Central to the successful implementation of the National Disability Strategy will be a process of financial accountability. Clear guidelines will be developed to ensure that the investment in the Strategy delivers value for money and real tangible benefits to people with disabilities.
  - ▶ Person centred supports will continue to be provided to 'adults with significant disabilities', having regard to the range of support needs which they require, e.g. nursing, personal assistance, respite, rehabilitation, day activities, etc.

- ▶ In its consideration of the core funding requirements of agencies providing services for people with disabilities, the HSE will be asked to take into account the appropriateness of core funding essential health and personal social services.
- ▶ Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children's residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published during the 2006 Autumn Session.
- ▶ Developing a strategic integrated approach to rehabilitation services within the context of the Multi-Annual Investment Programme with a view to supporting people back into employment, as appropriate, through early intervention and enhanced service provision.

## **PROGRESS**

**The Health Sectoral Plan, which has been developed through an extensive consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, sets out actions which the Department of Health and Children, the HSE and 27 statutory bodies will take to meet their obligations under the Disability Act, 2005.**

**One of the most important targets set in the Health Sectoral Plan is in relation to the arrangements for commencing Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005. This involves assessments of need and service statements for people with disabilities. Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005 commenced for children under 5 with effect from 1st June 2007.**

Part 2 will be commenced in respect of children aged 5 to 18 years in tandem with the implementation of the EPSEN Act, 2004, and the statutory requirement of Part 2 will be extended to adults as soon as possible but no later than 2011.

Service provision for people with disabilities is ongoing and being augmented with increased investment under the Multi Annual Investment Programme, 2006-2009.

As part of the monitoring procedures under the Multi Annual Investment Programme 2006-2009, a protocol was agreed between the Department of Health and Children and the HSE to ensure that specific targeted service provisions as listed in the investment programme for each year are achieved.

The Health Act 2007 provided for the establishment of the Health Information & Quality Authority (HIQA) and HIQA was formally established in May 2007.

The Act establishes the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services within HIQA, with specific functions. The newly appointed Chief Inspector took up post on 1st October 2007.

The Department of Health and Children is considering approaches for developing and implementing a Strategy for Rehabilitation.

Each Local Health Office (LHO) area has been assigned an Assessment Officer, 32 in all. The assignment of a Case Manager (formerly Liaison Officer) in each LHO area is currently underway. The HSE has put in place arrangements within its Complaints System to deal with complaints in relation to the Disability Assessment of Need Process until such time as Disability Complaints Officers can be appointed. An Acting Appeal Officer has also been appointed.

### 33.3 Priority Actions D/ETE

ETE

2. The elaboration of a comprehensive employment strategy for People with Disabilities including a range of measures to promote education, vocational training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including:
  - ▶ Consolidating and progressing vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities;
  - ▶ Exploring the potential for extending the NEAP FÁS referral process to people with disabilities in the context of their special needs and the Government's commitment to mainstreaming. This will include exploring issues of health and welfare entitlements and benefits and examining and addressing the disincentives for people in receipt of income maintenance or secondary payments who wish to participate in training or employment initiatives;
  - ▶ Public service employment in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Act, 2005;
  - ▶ Promoting awareness regarding the employment of people with disabilities and promoting employment retention; and
  - ▶ The suite of materials developed under the Workway initiative will inform future policy and best practice in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

#### PROGRESS

##### *Department of Social and Family Affairs Sectoral Plan*

The potential for extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to people with disabilities is being examined by the Interdepartmental Group with responsibility for the NEAP process, which includes representatives of the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment and FAS.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has submitted a proposal under the European Social Fund Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013 for a cross-agency programme to develop and assess new approaches to promoting participation in the economy on the part of people with disabilities. The initiative will concentrate on people with disabilities who are of working age and in receipt of a social welfare

disability payment but who, are not progressing into or within employment, accessing training, education or together progression opportunities.

### 33.3 Priority Actions D/H&C

HC

3. National Standards will be introduced in respect of specialist health services for people with disabilities, taking into account the draft standards already prepared by the National Disability Authority, together with the report of the Working Group on the development of a Code of Practice for Sheltered Workshops.

#### PROGRESS

##### *Department of Health and Children Sectoral Plan*

At the request of the Department of Health and Children the National Disability Authority produced Draft National Standards for Disability Services. These Draft National Standards have been forwarded to HIQA. Statutory responsibility for the introduction of national standards for disability services now rests with HIQA following the passing of the Health Act, 2007. A National Quality Standards Group is being established by HIQA to develop and agree a set of national standards for services for people with disabilities. The HSE has set up a Working Group to carry out a National Review of the HSE Funded Adult Day Services.

### 33.3 Priority Actions D/S&FA

SFA

4. In terms of ensuring adequate levels of income for people with disabilities, we will work for the continued enhancement and integration of supports in line with overall social welfare commitments and targets. This will include a rationalisation of existing allowances for people with disabilities in the context of the Government's policy of mainstreaming and the proposed transfer of functions from the HSE to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Other issues around cost of disability will be considered following the development of a needs assessment system provided for under Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005.

#### PROGRESS

##### *Department of Social and Family Affairs Sectoral Plan*

In February 2006, the Government decided that income support and maintenance schemes together with associated resources should be transferred to the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA). An Inter-Departmental Group (IDIG) has been established to progress the transfer of the non-Supplementary Welfare Allowance schemes, under the Chairmanship of the Department of Health and Children, with representation from the DSFA and the Health Service Executive.

It is envisaged that the project should be completed by end 2008. A policy review of the schemes designated for transfer is currently being undertaken by the DSFA which will examine, inter alia, the extent to which these schemes address additional costs of disability and how they can be developed and/or rationalised.

The establishment of a Needs Assessment process, as provided for by Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005 (to be commenced) is being progressed by the Department of Health and Children.

### 33.3 Priority Actions D/EH&LG

EHLG

5. Evolving building standards and the potential for advancements in design in the future should lead to general improvements in the accessibility of the Irish housing stock over time. However, it is recognised that people with a disability often have fewer choices in terms of providing for their housing and accommodation needs.

To bring a new focus to addressing these needs, a National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities will be developed as recommended in the NESC 'Housing in Ireland' Report in order to support the provision of tailored housing and housing support to people with disabilities. This would have particular regard to adults with significant disabilities and people who experience mental illness. This will be progressed through the establishment of a National Group under the aegis of the Housing Forum, headed by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and involving the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive, social partners and other relevant stakeholders.

#### PROGRESS

The National Group was formally launched by the Minister of State with special responsibility for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas on 30 October 2007.

### 33.3 Priority Actions D/S&FA

SFA

6. The development of information and advocacy services for people with disabilities. In particular, legislative provision for the introduction of the new personal advocacy service will provide for the assignment of a personal advocate to a person with a disability who is unable or who has difficulty in obtaining a social service without the assistance or support of the personal advocate. This will complement, in a balanced way, the other advocacy and support functions of Comhairle in relation to people with disabilities.

## PROGRESS

### Department of Social and Family Affairs Sectoral Plan

The introduction of a personal advocacy service is provided for in the Citizens Information Act, 2007. The Act assigns additional and enhanced functions to the Citizens Information Board to enable it to introduce a personal advocacy service to individuals, in particular those with a disability. The service will assist the individuals concerned in identifying and understanding their needs and options and assist them in securing their entitlements to social services. Social services are broadly defined and include health, social welfare, education, family support, housing, taxation, citizenship, consumer matters, employment and training, equality, asylum and immigration. It is envisaged that the necessary structures and staffing resources will be in place to enable the new service to be up and running in early 2008.

**The Department of Social and Family Affairs has received approval from the Department of Finance for recruitment of the Director to the Personal Advocacy Service and it is anticipated that this post will be advertised shortly.**

## 33.3 Priority Actions D/Transport

### Transport

7. The question of accessible public transport services will be addressed in the Sectoral Plan being developed by the Department of Transport. The Plan will deal with the accessibility of the range of transport services, including the continued introduction of accessible vehicles, the provision of accessible infrastructure and travel information systems.

## PROGRESS

The Department of Transport's Sectoral Plan, titled *Transport Access for All*, sets out a series of policy objectives and targets for accessible transport across all modes of transport.

As outlined in the last Progress Report, significant resources for public transport accessibility are being provided under Transport 21 and the National Development Plan 2007-2013, to facilitate further progress. Accessibility is being built into new public transport infrastructure projects and funding is also being provided to continue the phased retrofit of existing infrastructure.

*Transport Access for All* is due to be reviewed in 2008.

## 33.4 Governance Framework

JELR

### *Monitoring Progress*

Progress reports will be prepared on sectoral plans after 3 years and the Disability Act will be reviewed after 5 years.

Detailed consultations have been undertaken with stakeholders in relation to each of the sectoral plans being developed. Arrangements have also been put in place to ensure a continued constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the Strategy as a whole.

In addition, each sectoral plan includes monitoring and review procedures. Departments are also required to set out in the sectoral plans the arrangements that will be put in place to monitor the compliance of state bodies and other relevant service providers with the provisions of the Disability Act, 2005.

Departments have published Customer Charters which include commitments in relation to equality and access and are required to report on performance in their Annual reports.

Inclusion of service accessibility and sectoral plan measures where relevant in the strategy statements of all Departments will be considered in the context of the updating of guidelines for the preparation of Departmental Strategy.

The Government has agreed to amend the Cabinet Handbook to incorporate a requirement that all substantive memoranda submitted to Government take account of the impact on people with disabilities. Appropriate guidance will be developed to assist with the proofing requirement in the context of proposals being developed in relation to equality proofing more generally.

The National Disability Authority is a source of advice on disability practice and policy, and in the context of the life-cycle approach, will continue to contribute to the co-ordination and development of actions and priorities in this area. Complementary to the statutory remit of the National Disability Authority is the role which the voluntary disability sector continues to play as an advocacy and service delivery mechanism.

A National Carers' Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by end-2007. There will be appropriate consultation with the social partners. Further actions relating to those with caring responsibilities are set out in Section 31.

### *Research and Data*

The results of the first National Disability Survey, together with the data emerging from the Physical and Sensory and Intellectual Disability Databases will further help in monitoring progress in this area. This will also be enhanced by the collection of aggregate data through the implementation of the needs assessment process under the Disability Act 2005.

The implementation of the National Health Information Strategy recommendations in respect of the use of a system of a unique patient identifier and the development of an electronic healthcare record will contribute to establishing a holistic picture of individual needs as well as providing data to aid the development of high quality and cost effective health services to address those needs.

The National Longitudinal Study of Children will identify, in the first instance, children who have been diagnosed as having a disability by age 9 months, 3 years, 9 years and 13 years. This study will allow for both point prevalence and incidence to be recorded within the child population.

Reporting arrangements have been put in place in relation to spending under the multi-annual investment programme and it is intended that the sectoral plan review process would also be used to measure outcomes under the Strategy.

## **PROGRESS**

**The National Disability Strategy Stakeholder Monitoring Group consisting of senior officials, representatives of organisations working in the disability sector and the National Disability Authority met on 2 July 2007 to consider a Progress Report on the implementation of the National Disability Strategy prepared by senior officials; this Group will meet on a bi-annual basis.**

**The Disability Act, 2005 provides that reports on progress in implementing the Sectoral Plans should be completed at intervals of not more than three years from the date of publication. Due to the complexity of the process for the health services, the Department of Health and Children and the HSE committed to undertaking an annual review of progress in each of the first three years. The Department of Health and Children and the HSE are currently undertaking the first of these reviews.**

**The Guidelines on the Preparation of Strategy Statements for Government Departments specify that the Strategy Statement should be consistent with the National Disability Strategy and Sectoral Plans.**

The Cabinet Handbook has been amended to incorporate a requirement that all substantive memoranda submitted to Government take account of the impact of people with disabilities.

**All relevant departments and agencies will be involved in the development of the national carer's strategy and there will be appropriate consultation with the social partners. Departments are currently in discussions regarding the best way to advance the process.**

The development of proposals for a public service wide approach in relation to unique identifiers is underway. The health sector is participating in this initiative and is considering the proposed approach having regard to the service needs of the sector.

A unique health identifier is necessary to facilitate the introduction of an electronic healthcare record. Work on developing proposals for a legislative framework for information governance has commenced.

**The Health Information and Quality Authority was established in May 2007 on a statutory basis and has a remit in relation to health information development, including the setting of standards. The new Authority will have a role, with the HSE, in relation to both the development of the unique health identifier and an electronic health record.**

### *Research and data*

The HSE has commissioned external consultants to complete a strategic review on establishing a national client index, including the technical systems/processes/organisational arrangements needed to support patient registration and integrated health and social care processes. This review will be completed by the end of November 2007 and will inform the approach to establishing such index. The NHIS notes that a complete, accurate and up-to-date client index is an essential requirement for a unique identifier.

## **34 Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach**

Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach poses a significant challenge to Government and to all other stakeholders. Proposals in relation to monitoring, implementation of this approach, and developing it further in consultation with all the social partners are set out in Chapter Four of *Towards 2016*. However, as highlighted by NESC, particular challenges arise in relation to the role of the C&V Sector and a number of proposals to support this role in the future are set out below.

### **34.1 Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector**

**CRGA**

In pursuance of its objective of supporting sustainable and inclusive communities, the Government recognises the valuable role of the Community & Voluntary sector. The Government is committed to the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the sector as set out in the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity.

The Government commits to implementing the NESC proposal of maximising the contribution of the C&V Sector by deepening the partnership between statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations. The Government will engage with the sector in relation to future frameworks to support this relationship.

The Government recognises that community and voluntary activity forms the very core of a vibrant and inclusive society. The great strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities. While the Government should not seek to control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, it does have a responsibility to provide an enabling framework to help the sector. Where this involves direct supports, a delicate balance must be struck between having a relatively light regulation and maintaining proper accountability.

### *Task Force on Active Citizenship*

TAO

Future policy will take account of the work of the Task Force on Active Citizenship which made a number of recommendations to Government on measures which could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage a greater degree of engagement by citizens in all aspects of life and the growth and development of voluntary organisations as part of a strong civic culture.

Arising from the work of the Task Force, consideration will also be given to the development of appropriate measures and indicators of social capital, and to future approaches in relation to citizenship education and voter participation.

### *Regulation of the Community & Voluntary Sector*

Legislation will be introduced to regulate the charities sector and to introduce governance standards to protect against abuse of charitable status or fraud. The General Scheme for the Charities Regulation Bill 2006 has been published and the Bill is being given priority for drafting.

Government accepts that support will be required for charities to meet their obligations in the new regulatory environment and, in bringing in this new regulation, the Government commits that additional resources to assist the sector in this transition will be made available.

The modalities of this support will be decided following consultation with the C&V sector after the legislation has been approved by the Oireachtas.

## **PROGRESS**

### *Taskforce on Active Citizenship*

The *Taskforce on Active Citizenship* was set up in April 2006 to inform the Government on ways in which it can encourage greater participation, locally and nationally, and to advise us on measures that contribute to the development of strong, civic-minded independent citizens.

In March 2007, the Task Force submitted its final Report to Government in which it outlined a number of measures which could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage greater levels of active citizenship. As outlined in the last Progress Report, the Government accepted the recommendations, in principle, and agreed to establish an Office of Active Citizenship to work with relevant stakeholders in implementing the recommendations over a three-year period. In addition, an Implementation Steering Group will be established, chaired by Ms. Mary Davis, to oversee the work of the Office.

### *Regulation of the Community and Voluntary Sector*

The Charities Bill 2007 was presented to the Dáil in April 2007 with Second Stage was listed for 3rd May. However, following dissolution of the Dáil on 29th April, this did not take place. **The Bill was subsequently restored to the Dáil order paper in the Autumn session, and Second Stage of the Bill commenced on 10th October 2007 in Dáil Éireann.**

As stated in the last Progress Report, the Government accepts that support will be required for charities to meet their obligations in the new regulatory environment and, in bringing in this new regulation, the Government commits that additional resources to assist the sector in this transition will be made available.

The modalities of this support will be decided following consultation with the C&V sector after the legislation has been approved by the Oireachtas.

### *Policy on Volunteering*

The Government will continue to develop policies on volunteering arising from the package of measures initiated in February 2005. A key principle underlying the Government's approach is that volunteering finds meaning and expression at a local level and that supports and funding should seek, as far as possible, to recognise this reality. The Government remains committed to further developing policy to support volunteering, drawing on the experience in delivering these measures and informed by the recommendations of the Task Force on Active Citizenship.

### **PROGRESS**

The 2007 Estimates provided increased funding of €5 million per annum to support volunteering. The Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship recommended that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs should fund one Volunteer Bureau in each local authority area. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has recently increased the number of Volunteer Bureaus from six to twelve and is in negotiations with organisations in a number of other areas.

## **34.2 Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector**

**CRGA**

In the context of implementing this agreement based on a ten-year strategy and focused on delivering the outcomes envisaged in the life-cycle framework in the areas of income, service provision and innovation/participation/activation, the Government acknowledges that the C&V Sector has a central role to play in delivering the outcomes envisaged. Significant funding is currently provided to support both the activities of the sector and to develop the capacity and infrastructure within the sector. This includes a wide range of programmes and measures with an annual cost of over €300m through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, as well as programmes in a range of other Departments.

The Government is committed to appropriately resourcing the sector into the future as part of this agreement. The Government remains committed to reviewing the funding mechanisms for the C&V sector, to identify areas of overlap or gaps. The Government also remains committed to the White Paper principle of providing multi-annual statutory funding.

The Sector's important role in service provision will continue to be funded appropriately where it is delivering services on behalf of the State. This will be reflected through an increase in funding as part of the ongoing expansion in overall expenditure on service delivery in the course of the agreement, subject to budgetary parameters.

In addition to this increase as part of ongoing service expansion, the Government will provide the following specific additional supports to the sector:

- ▶ There will also be increased investment in the Community Services Programme of €30m by 2009.
- ▶ Increased funding of €5m per annum to support volunteering.
- ▶ Increased funding of €10m per annum to support the C&V Sector, including the costs arising from contributing to evidence based policy making, over and above normal activities and programmes.

### *Promoting Social Finance*

**FIN**

Building, in a significant way, on the commitments made in Sustaining Progress and in the Programme for Government, the further development of Social Finance will be supported. Social Finance applies financial instruments to the task of combating social exclusion through the provision of repayable finance to community focused enterprises at all stages of development including start-up. Social Finance will complement the range of measures in place to promote and assist community infrastructure and local development.

This development will include examining the conditions for the development of Social Investment as a practical option for charities, private individuals and socially responsible businesses to invest capital in the social sector through social finance providers. It is also agreed to examine ways in which the positive experience in Ireland with Social Finance may be able to be applied in an international development context.

### *Actions to be taken*

In the next three years based on best international practice and having regard to the Lisbon Agenda, the Government will:

- ▶ Implement the Government's Social Finance Initiative announced in Budget 2006. This includes the establishment of a social investment vehicle that will essentially perform the role of a wholesale supplier of Social Finance funding;
- ▶ Engage with and support existing providers, agencies and established networks of Social Finance providers and any new providers emerging from the sector, and;
- ▶ In conjunction with relevant interests, examine ways to progress the investment of capital in Social Finance providers by charities, private individuals and businesses.

### *Promoting Philanthropy and Philanthropic Activity*

The Government recognises the valuable work being carried out by organisations which promote philanthropy in Ireland and will continue to explore ways to facilitate philanthropic work, strengthen and deepen a culture of philanthropy in Ireland, and maximise the contribution of philanthropy to the common good.

#### **PROGRESS**

An extra €10 million has been provided for the Community Services Programme in the 2007 Estimates. Applications for new projects were sought in 2006, to draw down this additional funding in 2006. 126 new projects were requested to provide business plans, based on their applications. Funding contracts have issued to the majority of these projects. A further request for applications from new projects issued in May of this year. It is expected that decisions on new projects to be funded from 2008 will be made later in the year.

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is currently expanding funding to Volunteer Bureaux in a number of counties. In addition, the Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship which was published in March 2007 has made recommendations which will inform the direction of future policy and funding.

Funding totaling €1 million has been allocated to C&V Pillar organisations to cover the costs arising from their contribution to policy making.

An extra €4 million has been allocated in 2007 to the Scheme for Local Community & Voluntary Groups. A scheme seeking applications for funding from National Organisations in the C & V sector was advertised in May 2007. In excess of 100 applications for funding have been received and are being assessed at present. It is anticipated that decisions on the allocation of this funding will be made by the Minister in October 2007.

**A scheme to provide training and research grants for Community & Voluntary Sector Organisations will be advertised in November.**

### *Promoting Social Finance*

As reported in the last Progress Report, the Government's Social Finance Initiative announced in Budget 2006 has been implemented by the Minister for Finance. On 8 February 2007, under the Initiative, the Minister launched the Social Finance Foundation to manage €25m in funding provided by the Irish banking sector for social investment. The Foundation is essentially performs the role of a wholesale provider of social finance funding to lending agencies active in the social finance field who in turn on-lend to social and developmental projects and social enterprises in local communities.

**The Social Finance Foundation has commenced wholesale lending to accredited Social Lending Organisations. Loans totalling €2.4 million have been approved by the Foundation and €486, 700 of these loans have been drawn down to date.**

The Towards 2016 Social Finance Advisory Group has been established by the Department of the Taoiseach. The Terms of Reference of the Group are to monitor and advise on implementation of the social finance commitments contained in Towards 2016. The Group is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and comprises representatives of all the social partners as well as the Department of Finance, Enterprise Trade & Employment and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The first meeting will take place before the end of November.

### *Promoting Philanthropy and Philanthropic Activity*

Significant progress in this regard has already been made through the Dormant Accounts Flagship initiative. This measure has already managed to attract an impressive **€31.3 million** of private philanthropic cash in response to the allocation of **€13.3 million** from the Dormant Accounts fund in relation to nine flagship projects tackling disadvantage and disability. It is hoped to bring further successful projects to Government shortly as the assessment process allows.

## IV. Implementation Arrangements

### Mechanisms for Implementation

TAO

The Steering Group representing Government and each of the Social Partner Pillars will be reconvened to take overall responsibility for the management of the implementation of the ten-year framework agreement as it applies to the wider non-pay issues. The Steering Group will engage in high-level analysis and focus on these areas where it might add value. This includes “spot-light” issues which have a longer-term focus but which require further work to be done in the first period of the ten-year framework agreement.

The Steering Group will periodically review progress in implementing and further developing the national framework instruments including, in particular, the NSS and the NDP. The Group will also be supported in its work by sub mechanisms already in place or to be established at sectoral level, such as the Housing Forum.

### PROGRESS

As set out in the last Progress Report, the third meeting of the Steering Group was held on 12 July and received and discussed updates from the High Level Group on Manufacturing, on the Children LifeCycle Stage, and the Second Progress Report.

**As a result of discussions at this meeting, Department of the Taoiseach met with the C&V Pillar on a bilateral basis on 24 July to discuss commitments under Section 34 of the agreement.**

**The fourth meeting of the Steering Group took place on 8 October and focused on the People with Disabilities Stage of the LifeCycle and also received and discussed updates on *Towards 2016* housing commitments, the Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the National Reform Programme and the proposal to establish a North/South consultative Forum.**

The sectoral sub-groups e.g. the Housing Forum, the High Level Manufacturing Group and the Public Transport Partnership Forum continue to have a key role in the implementation of *Towards 2016* and in supporting the work of the Steering Group and the relevant monitoring committees and groups are continuing to progress their particular areas of work under the Agreement.

**It is anticipated that the Steering Group will next meet early in 2008.**

The lifecycle approach adopted in this agreement offers the potential of a more streamlined, outcomes-focused approach to monitoring and reporting on progress within social partnership across key national strategies such as the NAPinclusion and NDP 2007-13. It is also envisaged that the next NAPinclusion would also be based around the lifecycle framework. It will also be necessary to ensure an appropriate gender dimension, through linkage to forthcoming National Women's Strategy. This approach will also facilitate communication of progress under these strategies to the wider public.

This streamlined approach will consist of:

- ▶ A single reporting mechanism through an annual Social Inclusion Report to monitor and review progress at each stage of the Lifecycle in the context of this agreement, the forthcoming NAP inclusion and, where appropriate, social inclusion aspects of the NDP (2007-2013). All social partners will be consulted in this process;
- ▶ This process will be co-ordinated by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI). This will include drawing together relevant structures and reports at each stage of the lifecycle, as well as other relevant national strategies;
- ▶ The Report will be presented to the Steering Group which will have an ongoing oversight role in relation to implementation of the lifecycle framework, providing an opportunity for engagement between the social partners in relation to progress under NAPinclusion, NDP and other relevant strategies within the lifecycle framework;
- ▶ The annual Social Inclusion Forum organised by NESF will continue to serve as a structure for wider consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues, and;
- ▶ The OSI will review the role and effectiveness of the Combat Poverty Agency's programmes aimed at facilitating the participation of the community and voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty in the policy-making process. This review will examine the role and effectiveness of the programmes, in the context of the social partnership process and supports made available by other Departments and agencies, with a view to maximising participation and minimising overlaps.

### PROGRESS

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007 - 2016, launched on 21 February 2007, has a strong emphasis on services and activation as a means of tackling social exclusion. It contains an overall poverty elimination goal, 12 high level strategic goals and 153 targets and actions spanning all stages of the lifecycle. **The Plan focuses on delivery and achieving positive outcomes and places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing them and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle.**

**The first annual Social Inclusion Report is in its draft stage and will be launched by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs at the Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) on 15 November 2007. A consultative meeting, to facilitate feedback on the draft report, was held with the Social Partners on 12<sup>th</sup> October.**

The format of the forthcoming SIF will be mainly workshop-focused to maximise the involvement of participants. The workshops will consider four of the twelve high level goals for social inclusion identified in the NAPinclusion relating to:

- ▶ childhood literacy
- ▶ employment and participation of people of working age and people with disabilities
- ▶ community care
- ▶ integration of migrants

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is continuing its review of the role and effectiveness of the Combat Poverty Agency's programmes aimed at facilitating the participation of the community and voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty in the policy-making process.

## Data/Information

CSO

The availability of appropriate data over time is the basic building block of monitoring and the lack of appropriate indicators or data is a barrier to evaluating progress towards the achievement of the outcomes contained in this ten-year framework agreement.

The National Statistics Strategy 2003-2008 provides the strategic framework in which the statistical system is being developed to support evidence based policy making. The ten-year framework agreement will build on the progress that is being made in developing statistical frameworks at national level and data strategies at Departmental level.

The focus for the next phase of development of the statistical system during this agreement will be on the extensive use of unique identifiers linking data relating to specific users of services so as to reduce the administrative burden and compliance costs. The development of data strategies at Departmental level will be extended to include organisations under their aegis and data strategies at local level under the auspices of the County/City Development Board.

The parties note the particular difficulty in relation to measuring and setting targets for income poverty due to the relative newness of the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Nevertheless the parties agree that it is important to set real and achievable targets and agree that the approach to effective poverty measurement will be reviewed in the light of the timing difficulties in relation to EU-SILC and as part of the wider examination of data availability in the lifecycle framework referred to above.

The Office for Social Inclusion will carry this work forward as part of their responsibility for data and technical supports necessary for developing, monitoring and evaluating the NAPinclusion and social inclusion measures in other national strategies. This will include a specific focus on developing the type of data required to underpin the lifecycle approach. The Technical Advisory Group for OSI will be expanded to include technical experts from the social partner pillars.

## PROGRESS

**The first meeting of the reconstituted Office for Social Inclusion Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was held in early October and further meetings are to be scheduled.**

The National Statistics Board Progress Report, on the implementation of the Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008, identified a number of current statistical priorities. They included increased usage of unique identifiers, more cross-Departmental data co-ordination, more data at sub-national level, and improved access to existing statistics.

A cross-departmental group chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment is examining the feasibility of the introduction of a unique business identifier and an associated central business register. Widespread use of a common identifier would reduce the response burden on business and provide more comprehensive data on earnings and other employment related topics. The group last met on 2 October 2007.

A group has been established by the Office of the Minister for Children, in conjunction with the CSO, to examine the data needs in respect of children.

Government Departments are currently finalising their data/statistics strategies. These strategies will, inter alia, identify the data requirements for each stage of the life cycles in *Towards 2016*, thereby ensuring that there is a cross-departmental co-ordinated approach to measuring progress towards meeting these targets, as well as a co-ordinated approach to comprehensively identifying priority data gaps across Government.

**An inter-Departmental group on data strategies met in September and reported that many Departments have made significant recent progress towards finalising their data Strategies in 2007.**

The development of a system of postcodes and small areas was identified as a short-term priority in the NSB report and the Government Programme reiterates the commitment to the introduction of a postcode system for Ireland. Ordnance Survey Ireland has commissioned the National Centre for Geocomputation in Maynooth to develop a set of small areas for Ireland. The CSO proposes to use these areas as an underlying geography for its household surveys in areas such as sample selection and Census data dissemination.

**The CSO is developing a statistical web portal that will contain web links to a wide range of official statistics produced by Government Departments and their Agencies. A prototype website is on schedule to be launched in January 2008.**

## Integrating Delivery at Local Level

EHLG

Delivery of the ambitious ten-year objectives in the agreement will require a more intensive level of co-operation among agencies operating at local level and by Departments and agencies at national level.

The framework of the County and City Development Boards (CDBs) enables partnership and collaboration across statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sector at local level. The CDB structure will be developed and strengthened to ensure that it can operate effectively as a vehicle for supporting a more integrated approach to service delivery at local level. In addition, the pilot social inclusion programme established under the PPF will now be placed on a permanent footing and the programme will be extended to half of all county/city local authorities by end 2008. The C&V Sector's participation in local social partnership structures will be resourced appropriately.

Social Inclusion Monitoring (SIM) groups, representative of local public agencies and local development groups (Area Partnerships, Community Development Programmes) have been established by each CDB to improve co-ordination of social inclusion activities at local level. The work of the SIM groups, including implementation at local level of the commitments contained in this Agreement where appropriate, will be prioritised by the CDBs and supported by relevant Government Departments and national agencies.

### PROGRESS

The Indecon report on the review of the County/City Development Boards and their revised strategies was recently finalised and has been submitted to the Minister.

In July last, ahead of target, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, announced the extension of the Social Inclusion Unit programme to nine more county/city local authorities. The successful local authorities were selected following an objective assessment process, which was overseen by an Inter-Departmental Steering Group, chaired by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

The additional nine local authorities are:

- ▶ Cavan
- ▶ Donegal
- ▶ Fingal
- ▶ Galway City
- ▶ Galway County
- ▶ Meath
- ▶ Monaghan
- ▶ Roscommon
- ▶ South Tipperary

€1.375m was distributed from the Vote of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, during 2007, to support the operation of each of the 34 County/City Community and Voluntary Fora this year.

## **Monitoring and Review Arrangements**

A meeting of all the parties to this ten-year framework agreement with the political process, chaired by the Taoiseach will take place annually.

Quarterly plenary meetings of the four social partner pillars, chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach will be held to review, monitor and report on overall progress in the implementation of the ten-year framework agreement.

A formal review will take place during 2008. This will provide an opportunity to take stock of outcomes achieved in relation to the overall goals and to consider any opportunities arising to refocus and reprioritise.

## **IX. Part Two - Public Service Modernisation**

### **OECD Review of the Irish Public Service**

**TAO**

In December 2006, the Government approved a major review of the Irish Public Service to be undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The two main objectives of the Review are: (1) to benchmark the Public Service in Ireland against other comparable countries; and (2) to make recommendations as to future directions for Public Service reform.

#### **PROGRESS**

To date, there have been eight formal fact-finding missions, involving visits to Dublin and other locations by delegations of OECD staff members and national experts from other countries. In total, the OECD Review Team has met with over seventy stakeholder organisations/groups. The public consultation process on the Review is now complete, 936 submissions were received; 102 from organisations (including a number of Social Partner organisations) and 834 from private individuals. Submissions have been catalogued and analysed by the secretariat in the Department of the Taoiseach, and have been passed to the OECD for consideration as an important supplementary information stream. Work has already commenced on drafting; this phase of the review will be informed by meetings and dialogue between the OECD team, national experts from other countries, the High Level Group, the Consultative Panel, and the ongoing input of the Project Liaison Group. It is expected that the Review will be completed by the end of the year and published early in 2008.





