

Foreword

When we began negotiations last November on a new national agreement, we were faced with three challenges:

- firstly, of ensuring that everybody can feel the benefit of social partnership, recognising that, for many people, poverty and social exclusion are still a stark reality;
- secondly, of bringing about real, tangible improvements in living standards, not only in terms of income but also in terms of the issues affecting the quality of people's lives, such as housing and transport; and
- thirdly, of mastering the challenges posed by the information revolution, globalisation and EU enlargement, which dominate our changing world.

This *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* - the latest in a series of agreements between the Government and the social partners going back to 1987 - will enable Ireland to meet these key challenges.

It will:

- maintain our international competitiveness through policies that encourage enterprise and investment;
- ensure that those in work have a fair share in our increased national prosperity;
- substantially increase the resources allocated to social inclusion; and
- enable us to become a learning, knowledge-based society, with the capacity to embrace with confidence the opportunities offered by technological change.

I believe that if we can go forward with this Programme, we can give everybody in this country a fresh start, fit for the challenges and opportunities of the opening years of the new Millennium.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the many people who took part in the negotiations and who worked so hard to bring about this wide-ranging and very ambitious agreement. We in Government look forward to working closely with the social partners in making it a reality.



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Taoiseach

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Overview

Background

The negotiations on a new national Agreement were formally launched on 9 November, 1999.

The National Economic and Social Council report, *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice*, provided a background for the negotiations, which were wide-ranging and intensive.

The parties to the negotiations included the Government, employers, trade unions, farmers and the community and voluntary sector as follows: Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), Construction Industry Federation (CIF), 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 for the Unemployed, The Community Platform¹, Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI), National Womens' Council of Ireland (NWC), National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Protestant Aid, Small Firms' Association (SFA), Irish Exporters' Association (IEA), Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC) and Chambers of Commerce of Ireland (CCI).

The negotiations have resulted in an Agreement between all the parties to the negotiations over five Operational Frameworks as set out in this *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. The Programme covers a wide range of issues as set out below.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* aims to:

- keep our economy competitive in a rapidly changing world;
- provide a strong basis for further economic prosperity;
- improve the quality of life and living standards for all; and to
- bring about a fairer and more inclusive Ireland.

The core objective of the Programme is to build a fair, inclusive society in Ireland based on:

- a dynamic and competitive economy;
- full employment and the effective elimination of long-term unemployment;
- equal opportunity;
- lifelong learning;
- adaptation to the Information Society;
- the promotion of research and development;
- balanced and sustainable development between and within regions and between urban and rural areas;
- an entrepreneurial culture; and
- Ireland playing its full part in the European Union and the international community.

¹ Currently there are 22 participant organisations in the Community Platform. These are: Community Action Network, Community Workers Co-operative, Conference of Religious of Ireland, European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Focus on Children, Forum of People with Disabilities, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, Irish Association of Older People, National Adult Literacy Agency, Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Irish Rural Link, Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women's Council of Ireland, One Parent Exchange Network, Pavee Point, Threshold, Vincentian Partnership for Justice, St. Vincent de Paul, Women's Aid, Voluntary Drug Treatment Network.

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* consists of five Operational Frameworks:

- Living Standards and Workplace Environment;
- Prosperity and Economic Inclusion;
- Social Inclusion and Equality;
- Successful Adaptation to Continuing Change; and
- Renewing Partnership.

The objective of the Frameworks is twofold:

- to identify and highlight the key new policy initiatives that have been agreed as necessary to achieve the essential objectives set for the Programme; and
- to provide an integrating focus for and the basis for social partner involvement with the relevant Departments and Agencies in the development of policies and the solution of problems arising in the areas covered by the Programme, through the arrangements set out in Framework V.

The Programme is dependent upon achieving an average annual GNP growth rate of about 5.6% over the period of the Agreement and a goal of maintaining significant budgetary surpluses in each year. If economic growth exceeds this level, it may be possible to apply additional resources in a balanced way to accelerate progress towards the priority objectives of this Programme, including social inclusion. Equally, if growth falls below this level, it may be necessary to make more gradual progress.

The framework for addressing poverty and social exclusion is based on the overall view in the NESC Strategy Report on *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice*, which states: “Citizenship rights encompass not only the core civil and political rights and obligations but also social, economic and cultural rights and obligations which are embedded in our political culture and which underpin equality of opportunity and policies on access to education, employment, health, housing and social services.”

The following is a brief overview of the key measures aimed at tackling some of the immediate issues confronting the economy and society at this time.

Competitiveness

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* is anchored on the vital importance of international competitiveness for Ireland’s continuing economic and social progress. It recognises the current domestic and international issues facing Ireland’s competitive position. In order to enhance and sustain Ireland’s competitiveness in the rapidly changing world of global competition, the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* sets out measures to:

- strengthen each of the main enterprise sectors, including small business and the services sector;
- promote indigenous industry including agriculture, agri-food and marine and forestry;
- address skills shortages; and
- accelerate e-commerce infrastructure and the information society.

People on Low Incomes

The Programme addresses the needs of people on low incomes by providing for significant improvements in their living standards. Key measures include:

- The Pay Agreement associated with this Programme will provide for significant minimum increases in each phase;
- A National Minimum Wage: this will be set at a rate of £4.40 from 1 April, 2000, and the Pay Agreement supports increases to £4.70 from 1 July, 2001, and to £5 from 1 October, 2002;
- Reduced Taxation: the personal tax packages will produce substantial increases in take-home pay at all income levels over the period of this Programme;
- Social Welfare Reform: all rates of social welfare will be increased in real terms and substantial progress will be made towards targets for the lower rates and for child benefit set out in Framework III;
- Training: a range of measures will be introduced to upskill the workforce generally, which will have a particular impact on those on low incomes and those returning to the workforce; and
- Pensions: the parties have agreed to co-operate to actively promote improvements in the coverage of occupational pension schemes and the level of State old age pensions will be improved in line with the commitments given in the Review of the Government's *Action Programme for the Millennium*.

Transport

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* recognises that public transport has to be improved and the infrastructure bottleneck has to be overcome to improve people's quality of life and sustain economic growth. Key measures include:

- The largest ever investment programme in our national public transport systems - this aims to provide a well-functioning, integrated public transport system and to reduce travel to work times in congested urban areas;
- A new, faster approach to building our national roads and new motorways;
- A new focus on the quality of the public transport service;
- Setting up a new Public Transport Partnership Forum; and
- Use of Public Private Partnerships to speed up delivery of new transport systems.

Housing

The infrastructure bottleneck also affects the housing market. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* addresses the growing need for social and affordable housing and the need to improve the physical condition of the existing social housing stock. Measures include:

- Establishment of a Housing Forum, including representatives of social partners and relevant Government Departments;
- Expansion of the Local Authority housing programme to deliver 22,000 new Local Authority starts in the four year period, 2000-2003;

- Enacting the Planning and Development Bill to remove obstacles and delays to housing development;
- Increasing voluntary housing output to 5,400 units in the four year period, 2000-2003;
- Continued investment in improvements to Local Authority houses and inner city flat complexes;
- A targeted initiative for homeless people;
- Estate Management Programmes, involving increased tenant participation in partnership with Local Authorities and their staff; and
- A commission will report by June 2000 on measures to reform the private rented residential sector.

Childcare and Family Friendly Policies

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* recognises that policies to support childcare and family life are a cornerstone of future social and economic progress. Accordingly, the Programme aims to:

- Increase childcare places in both private and community sectors;
- Protect the well-being of children by appropriate training of childcare workers and by regulation of childcare provision;
- Increase out-of-school hours childcare services by community groups and school managements; and
- Further national fiscal and social policy measures to reconcile work and family life, including family-friendly policies in employment.

Healthcare

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* recognises the need to provide quality healthcare services for people who are ill or who have disabilities. A greater emphasis will also be placed on improving quality of life through targeted health promotion and preventive strategies. Measures will include:

- Major capital investment to increase the capacity of the health services, both hospital and community based;
- The development of a new Health Promotion Strategy targeted at areas such as smoking, healthy eating, and lifestyle changes;
- The expansion of treatment and rehabilitation services for drug misusers;
- Enhanced services for particular target groups such as women, people with disabilities, older people and Travellers; and
- The development of new models to explore ways of moving further towards 24 hour seven day primary care.

Equality

Equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination are key aspects of a modern, open inclusive society. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* will support practical policies and measures to promote equality through:

- a progressive legislative framework which eliminates discrimination in employment and in services;
- institutions to combat discrimination and to provide redress and support to people experiencing problems;
- further measures to tackle equality issues; and
- a system of equality proofing and ongoing monitoring mechanisms.

The Challenge of Continuing Change

This *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* sees lifelong learning as the key to a future of sustained economic growth and social development at a time of ongoing change. It contains a radical package of lifelong learning measures which will:

- improve early and adult literacy, as well as IT, science and language skills;
- support maximum participation in education and training programmes by all;
- make sure that our education and training courses respond to economic and social needs;
- promote development of the adult learning sector; and
- improve school staffing to meet greatest needs.

The Programme also contains a series of measures designed to speed up Ireland's transition to an Information Society. It includes measures aimed at:

- building people's skills so they can participate in the Information Society;
- fostering an affordable and inclusive Information Society;
- developing Ireland as a centre for e-commerce; and
- encouraging and supporting teleworking.

Agriculture

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* sees Irish agriculture and the agri-food industry remaining a cornerstone of the Irish economy into this new century. It aims to promote a strong, internationally competitive industry and to ensure that farm families enjoy increased living standards in line with the norm in our growing economy. Key measures aim to:

- develop and support a core of full-time farms;
- increase opportunities for sustainable off-farm income;
- ensure an improved farmer age structure;
- move the produce of the agricultural sector up the value chain;

- promote an increased emphasis on the highest environmental, food safety and animal health standards;
- protect Ireland's core agricultural interests in the context of EU enlargement and the WTO negotiations; and
- provide efficient and effective State services to farmers.

Promoting North/South Partnership

The social partners will seek to work in partnership with all relevant interests in realising the vision of the Good Friday Agreement and the structures arising from it through:

- supporting full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement;
- promoting dialogue between the North/South Ministerial Council, the Implementation Bodies and the social partners in the pursuit of common action where mutual benefit is perceived;
- actively examining the best ways by which the views and expertise of the social partners will be most effectively utilised in building co-operation between North and South and between Ireland and Britain;
- developing the opportunities for co-operation as set out in the Common Chapter of the NDP;
- making maximum use of EU funding under INTERREG, other Community Initiatives and the Peace Programme; and
- promoting human rights.

Commitment to the Wider World

In recognition of Ireland's changing relationship with the Wider World, the emphasis of foreign policy will be on:

- participating actively in the EU and other international fora in policy development, particularly with regard to EU enlargement, competitiveness and human rights;
- developing a balanced EU social policy to secure adequate social protection and contribute to the tackling of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion;
- promoting a broad-based round of world-trade negotiations, protecting in particular the balanced outcomes reached under *Agenda 2000*;
- building on the substantial progress of recent years in provision on Overseas Development Assistance; and
- encouraging the international community to take a generous and flexible approach to the heavily indebted poor countries.



Framework I for Living Standards and Workplace Environment

Introduction

Among the key objectives of this Programme are the achievement of higher living standards and improvements in the environment for work. Many and varied issues of policy impact on living standards and on the work environment. These include pay and pensions, social welfare payments, taxation, improved public services and the enhancement of workplace relations through partnership and through the development of equal opportunities and family friendly policies.

On pay, the terms of the Draft Pay Agreement are set out in Annex I¹ and Annex II¹ to this Framework.

The social inclusion package in Framework III includes important initiatives to improve the living standards of those dependant on social welfare.

The other issues are set out in this Framework as follows:

Section 1.1: Taxation

Section 1.2: Pensions

Section 1.3: (a) Enhancing Workplace Relations through Partnership for Competitive Enterprises and
(b) Workplace Environment

Section 1.4: Modernising the Public Service - The Next Phase.

There are four Annexes to this Framework:

Annex I Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Employment between the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Employer Organisations.
Annex II Public Sector Pay
Annex III IBEC/ICTU Framework Agreement on Developing Equal Opportunities at Enterprise Level
Annex IV IBEC/ICTU Framework Agreement for the Development of Family Friendly Policies at the Level of the Enterprise

1.1 Taxation

1. Over the period of this Programme, up to and including Budget 2003, there will be increases in net take home pay, including pay increases, of up to 25% or more.

Personal Taxation

2. The Government and the social partners confirm their support for further tax reform and tax reductions to improve the position of all taxpayers, increase the real take-home pay of those covered by this Programme, especially those with below average earnings, and develop the structure of the tax system to deliver benefits and focus resources in an equitable manner.
3. Tax benefits can be delivered through increased personal tax credits, widening the standard rate band and reductions in the rates at which tax is levied. The Government and the social partners regard increases in tax credits and the development of the tax credit system as the priority areas for resources over the course of this Programme. It is an agreed policy objective of the Government and the social partners that, over time, all those earning the minimum wage will be removed from the tax net.
4. The social partners support the policy of establishing a single standard rate income tax band for all individual tax payers. They also agree that the standard rate income tax band should be kept under review in the light of increases in income levels and the objective of ensuring that, over time, at least 80% of taxpayers are not subject to the higher rate of income tax.
5. In seeking to frame tax policy, the social partners believe that tax reductions should be delivered in the most straightforward, equitable and transparent way; that all taxpayers should be treated equitably under the tax system; and that income from different sources should, as far as possible, be treated in an equivalent way. In this context, Budget tax packages will be poverty proofed. The social partners are convinced that the confidence of taxpayers in the fairness of the system must be maintained by determined action to combat tax evasion and fraud and to reduce the opportunities for tax avoidance. The social partners agree that, in framing tax policy, there is a role for enhanced consultation in examining major tax policy initiatives. The social partners note that the publication of policy papers, such as those prepared for the Tax Strategy Group, can make an important contribution in this regard.

Tackling Tax Evasion and Fraud

6. The social partners are committed to strengthening the role of the existing Monitoring Group and to measures to increase the resources applied to tackling tax and social welfare fraud and evasion. The social partners note the increased powers which have been given to the Revenue Commissioners in the Finance Act, 1999, and the commitment of the Government to make further progress in relation to increasing the efficiency of the tax collection system, taking account of the public and other Inquiries currently under way or recently completed.

Tax Credits

7. The social partners welcome the proposed completion of the move to a full tax credits system and regard the tax credits system as an effective and equitable way in which to deliver tax reductions. The social partners believe that the role, which refundable tax credits can play in the tax and welfare system, should be actively examined. They have agreed that a special Working Group, on the lines of the Tax Credit Working Group set up under *Partnership 2000*, should be established to carry out this examination. This examination will include the possibility of paying the Family Income Supplement (FIS) through the tax system. A progress report will be prepared by the end of 2000.

Employee Share Ownership, Gain Sharing and Profit Sharing

8. The Government and the social partners acknowledge the role of Employee Share-Option Trusts (ESOTs), gain sharing, profit sharing and other financial employee incentives in developing and deepening partnership and in increasing performance and competitiveness. A Consultative Committee, involving ICTU, IBEC and appropriate Government Departments and Agencies, will be established to prepare proposals for consideration in the context of Budget 2001.

Treatment of Work-Related Expenses and Benefits

9. It is recognised that there can be situations where the tax treatment of work-related expenses and benefits under the current regime could lead to unintended effects. There are also important differences between the treatment of work-related expenses incurred by the self-employed and by employees. The social partners have agreed that the issues involved will be reviewed by the appropriate parties, including the Revenue Commissioners, ICTU and IBEC, before Budget 2001.

Discretionary Tax Expenditures

10. The Government will continue to systematically evaluate discretionary tax expenditures to ensure that they meet their objectives in an efficient and equitable manner and make the results of such evaluations publicly available.

Medium Term Tax Policy

11. The Government will request the NESG to review the strategic options for the future of the tax and welfare systems over the next 10 years, taking account of emerging trends and policy objectives. This report will be produced by September 2001.

VAT on Labour Intensive Services

12. The Government confirms its intention to maintain the current position in relation to VAT on labour intensive services and construction, subject to EU requirements. The Government will be pressing for the maintenance of the current VAT regime in relation to labour intensive services and construction in whatever common EU VAT system may emerge in the future.

1.2 Pensions

Objectives

- All retired persons should have an adequate income to enable them to live with dignity and to share in the benefits of economic growth.
- The current level of coverage of occupational pension schemes needs to be increased.
- In the light of the National Pensions Policy Initiative (NPPI) target for occupational pensions coverage of 70% of the total workforce over age 30, the parties agree to co-operate to actively promote improvements in the coverage of occupational pension schemes over the lifetime of this Programme.

Actions

1. The Government has already noted the recommendation of the NPPI Report to increase the social welfare pension over a 5-10 year period to 34% of average industrial earnings. During the period of this Programme, the level of State old age pensions will be improved in line with the commitments given in the Review of the Government's *Action Programme for the Millennium*.
2. New pre-funding arrangements will be established to meet part of the future costs of social welfare and public service pensions. The necessary legislation will be passed in the year 2000.
3. The new Pensions Bill will be published by July 2000. The Bill will provide a framework for the early introduction of Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs). Both employers and unions are committed to promoting the introduction of occupational schemes for those employees without access to such schemes, subject to the costs involved not undermining competitiveness and employment in enterprises. Furthermore, nothing in this Programme shall impede the improvement of schemes where the employers and/or employees concerned are willing and able to meet the cost.
4. A survey of occupational pension coverage will be undertaken in the first fifteen months of this Programme in order to monitor progress towards the NPPI target. Details of the nature and timing of the survey and subsequent reviews will be agreed in consultation with the Pensions Board. The information generated will be reviewed to track the trends in coverage and will enable the extent and effects of the introduction of PRSAs to be monitored.
5. Following Government consideration of the Report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions, which is expected in mid-2000, a Working Group of the public service unions, relevant Government Departments and other appropriate parties will be established to advise on the implementation of the relevant Government decisions with a view to introducing, as quickly as possible, any proposed changes in public service pensions arrangements, including those for low paid workers.

1.3 Workplace Relations and Work Environment

(a) Enhancing Workplace Relations through Partnership for Competitive Enterprises

The Development of Partnership at the Level of the Enterprise

1. The period of economic growth since 1996 has been underpinned by rapid organisational change in enterprises, from which we have learned much about enterprise partnership. Working together to advance enterprise partnership has encouraged the social partners to put in place arrangements which better position them to monitor and support partnership activity in the future.
2. Under *Partnership 2000*, significant progress was made in enterprise partnership:
 - the adoption of new forms of work organisation and greater levels of employee involvement;
 - innovative pilot projects in which employers' associations and unions have deepened knowledge of partnership and designed new approaches, working in conjunction with bodies such as the National Centre for Partnership and the Irish Productivity Centre;
 - programmes for dissemination of partnership approaches learned both from experience of implementation and, importantly, of the EU-funded pilot projects; and
 - innovation in areas of financial involvement.
3. That progress has taken place in large and in small enterprises and in indigenous and in foreign owned companies. Those developments enable the principles set out in Chapter 9 of *Partnership 2000* to be further enhanced and deepened.

Key Objectives

4. The Key objectives are as follows:
 - To enhance organisational capability to contribute to competitive advantage.
 - To improve the environment for work in tandem with the achievement of production and service excellence.
 - To build on existing workplace relationships through the establishment or deepening of the partnership process at enterprise level.

Defining Partnership

5. Enterprise Partnerships are defined as:

'an active relationship based on recognition of a common interest to secure competitiveness, viability and prosperity of the enterprise. It involves a continuing commitment by employees to improvements in quality and efficiency; and the acceptance by employers of employees as stake-holders, with rights and interests to be considered in the context of major decisions affecting their employment.'

Partnership involves common ownership of the resolution of challenges involving the direct participation of employees/representatives and an investment in their training, development and working environment'.

Principles underpinning the Framework for deepening Workplace Partnership

6. A focus on competitiveness

- a focus on competitiveness that includes the means by which organisations can be made more flexible, adaptable, and innovative.

7. Building on progress to date under Partnership 2000

- building on progress already made under *Partnership 2000* to develop the partnership approach at enterprise level through participation to further enhance both the competitiveness of firms and the quality of working life.

8. No one model of partnership

- a range of models and means may be used to design partnership approaches appropriate to the needs of the individual enterprise.

9. Employer and Trade Union Support

- IBEC and ICTU are committed to encouraging and supporting the development of appropriate initiatives at enterprise level.

10. Voluntary nature of the process

- participation by employers and unions in partnership activities, arising from discussion on topics in paragraph 16, will take place on a voluntary basis.

11. Evaluation and monitoring

- ongoing joint monitoring and evaluation as implementation progresses are recognised as key determinants of the effectiveness of improving workplace relations.

Continuing the Development of Partnership Arrangements at the Level of the Enterprise

12. The results of research carried out over the past few years, together with initiatives and programmes undertaken during the period of *Partnership 2000*, confirm the progress that has been made in working towards improved employee relationships. There is also clear evidence of a growing volume of partnership activities at enterprise level. Employers' organisations and trade unions agree, however, that this improvement is not uniform and that greater progress is desirable on a wider scale across the economy in order to increase employee involvement, productivity and employment. They recognise the central importance of agreement at local enterprise level in further developing the partnership process.

13. For this reason, they propose to build on the existing valuable experience gained through the National Centre for Partnership, the PACT project, the SIPTU ADAPT project, the NWO project and other work to learn and disseminate the lessons of partnership.

14. IBEC and ICTU will work together to develop guidelines to assist companies in embarking and successfully putting in place partnership arrangements.

15. The important role of institutional support in this context is recognised and the results of the current evaluation of partnership development will be taken into consideration in this context.

Partnership Topics

16. Chapter 9 of *Partnership 2000* sets out a range of topics for discussion and possible partnership initiatives, activities and arrangements which can be undertaken at enterprise level. IBEC and ICTU confirm these topics as appropriate for discussion and agreed progress, depending on the particular circumstances of the enterprise. In the context of this Programme, the following topics are particularly relevant:

- *competitiveness, adaptability, flexibility and innovation in the enterprise;*
- *better systems of work organisation;*
- *training and personal development which is linked to lifelong learning - (set out in Section 4.1 of Framework IV);*
- *measures to promote equality of opportunity and family friendly working arrangements (set out in Annexes III and IV to this Framework);*
- *problem solving and conflict avoidance;*
- *occupational safety, health and welfare issues, including physical environment improvements;*
- *information and consultation;*
- *time off, facilities and training for staff representatives; and*
- *forms of financial involvement.*

17. The focus of any discussions will be in the context of developing a better understanding of the challenges facing the enterprise and the measures needed to meet those challenges and to ensure that adequate arrangements for communications are in place in the enterprise.

18. (a) Any initiatives or proposals taken directly by management in relation to any of the above topics will be voluntary and, if not resolved, may only be processed further (including reference to third parties) if agreed by all parties to the discussions.

(b) In response to a request from employees or their representatives in relation to the above topics, discussions will take place. If as a result of such discussions, there is no agreement, the matter may only be processed further or referred to third parties if agreed by all parties to the discussions.

In any event, in all circumstances in relation to both (a) and (b) above, co-operation will continue unaffected.

19. In relation to financial involvement, ICTU and IBEC recognise the part which a link between the financial performance of the company and the individual employee plays in developing and deepening partnership and in increasing performance and competitiveness. The schemes in operation include ESOTs, ESOPs, gainsharing, profit sharing and other financial employee incentives. IBEC and ICTU will work together to produce guidelines to support, facilitate and encourage this process.

20. It has been agreed in Paragraph 8 of Section 1.1 of this Framework that a Consultative Committee, involving ICTU, IBEC and appropriate Government Departments and agencies, will be established to prepare proposals for consideration in the context of Budget 2001.

Institutional Supports for Partnership

21. It is clear that employers, employees and unions play the leading role in the development of enterprise partnership and organisational capability. Their work can be facilitated and enhanced by supportive institutional bodies.
22. This approach is one which encourages each organisation to achieve the highest possible standards in its chosen approach to partnership and involvement. It also encourages active, ongoing, comparison between:
 - models of partnership and involvement;
 - practices in the workplace; and
 - strategies for improving enterprise performance and partnership.
23. It is important that the appropriate institutional arrangements and resources are in place to support the development of partnership. The National Centre for Partnership has an important role to play in this process and it is proposed to enhance this role as set out in Section 5.7 in Framework V. The Centre will work with the social partners in supporting the deepening of partnership, including through:
 - deliberation, consensus-building and dissemination;
 - monitoring;
 - research and analysis; and
 - training and facilitation.
24. The role of other organisations in both the public and private sector, which contribute to partnership development, will also be considered in this context.
25. The social partners will consult and make proposals to Government on the detailed arrangements to be put in place to give effect to the strengthened institutional structures required and the relevant funding issues.

(b) Workplace Environment

Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare

Objectives

- To reduce the number of accidents and to underpin the joint responsibility of employers and employees in relation to the prevention of accidents in the workplace and the adoption of a health and safety culture.
- To examine the existing system relating to personal injuries to ensure that realistic and equitable mechanisms exist to deal with personal injuries claims in an efficient and effective manner.

Actions

1. The review of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act will be completed by Autumn, 2000, and will include examination of issues posed by a broad definition of health and welfare at work (e.g. stress and bullying), as well as improved innovative approaches to deterrence, enforcement and consultation.

2. Codes of Practice will be developed in the areas identified by the review, including occupational health, with a view to encouraging health screening and health promotion, and measures will be considered at enterprise level within a partnership framework.
3. The case for additional resources for the HSA and for a fund for joint initiatives within high risk sectors, such as construction, will be examined during 2000, bearing in mind also the responsibilities of employers and employees.
4. Measures will be put in place to address the increasingly complex nature of issues concerning personal injury claims; in particular, the appropriateness of establishing a Compensation Board as an optional alternative to the present system will be examined.
5. The joint IBEC/ICTU Workplace Safety Initiative is acknowledged as a significant vehicle to promote a positive health and safety environment. It is important that its potential is fully developed.

Atypical Workers

6. The Bill to implement the EU Directive on Part Time Work will be introduced in the Oireachtas by June, 2000. Government confirms that the definition of remuneration in the Part Time Workers Directive will include occupational pensions.
7. The Bill to implement the EU Directive on Fixed Term Contracts will be introduced in the Oireachtas in time to permit implementation of the Directive by the July 2001 deadline.
8. Consultation and discussion will continue with IBEC and ICTU on the transposition of both Directives.

Employment Status

9. The Office of the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, in consultation with the social partners, will seek a uniform definition of 'employee', based on clear criteria, which will determine the employment status of an individual.

Right to Bargain

10. The application in practice of the legislation to give effect to the Report of the High Level Group will be monitored by the parties during the course of this Programme.

Worker Participation (State Enterprises)

11. It is recognised that the mechanisms provided for in the Worker Participation (State Enterprises) Acts 1977 and 1988 have contributed to the development of the commercial semi-State companies.
12. The Government, in the first year of this Programme and in consultation with ICTU and IBEC, will review the operation, effectiveness and coverage of the mechanisms established under the Acts. The review will inform decisions affecting the future of Worker Directors in the context of the sale of any semi-State companies covered by the Acts.
13. In the interim, issues arising will continue to be dealt with on a case by case basis and suitable arrangements put in place.

Time off for Union Training

14. During the first year of this Programme, IBEC and ICTU will review their Agreement on the release of worker representatives for union representative training.

1.4 Modernising the Public Service - The Next Phase

Recent Progress

1. Modernising the Public Service is an ongoing challenge that will continue to be addressed during this Programme. The good progress of recent years provides a firm foundation on which to advance further the objectives of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) and enable continuous improvements in service delivery, resource management and organisational responsiveness.
2. The progress made has been based on promoting a strategic management approach, better management of resources, devolution of responsibility and accountability, increasing job satisfaction and openness and transparency in all aspects of service provision, underpinned by the commitment and contribution of public servants to the modernisation process. Complementary initiatives have been implemented to put a stronger emphasis on delivering quality services to meet the needs of recipients and to maximise the use of information and communications technologies. Additional initiatives, aimed at reforming and streamlining the regulatory process and, critically, improving all aspects of human resources management, are under way.
3. The progress to date has been driven by the sectoral strategies developed under SMI. More recently, these have been advanced through the participative structures put in place under *Partnership 2000* to involve public servants at all levels in the change process. The partnership structures are leading, and will increasingly lead, to a better and shared understanding of organisational objectives and ownership of the modernisation process.

Need for Continuous Modernisation

4. While good progress has been made, there is a continuing need for modernisation of the Public Service. The recent NESR Report, *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice*, identified the increasing relevance of the SMI in the current circumstances. The Council added that “*it could be argued that the pace of change arising from SMI to date is in need of being progressed with greater urgency*”. Given the many challenges to maintaining and further advancing the economic and social development of the country as set out elsewhere in this Programme, greater urgency in progressing the modernisation of the Public Service is clearly required. The imperatives that informed the introduction of SMI and the actions to modernise the Public Service under *Partnership 2000* remain and are more valid now than at anytime previously.
5. In particular, meeting the needs of a modern, highly diversified and rapidly growing economy requires a responsive, flexible and innovative Public Service. Increasing globalisation, driven by non-stop technological advances, and the growing demands and expectations of the public, are adding to the pressures on the Public Service. The successful implementation of the National Development Plan and this Programme depends also on an efficient and responsive Public Service. The role of the Public Service remains a crucial one and, increasingly so, in relation to managing the many complex issues which are features of current economic and social development. The quality of the response of the Public Service to these challenging demands will be determined to a large extent by its efficiency and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances. This will be particularly the case in responding to and managing issues of national or regional importance which require the combined effort of two or more organisations or sectors within the Public Service. Equally, the Public Service has to respond better to the aspirations of its staff for more fulfilling work and improved career paths and create workplace conditions and relations which are conducive to increasing the job satisfaction, motivation and commitment of staff. This is relevant also in the context of promoting the Public Service as a preferred employer in the current, highly competitive labour market.

The Strategic Management Initiative

6. The primary objectives of the SMI and the related sectoral strategies continue to drive the modernisation process. These require the Public Service to continue to:
- enhance its contribution to national development;
 - provide excellent services that meet recipients' needs in a timely and efficient manner; and
 - use available resources to best effect.

In furthering these objectives, the progress achieved to date will be consolidated and key initiatives in the areas of service delivery, resource management, regulatory reform and the Information Society will be pursued through the partnership process.

7. The achievement of the SMI objectives relies on the ongoing development and reinforcement of the strategic management approach, allied to a new urgency to realise continuous improvements in resource management and in every aspect of service provision, including policy development and implementation. This will necessitate reviewing and setting clear objectives, and targets for their achievement, in each sector and organisation in the Public Service. Such objectives will take account of Government policies, the National Development Plan, the Action Plan for Implementing the Information Society, this Programme and the sectoral requirements of the SMI modernisation programme. The strategic management framework comprising organisational statements of strategy, business/service planning and performance management provide the means of developing, and monitoring the achievement of, the relevant objectives and targets. These will be underpinned by sectoral service delivery plans, incorporating challenging service standards, which will be developed through the partnership process and in consultation with the users of public services.

Strategic Management Framework

8. Modernisation of the Public Service is a participative process, based on a strategic management approach comprising:
- **A Statement of Strategy**, to inform detailed
 - **Business/Service Planning**, to provide a means of
 - **Managing Performance**, to improve the standard of
 - **Service Delivery**.
9. The **Statement of Strategy** sets out the organisation's goals and high-level objectives, the priorities and strategies to be pursued in achieving them, and how it will use its resources to this end. It defines the organisation's mission and role in the light of the needs of the users of its services and its internal and external operating environment, with a view to setting challenging objectives in relation to the services it delivers, the mode and timing of their delivery, and the use of its resources to meet these objectives. It is essential that staff at all levels are involved in its development to ensure widespread ownership of the outcome within the organisation. The Statement of Strategy normally covers a three-year period and is reviewed at least yearly to ensure its continuing relevance.
10. **Business/Service Planning** translates goals and high-level objectives into more detailed work programmes setting out the objectives and actions that inform the day-to-day activities of work units and staff. Performance indicators or measures, quantitative and/or qualitative as appropriate, are developed to enable the achievement of objectives to be monitored and any needed adjustments made. Business/service planning results in individual and team objectives, providing the basis for managing performance.

11. **Managing performance** is a continuous process directed at achieving the organisation's objectives by ensuring that staff at all levels know what their role is and what is expected of them in terms of targets and standards, are aware of the progress being made and that they have, or can acquire, the knowledge, technical skills and other competencies they need to carry out their work in an efficient and effective manner. Effective management of performance also enables, and assists, staff to realise their full potential. An effective performance management system is concerned with *what has to be achieved and how it is achieved and with helping staff to pursue their work and career aspirations*.
12. Enhancing performance is aimed at improving **service standards**. Improved standards of service follow from a strong focus on the needs of recipients, the setting of challenging standards in service delivery, and making the best use of available resources. In this context, it is essential to provide for consultation with, and feedback from, both the providers and users of the services in order to identify the required improvements and validate the progress being made subsequently in improving service delivery.

Next Phase - Key Objectives

13. The next phase in the modernisation of the Public Service will be to continue to embed the strategic management approach and to achieve a number of key objectives over the period of this Programme. These objectives are:
- the design and implementation of performance management systems;
 - putting in place integrated human resource management strategies;
 - improved organisational flexibility;
 - better targeted training and development; and
 - strengthening organisational capability.
14. Achieving these objectives is essential to underpin quality improvements in service delivery and to enable the Public Service to respond more flexibly to the changing needs of the users of its services. This Programme is designed to establish clear linkages between public service pay and the implementation of the modernisation programme at sectoral and organisational level across the Public Service.

Actions to be pursued at Sectoral Level

15. An outline of the actions to be pursued in the Civil Service and in the education, health and Local Government sectors to realise the key objectives are set out at the end of this section. Corresponding actions will be pursued in other sectors of the Public Service.

Link to Public Service Pay Annex

16. The parties commit themselves, in return for the composite agreement on pay and tax provided for in this Programme, to the delivery of the modernisation programme in the Public Service. In particular, and as indicated in Paragraph 4(c) of Annex II to this Framework on Public Service Pay, certain increase(s) under this Programme will be paid in return for the agreement of specific performance indicators for each sector and the achievement of these sectoral targets, with progress in this regard being assessed at organisational level.

Quality Assurance

17. The performance indicators to be put in place for each sector will be developed and agreed through the partnership structures which were established under *Partnership 2000*. The assessment of verified progress in meeting these objectives will be a matter for the relevant Secretary General, Health Board Chief Executive Officer, County Manager, etc. as appropriate subject to, in the event of disagreement, reference to the arrangements provided for in General Council Report No.1331 in the case of the Civil Service or its agreed equivalent in other sectors.

18. It is accepted that there is a need to provide for appropriate arrangements to ensure quality assured improvements in each sector. It has, accordingly, been agreed to establish a Quality Assurance Group in each sector.¹ The agreed sectoral indicators will be supplied to the relevant Group for confirmation that, in its view, the indicators meet the requirements outlined in this Programme and the associated Pay Agreement, and are sufficiently challenging in that context. At a later stage, as each organisation confirms that its targets have been met, it will submit a report to the Quality Assurance Group outlining the basis upon which the decision had been reached. It would be open to the Group to examine the outcomes in the case of a number of selected organisations. If the Group considers that the indicators or the subsequent progress reports are not satisfactory, they will be referred back to the partnership structures to be reviewed.

Performance Management

19. Achieving continuous improvements in performance will require the implementation of an effective performance management system in each sector and organisation. Implementing such systems, based on clarity of roles and responsibilities and on developing the knowledge, skills and other competencies of individuals and teams, will be a priority. Each sector will develop, as a matter of urgency, a performance management system relevant to its needs and circumstances and implement it over the period of this Programme. Implementation will be underpinned by:

- an acceptable balance between meeting the objectives of the organisation and the development needs of staff at all levels;
- improved training and development focusing on enhancing management and staff skills and competencies to facilitate career and personal development;
- improved measures to ensure equality of opportunity in recruitment, promotion and work practices;
- necessary measures to meet the needs of staff with disabilities in line with the relevant codes of practice;
- a motivating and rewarding working environment; and
- the development of family-friendly working arrangements.

¹ The structure and composition of each Group will be agreed between the parties not later than six months after ratification of this Programme but will include suitable people from outside the sector/public service and, where feasible, representatives of the sector's clients/customers.

Human Resource Management Strategies

20. Sustaining and improving efficiency and effectiveness in a rapidly changing environment require increasingly innovative and flexible human resource management policies and strategies. The implementation of new performance management systems will need to be complemented by the development of integrated strategies addressing all aspects of human resource management. These strategies will be linked to, and be informed by, the overall sectoral and organisational business strategies to ensure alignment between the management of human resources and business strategies and objectives. They must also take account of the aspirations and career development needs of staff. The development of effective strategies will require a refocusing of the existing human resource function in many areas of the Public Service to provide for, among other things, a more strategic approach to human resource management issues and greater involvement by line managers in the management of their staff. An action programme to achieve such refocusing will be an immediate priority.
21. The Public Service needs also, in the light of the current highly competitive labour market, to improve and streamline recruitment procedures and promote itself as a preferred employer if it is to continue to attract and retain high-calibre staff. In this context, the parties to this Programme accept that there are situations where recourse to open recruitment at various levels to, and within, the Public Service is necessary. While open recruitment at the existing levels will continue to be the norm, the parties accept that, in order to acquire skills and expertise which are in short supply within the sector, the need to resort to external recruitment at levels other than the norm can arise and the Public Service must be able to respond to such needs in an efficient and timely way. The parties commit themselves to establishing mechanisms in each sector which, while addressing the concerns of both sides, will be sufficiently flexible to enable decisions to be made in respect of individual cases.

Organisational Flexibility

22. Continuous improvements in performance will require greater organisational adaptability and flexibility in responding to changing service needs and circumstances. Changing consumer preferences and expectations will increasingly influence the timing and mode of delivery of services. Equally, the effective management of complex issues will require prompt and innovative responses necessitating new and more effective approaches to policy formulation and implementation. The parties to this Programme recognise the necessity to examine issues such as new forms of work organisation embracing innovative work practices, multi-grade and cross-stream teams, and flexibility in grading, including broad-banding, complemented by imaginative reward and recognition systems including an examination of gainsharing. It is also recognised that these issues are likely to arise in any event from the Benchmarking exercise agreed to under this Programme. While recognising that there are existing agreements on these issues, the parties are committed to addressing them during the currency of this Programme.

Training and Development

23. Organisational flexibility is heavily dependent on the adaptability and skills of the organisation's staff. Enhancing performance is equally dependent on the knowledge, skills and other competencies of staff being developed to the levels needed to undertake their jobs to best effect and to enable them to realise their potential, enjoy greater job satisfaction and advance their careers. Career-long development and learning are now increasingly important in many areas of the Public Service. The objective must be to ensure that training and development is better targeted at job-related needs and individual and team development, while helping staff with their work and career aspirations. Accordingly, training and development will be integrated with performance management systems and, in turn, aligned with organisations' human resource management strategies. This will result in training and development needs being better defined, enabling them to be addressed in a co-ordinated, coherent manner.

Organisational Capability

24. The strategic management approach and better management of resources are helping to enhance the organisational capability of the Public Service. The need to build better capability at the individual organisation level is critical to improved responsiveness. Strategic goal-setting, devolution of authority and accountability, improved internal management systems and better targeted training and development will make organisations more effective and increase their capability and capacity to respond to changing needs and circumstances. It will be the responsibility of each organisation to use these developments to enhance its capability to anticipate needs; adapt to change; develop, implement and evaluate the required responses; and develop innovative and imaginative ways of motivating staff and managing performance.

Partnership

25. Experience to date of the partnership approach at the organisation level in the Public Service demonstrates its benefits. These include a growing and shared understanding of organisational goals and challenges, the need for and purpose of change, the importance of training and development for both individuals and teams, and the necessity for an open, participative approach to addressing the business and work needs of the organisation. This is borne out by studies which report on the benefits of partnership at the organisation level and highlight good practice and the lessons to be learned. The participative approach, introduced under *Partnership 2000*, will continue to be developed and refined under this Programme to better meet sectoral and organisational needs and circumstances.

1.4.1 Modernisation in the Civil Service

Strategic Management Initiative (SMI)

Considerable progress has been made in advancing and implementing the SMI in the Civil Service. The programme of change for the Civil Service was set out in *Delivering Better Government* (1996), following on from which a series of developments and initiatives has been implemented. These include for each Department and Office:

- publication of Statements of Strategy (1996 and 1998);
- development of business plans;
- publication of Quality Customer Service Plans (1997-99), including standards for service delivery;
- implementation of improved financial management systems, including multi-annual budgeting, systematic programme expenditure reviews and changes to the administrative budget system;
- implementation of freedom of information (April 1998), and
- publication of annual reports (commenced in 1999).

Significant, new legislation - the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and Public Service Management Act 1997 - was introduced to underpin key elements of the modernisation process. The Freedom of Information Act ensures openness, transparency and accountability in all aspects of service delivery. The strategic management framework is underpinned by the Public Service Management Act which provides formally for devolution of authority and responsibility within Departments and Offices, the preparation and publication of Statements of Strategy (at least every three years), business planning and the publication of annual reports.

Other developments include a new performance management system, which was designed in consultation with staff and unions, and consideration of a wide range of human resource management issues with a view to updating and modernising existing practices and policies. Information technology developments to support improvements in service delivery and give effect to the Government's *Action Plan for Implementing the Information Society* are also being pursued on an ongoing basis.

Partnership Structures

Under *Partnership 2000*, participative structures have been put in place in each Department and Office to facilitate involvement by management, staff and unions in the change process, in ongoing business developments and in identifying and addressing organisational and work-related issues and challenges generally. Action programmes to give effect to SMI and change initiatives were agreed within the partnership structures to comply with the local bargaining clause of the *Partnership 2000 Pay Agreement*.

Next Steps

The Civil Service is committed to progressing further the SMI/*Delivering Better Government* programme of change during the period of this Programme. Key objectives will be:

- implementation of the performance management system in each Department and Office commencing on 1 March 2000;

- implementation of regulatory reform (announced by the Taoiseach in July 1999);
- further development of the financial management modernisation programme, including in particular the design and roll-out of a new accounting system (i.e. Generic Model);
- further development and more effective use of the systematic reviews of public expenditure;
- further improvements in service standards, including more extensive consultation with, and feedback from, the users of services, and roll-over of the Quality Customer Service Plans;
- roll-out and implementation of a range of human resource management initiatives including, among other things, recruitment, induction, promotion, tenure, values and ethics, work practices and refocusing of the human resource management function;
- development and implementation of improved measures to support equality of opportunity in recruitment, promotion and work practices; and
- continued development of information and communications technology systems to support more flexible service delivery and give effect to electronic-government in advancing and supporting Information Society developments.

Initiatives to improve policy analysis and formulation and the management of complex policy issues will also be pursued. In particular, improved and more extensive use will be made of techniques to anticipate and explore better the breadth and depth of emerging policy issues.

Training and Development

The Civil Service is committed to enhanced training and development for management and staff at all levels in the context of implementing and developing the performance management system, ensuring better quality in service delivery and enhancing policy analysis, development and implementation. A spend of 4 per cent of payroll on training and development by 2003 will be the aim, compared with a spend of 2 per cent in 1998.

Partnership

Implementation of the modernisation programme will continue to be advanced under the partnership arrangements now in place. These arrangements will be developed and improved in consultations between management and unions. The review provided for under the Civil Service agreement on partnership will be undertaken and will consider, among other things, the support needed to facilitate the continued development of the partnership structures.

1.4.2 Modernisation in the Education Sector

The education partners are committed to improving the quality of education provided in our education institutions. An important factor in improving performance is the development of performance management systems.

First and Second-level Schools

In the case of first and second-level schools, the basic element of a performance management system is contained in the School Development Planning initiative. Such a system will be fully developed through the following procedures.

Every school will partake in a school development planning process involving a school plan dealing with total curriculum and with the organisation of all the school's resources including staff, space, facilities, equipment, time and finance. It will also include the school's policies on a diverse range of administrative and organisational issues and, in accordance with the Education Act, 1998, it will set down "the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school and the measures which the school proposed to take to achieve those objectives." (It is noted that the Education Act, 1998 provides that every school must prepare a School Plan).

The School Plan is a collaborative process and its preparation must therefore involve consultation with all the partners including parents. A factor which must be taken specifically into account is how the needs of parents in regard to information on their children's education might be more conveniently catered for.

Over the period of the Plan, it will be subject to ongoing review internally and at the end of the period it will be evaluated in relation to the extent to which the objectives it set out have been achieved.

School Development Planning, School Self Review and an assessment of the Plan's outcomes are designed to enhance school performance through the involvement of all the education partners. In summary these processes, working together, will provide that every school:

- will assess its current strengths and weaknesses;
- will set effective and realistic objectives for building on its strengths and addressing its weaknesses;
- will monitor and review its objectives on an ongoing basis; and
- will, at the end of the period of its plan, evaluate the extent to which it has achieved its objectives.

The Department of Education and Science will engage in the assessment of the Plan's outcomes and advise on future plans. During this process, good practice will be identified and affirmed and a support programme will, where necessary, be put in place.

Other Education Institutions

In the other areas of the education sector, e.g. the Vocational Education Committees, the third level and other institutions, it will be a matter for each institution to develop its own plans. These plans will provide for:

- the adoption of a strategic management approach;
- the implementation of Performance Management;
- the development of human resource management strategies;
- the improvement of organisational flexibility; and
- the expansion of training and development programmes, as set out in paragraph 23 of Section 1.4 of this Framework.

1.4.3 Modernisation in the Health Sector

Introduction

The Health Strategy, *Shaping a Healthier Future*, launched in 1994 had at its core the principles of:

- Equity;
- Quality; and
- Accountability.

While very significant progress has been made towards achieving these principles through major initiatives such as the Cancer Strategy, Cardiovascular Health Strategy and the establishment of new organisations with defined roles (OHM, HSEA, ERHA), there is still significant work to be done to deliver the remaining areas.

The health care area is quite different from the commercial sector. The relationship between the patient and the health care institution or provider is usually much different to that of the customer in the commercial area who can often make choices and 'shop around'. These important differences underline the need for a conscious patient-focused approach to realigning services in a way that puts patients first.

The emphasis on patient care is an accepted cultural ethos of health service staff. A performance management approach to building on the quality of service for patients, utilising partnership structures, will be a unifying force for both management and staff.

Service Planning/Business Planning is an essential element of any system of performance management. As a first step, therefore, it will be necessary to ascertain the views of the public regarding their experiences of the health service. This will focus on the users of the service.

Service Delivery Plans for the health service have been in use for some years. Significant work has been done in improving the service planning process and current plans are now suitable for the creation of conditions which will allow performance management systems to be put in place.

Aside from setting out the high-level objectives of the organisation, the service planning process will allow team objectives to be set which will reflect what the patients require from the unit and from the organisation. In order to guide the preparation of future plans, it is essential to validate the improvements made.

Service Plans should lend themselves to being used as a management tool for monitoring the performance of the organisation.

It is also essential, when drawing up the Service Plans, to involve staff at every level of the organisation so that they can have a meaningful input into the process at unit level. Advancing these objectives will require working through the partnership process at both national and local level. The Service Plan process should therefore be significantly improved through the contribution of staff who are in closest contact with members of the public.

Traditional work patterns in what is a 24 hour service have grown up around normal office hours attendance regimes. There is a need to create a shift in the way the service is delivered. We must move from the present position where institutions are often configured around the way people have traditionally done things to one where the patient is at the centre of how the service is organised. There is a need to develop performance standards against which the level and quality of service to members of the public can be measured.

Key Elements of a Change Programme for the Health Sector

The next phase of implementation will require a carefully co-ordinated and focused change implementation programme which would have within it, for example, a number of elements, as set out below:

- Extending **hours of service** to the public;
- Co-ordinated action across a broad range of disciplines to achieve specified targets for reduction of **waiting times** and numbers of people waiting for procedures;
- Introduction of a strengthening of **audit of patient satisfaction** within the health care system and the establishment of measurable standards for patient satisfaction;
- Improved **communication** between patients and providers in relation to information on treatment processes, updating of current status, and other relevant information sought by patients and their families;
- Working in partnership with the Service Planning process and co-operating with the ongoing measurement and validation of **performance indicators** as agreed by each agency;
- Achieving a greater **flexibility of skill mix** by utilising a continuum of health care competencies (e.g. developing role of nurse practitioners, nurse-led clinics, etc.);
- Setting clear and measurable targets for the uptake of **vaccination/immunisation programmes**;
- Co-operation in the introduction of **information systems** in the areas of personnel, payroll, attendance, recruitment and superannuation (**PPARS**);
- Agreed **human resource measures** for a more open recruitment system (as per paragraph 21 of Section 1.4), improvements in staff retention, effective deployment of staff, speed of vacancy filling and staff absenteeism, and workforce planning; and
- Co-operating with a comprehensive overhaul of the provisions of personnel policies (circular 10/71) to progress positively the HR agenda in the health service.

These are practical examples of areas in which real progress, resulting in improvements in services for patients, can take place.

Any of these performance measures must, of course, be agreed between the social partners at health sector level. The most suitable vehicle for this would be the partnership arrangements which are now being developed both nationally and locally.

Performance management systems would then operate at agency level where senior management and staff would agree arrangements for setting targets and monitoring outcomes.

1.4.4 Modernisation in the Local Government Sector

Introduction

The Local Government sector has a clear commitment to placing ever greater emphasis on performance and on the delivery of quality services. This is reflected in *Better Local Government - a Programme for Change (BLG)*, in the strategic plans being developed under SMI and in the new financial management system being introduced in the Local Authorities. The local bargaining agreement reached on the application of a 2% increase for all employees of Local Authorities, in accordance with provisions of paragraph 4 of the Annex on public service pay in *Partnership 2000*, reaffirmed the Local Authority sector's partnership approach.

Explicitly, commitment was given to the provisions of Chapter 10 of *Partnership 2000* including continuing flexibility and responsiveness in order "to respond more rapidly to the changing needs and preferences of the recipient of its services", as was a commitment by management to respond "to staff aspirations for more fulfilling work and improved career paths", and to provide training and development as part of the process of modernisation.

Following on from this, significant progress has been made in the Local Authority service on the introduction of a partnership approach. Facilitators have been appointed in each local authority, charged with establishing local partnership committees and implementing change through incorporating elements of Chapter 10 of *Partnership 2000*, and progressing the Local Authority strategic plan.

Framework for Development

The Local Authorities are committed to the implementation of the Government's policy for a strengthened and reinvigorated local government system which will be at the centre of the provision of a wide range of services to the community at the level of the county and city.

The core principles of this policy are to serve the customer better and to enhance local democracy. To meet these principles, Local Authorities are bringing their services closer to the customer, strengthening management and staffing structures, providing higher levels of staff development and training and eliminating obstacles to flexibility and efficiency such as the dual structure. It is also recognised that customer needs and demands require additional flexibilities including extended opening hours and arrangements for carrying out activities such as street cleaning, refuse collection and road maintenance at times which cause the least interference with the public.

The ultimate test of the efficacy of the new initiatives in the Local Government sector will be improved efficiency and high levels of customer satisfaction. The new Local Authority financial management system, which is being developed and is currently being tested on a pilot basis in a number of Local Authorities, will enable performance indicators to be developed which will identify best practice and encourage Local Authorities to improve their own performance levels.

The principles of customer service and local democracy have always been at the centre of the local government service, through the intimate involvement of local public representatives in the operation of their authorities. This unique feature will be strengthened through the involvement of representatives of community and other interest groups in the strategic policy committees (SPC's) which form a core element of Government policy. The SPC's will play a major role in determining the Local Authority's policy and in overseeing the implementation of that policy. Local Authorities are also developing a variety of means by which customer satisfaction and levels of performance can be measured.

SMI/Performance Management

Performance management is a step in the SMI process. Strategy statements and business plans are a necessary foundation for performance management. These define the objectives and individual and team responsibilities and will provide the basis for measurement of achievement.

In accordance with the SMI process, Local Authorities generally have prepared and adopted strategic management plans which incorporate:

- Mission statement;
- A comprehensive set of objectives; and
- The strategies necessary to achieve these objectives.

Action/business plans to deliver the content of the strategic management plans have been or are being completed. These action/business plans, which will have a strong customer service focus, incorporate four core elements:

- The objectives and strategies identified in the strategic management plan;
- The activities to be carried out to meet the objectives and strategies in the strategic management plan;
- Targets to achieve the required level of performance; and
- A set of performance indicators.

Following on from this, the next step in the process is the systematic development and implementation of a performance management system to implement the strategic management plan and business plans. A sector wide performance management advisory and monitoring group is being set up under the auspices of the Local Government Management Services Board to oversee the implementation of the system. This group will have a central co-ordinating and advisory service role for local authorities to assist in the implementation of performance management in the local authority sector. The group will look at issues such as:

- Performance planning;
- Ongoing management of performance; and
- Annual performance and development review.

Annex I

Draft Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Employment between the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Employer Organisations

Introduction

1. This Agreement is part of a composite agreement on pay, conditions of employment, tax reform, lifelong learning and family friendly policies, including childcare. The tax elements are set out in Section 1.1, while the framework agreements on lifelong learning and childcare are set out in Sections 4.1 and 4.3 respectively. The parties to this Agreement accept as essential, adherence to the terms of the Agreement with particular reference to the clauses on pay, economic, competitive and commercial circumstances, partnership and industrial peace and stabilisation and are committed to:

- improving living standards through pay increases and significant tax reform;
- full and ongoing co-operation with change and the need for continued adaptation and flexibility to maintain and improve competitiveness;
- increasing productivity and employment;
- the development of workplace partnership, lifelong learning, family friendly policies and equal opportunities at workplace level; and
- the continued delivery of the modernisation programme in the Public Service.

Date of Implementation and Duration

2. Except where otherwise agreed at local level, this Agreement shall come into force on the expiry of the Pay Agreement under *Partnership 2000* in each individual employment or industry and shall last for two years and nine months.

Pay

3. It is agreed by the parties that basic pay shall be increased by the following amounts:
- 5½% of basic pay for the first 12 months of the Agreement as it applies in each particular employment or industry;
 - 5½% of basic pay for the second 12 months of the Agreement as it applies in each particular employment or industry; and
 - 4% of basic pay for the next 9 months of the Agreement as it applies in each particular employment or industry.

4. Where the application of this formula would result in increases in basic pay for full-time adult employees of less than:

- £12 per week in the first phase;
- £11 per week in the second phase; and
- £9 per week in the third phase

the appropriate percentage increase for these particular phases will be adjusted to these levels. These minima will apply on a pro-rata basis to part-time employees unless existing agreements apply more favourable terms.

Statutory Minimum Pay

5. It is agreed to put to Government a position accepted by both ICTU and IBEC that the National Minimum Wage be adjusted to £4.70 from 1 July, 2001, and to £5 from 1 October, 2002. The parties accept in this connection the terms of Section 39 of the National Minimum Wage Bill.
6. The parties agree that no repercussive claims related to or following on from the application of the National Minimum Wage will be made by trade unions or employees.

Economic, Competitive and Commercial Circumstances

7. Clause 3 shall be negotiated between employers and unions through normal industrial relations machinery, due regard being had to the economic, commercial and employment circumstances of the particular firm, employment or industry, whether arising from exchange rate movements or otherwise. The need for ongoing co-operation with change and for continued adaptation and flexibility accepted by the parties may include necessary measures to sustain competitiveness and employment on the implementation of Clause 3.

Pension and Sick Pay Schemes

8. Unions are not precluded by Clause 11 from making claims for the introduction of pension or sick pay schemes where none exist or from making claims for the improvement of such schemes where these are substantially out of line with appropriate standards in comparable employments.¹
9. Having regard to the cost and other implications of pension and sick pay schemes, negotiations on these matters shall be governed by the capacity of the enterprise to absorb the cost involved and, additionally, in the case of sick pay schemes, the implications for attendance.
10. Agreements under Clauses 8 & 9 may therefore include appropriate phasing and other arrangements (which may exceed the timescale of this Agreement) to take account of these considerations.

¹ Arrangements will be agreed to facilitate the introduction of the PRSAs in accordance with the National Pensions Policy Initiative. Insofar as the public service is concerned, no claims shall be submitted or processed further pending the Report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions.

Industrial Peace and Stabilisation

11. This Agreement:

- provides that no cost-increasing claims by trade unions or employees for improvements in pay or conditions of employment, other than those provided in Clauses 3 & 5, will be made or processed during the currency of the Agreement;
- commits employers, trade unions and employees to promoting industrial harmony; and
- precludes strikes or other forms of industrial action by trade unions, employees or employers in respect of any matters covered by this Agreement, where the employer or trade union concerned is acting in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.

12. Where the parties cannot reach agreement through negotiations on any matter covered by this Agreement, they shall jointly refer the matter to the LRC/Labour Court or, where appropriate, to other agreed machinery. Where a dispute arises as to what constitutes a breach of the Agreement, that will be referred to the Labour Court and the parties shall agree to comply with its findings.

Partnership

13. The Parties re-commit themselves to extending and deepening the Partnership process set out in Chapter 9 of *Partnership 2000*. As set out in Section 1.3 of the Programme, the principles of partnership have been developed further in the light of experience under *Partnership 2000*. The Parties support the further development of the process in the light of the positive experience to date through discussions initiated at enterprise level between management and employees/trade unions.

Annex II

Public Service¹ Pay

1. The parties commit themselves to full and ongoing co-operation with change, continued adaptation and flexibility and the delivery of the modernisation programme in the Public Service set out in Section 1.4, in addition to the other issues mentioned in the Introduction to Annex I.
2. It is accepted that change is a requirement of a modern high-performing public service and is not, in itself, a basis for claims for improvements in pay and conditions.
3. Section 1.4 of the Programme and the associated Sections outline the key objectives to be achieved over the lifetime of the Programme in relation to the ongoing modernisation of the public service. As indicated therein, this will involve:
 - ongoing implementation of Statements of Strategy/Service Delivery Plans within each sector based on the relevant policy documents and the SMI modernisation programme;
 - design and implementation of performance management systems to support implementation; and
 - implementation of challenging service standards set in consultation with the recipients of the service.

It will also require greater organisational adaptability and flexibility in responding to service needs and that issues such as changes in grading, broadbanding and teamworking be addressed.

4. It is agreed that:
 - (a) pay increases shall be calculated on the basis of:-
 - Phase 1 5½% of basic pay for the first 12 months of this Agreement;
 - Phase 2 5½% of basic pay for the next 12 months; and
 - Phase 3 4% of basic pay for the next 9 months.
 - (b) Where the application of this formula would result in increases in basic pay for full-time adult employees of less than:
 - (i) £12 per week in the first phase;
 - (ii) £11 per week in the second phase; and
 - (iii) £9 per week in the third phase

the appropriate percentage increase for these particular phases will be adjusted to these levels. These minima will apply on a pro-rata basis to part-time employees unless existing agreements apply more favourable terms.

- (c) the third phase increase of 4% will be paid not earlier than 1 October 2002 and will be dependent on the specific performance indicators as outlined at paragraph 3 above having been established by 1 April 2001, and these sectoral targets having been achieved by 1 April 2002, with progress in this regard having been assessed at organisational level, by 1 October 2002.

¹ the term "public service" does not include commercial State sponsored bodies.

5. A mechanism providing for independent quality assurance of the agreed performance indicators and the achievement of these targets has been agreed between the parties.
6. It is accepted in the context of the agreement between the parties on the establishment of the Public Service Benchmarking Body, that any outstanding claims or commitments in relation to pay, analogue or other reviews, in whatever form, by or in respect of any grade, group or category will be subsumed within the benchmarking exercise and will be dealt with solely in that context.

Relationship between Pay in the Public Service and in the Private Sector

Relating Public Service Pay to the Market

7. The need to find an appropriate way of benchmarking Public Service pay to the market is accepted by the parties to this Agreement. This is necessary to ensure, particularly in the context of the current rapidly changing labour market situation, that the public service is in a position to attract and retain the staff needed to deliver the quantum and quality of services that the public are entitled to expect. Such an approach would also provide a basis for ensuring equity between employees in the public service and the private sector.
8. The traditional approach to pay reviews in the Public Service, based on analogues and relativities, has given rise to serious difficulties in the past. The parties are committed, therefore, to making arrangements for an alternative approach which will be grounded in a coherent and broadly-based comparison with jobs and pay rates across the economy, which can be dealt with within the overall context of programmes agreed between the social partners at national level.²

Benchmarking Body

9. A Public Service Benchmarking Body will be established within three months of the commencement of this Agreement to examine Public Service pay and jobs in the manner outlined below and to make recommendations thereon.
10. The benchmarking exercise will cover both pay and jobs, i.e. it will examine existing roles, duties, responsibilities, etc. in the public service and across the economy, and not just the pay rates applicable in the private sector to jobs with similar titles to, and superficially similar roles as, jobs in the public service.
11. It would be impractical to examine every single grade across the entire Public Service within the agreed time frame. Instead, the Body will be asked to examine all the major groups and categories within each sector. A list of such groups will be agreed between the parties, together with details of how the remaining grades will be dealt with in the light of the outcome of the benchmarking exercise; a copy of this agreement will be supplied to the Benchmarking Body.
12. The Benchmarking Body will be asked to arrange in-depth and comprehensive research, examination and analysis of pay levels across the private sector. This will include an examination of overall public service and private sector pay levels as well as an examination of the pay rates of particular occupational groups (such as clerical/administrative staff, engineers and technicians) and other identifiable groupings (such as graduate recruits).
13. This examination will cover the overall pattern of pay rates in the private sector and employments across a range of type, size or sector. It will also take account of the way reward systems are structured in the private sector.

² The existing conciliation and arbitration schemes, and other normal industrial relations machinery, will continue to operate as before subject, of course, to the terms of this Pay Agreement.

Approach

14. It is accepted by both sides that cross sectoral relativities are incompatible with the operation of benchmarking; in practice, wide variations would be unlikely to emerge between the various sectors in the pay of common groups such as clerical/administrative staff, engineers and technicians.
15. Within each sector, it is accepted that internal relativities would be a relevant criterion but it will be made clear in the terms of reference that *traditional* or *historical* relativities between groups in a sector would not prevent the Benchmarking Body from recommending what it considers are appropriate pay rates on the basis of existing circumstances.
16. The Benchmarking Body will be asked to produce its report³ and recommendations by the end of 2002 so that the parties will be in a position to discuss the implementation of its recommendations within the context of any successor to this Programme which might be agreed between the social partners, or whatever other arrangements may be in place on the expiry of this Programme. It is agreed that any additional increases (i.e. over and above those agreed as part of this Agreement) which might emerge from the exercise would not take effect during the period of this Agreement.

Procedures

17. The composition of the Benchmarking Body will be discussed and agreed between the parties. While the procedures which might be adopted by the Body are issues which will need to be considered at a later date, it is envisaged that the process will involve (i) an initial input by employers and trade unions followed by (ii) the necessary research being arranged by the Body with (iii) a further input from employers and unions in advance of (iv) the Body coming to conclusions and forming recommendations.
18. Terms of Reference to give effect to the foregoing will be agreed between the parties.

Public Service Monitoring Group

19. It has been agreed to establish a Public Service Monitoring Group (PSMG) to oversee implementation of any future public service pay agreements (whether forming part of an overall national programme or otherwise). The PSMG will deal with any overarching issues that arise in implementing these agreements as well as any other issues which both sides agree would help to improve the operation of public service pay and industrial relations arrangements.
20. Membership of the PSMG will comprise an equal number of Employer Side and PSC representatives. The PSMG will determine its own procedures in relation to substitutes, co-option of additional members, appointment of joint secretaries, establishment of subcommittees, etc. It will be open to representatives of either side to raise any issues relevant to its terms of reference at the PSMG, including alleged breaches of the terms of the relevant agreements.

Supporting the Established Industrial Relations Machinery

21. The parties reiterate their commitment to using and supporting the established industrial relations machinery, and agree to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the primacy of these institutions.

³ A single report will be produced covering all grades, groups and categories within the Benchmarking Body's terms of reference.

Health and Local Authority services

22. The parties are committed to agreeing appropriate arrangements in the Health and Local Authority services (in place of the former National Joint Councils) to provide agreed mechanisms for “in-house” discussion of claims and other issues prior to them being referred to the Labour Relations Commission. It is agreed that such arrangements should be in place by 30 April 2000.

Code of Practice on Dispute Procedures

23. The parties are committed to agreeing voluntary codes of practice to address in particular the maintenance of essential services. These codes should reflect the Code of Practice (*Dispute Procedures Including Procedures in Essential Services*) prepared by the Labour Relations Commission (S.I. No. 1 of 1992).

24. Discussions will take place as a matter of urgency within each sector, under the auspices of the appropriate negotiating machinery, on the adoption of a voluntary code of practice for that sector. The parties are committed to these codes being agreed by 30 June 2000. A copy of each agreed code should be lodged with ICTU, the Department of Finance and the Labour Court/Arbitration Board as appropriate. In the event of the parties encountering problems in agreeing the code of practice, the matter should be referred to the LRC/C&A Facilitator and, if necessary, the Labour Court/Arbitration Board.

25. All of the other provisions of the Agreement in Annex I apply equally to the Public Service.

Annex III

Framework for the Development of Equal Opportunities Policies at the Level of the Enterprise

1. Objective

The objective of this Agreement is to eliminate discrimination and to promote equal opportunities in the workplace.

2. The Challenge

The Employment Equality Act, 1998, which came into force in October 1999 introduces many new elements into employment equality legislation in Ireland. The Act replaces the Anti-Discrimination Pay Act, 1974 and the Employment Equality Act, 1977.

The Equality legislation now covers 9 distinct grounds of discrimination, gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, age, disability, race and membership of the traveller community.

Discrimination is outlawed in all areas relevant to employment e.g., access to employment, conditions of employment, training or work experience, promotion or regrading or classification of posts. Positive action is permitted to promote equal opportunities geared to remove existing inequalities which affect women's opportunities to access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions. Positive action is also permitted in relation to people over 50 years of age; people with a disability; and members of the traveller community.

3. The Equal Opportunities Workplace

The Equal Opportunities workplace recognises the talents and skills of workers to the mutual benefit of both employer and employee. The employer has access to the talents and skills of all the employees and the employees have equal access to the conditions of employment in the enterprise. This results in greater job satisfaction for the employee and greater productivity for the employer. The EEA/IPD NOW Project "Equality & Diversity in the Workplace" confirms the value of equal opportunities for employer and employee.

4. Framework

In response to the challenges faced by both Employers and Unions arising from the implementation of the Employment Equality Act, 1998, and in assisting the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace, a framework will be established, comprising representatives from IBEC, Public Service Employers, ICTU and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and will be supported by a secretariat provided by the Equality Authority.

The activities of this framework will be supported by a specific budget. The framework will assist in the development and implementation on a voluntary basis of equal opportunity policies at enterprise level and provide encouragement, training, information and support to employers and employees/representatives.

5. Developing Equal Opportunities at Enterprise Level

ICTU, IBEC and Public Service employers are committed to the development of equal opportunities policies and practices and will encourage and support their development in every practical way.

At enterprise level, Equal Opportunities policies/practices should be developed and implemented, on a voluntary basis, at enterprise level by agreement between employers and unions.

The following are examples of issues that are appropriate for discussions at enterprise level:

- Policy Statement/Equality Programme
- Positive Action Programme/s
- Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Bullying at Work Policies
- Racial Equality Policies
- Guidelines to implement support mechanisms at work for victims of domestic violence

Other appropriate issues may arise at enterprise level and where there is agreement between the employers and unions they may also be discussed at that level.

All employment policies and practices must comply with the provisions of the Employment Equality Act, 1998.

6. Monitoring and Review Mechanisms

The Framework will monitor and review progress on an annual basis.

Annex IV

National Framework for the Development of Family-Friendly Policies at the Level of the Enterprise

1. Introduction

The objective of this Agreement is to support and facilitate the development of family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise. The achievement of this objective will be supported by the **National Framework for Family Friendly Policies** to be established within the context of this Agreement. This National Framework will focus on supporting and facilitating family-friendly policies through the development of a package of practical measures that can be applied at the level of the enterprise.

2. Context

The development of appropriate measures to assist in reconciling work and family life is important to underpinning economic, social and equality objectives. At a policy level the 1999 EU Employment Guidelines have detailed the importance of designing, implementing and promoting family-friendly policies. Similarly, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has indicated a need for striking a balance between work and family responsibilities. As articulated in Section 4.3, the development of an accessible, affordable, quality childcare infrastructure is critical to supporting the reconciliation of work and family life. This Agreement considers, however, that there are a range of other measures that can contribute to the reconciliation of work and family life.

The emergence of a tightening labour market and the increased emphasis on human resources as a key competitive element serve to underpin the importance of developing innovative ways of maximising the available labour supply. Similarly, the importance of facilitating equality of opportunity for men and women in the workplace also underscores the desirability of developing policies that can assist parents in reconciling work and family life. Family-friendly policies can serve a dual purpose of contributing to the needs of the business as well as meeting the needs of employees with family responsibilities.

The challenge in developing family-friendly policies relevant to the level of the enterprise is to find ways of developing approaches that reflect the reality of the workplace. Identifying different options that have the potential to meet the many diverse needs of different employers and their employees is especially problematic. In order to be effective, such options must meet the following objectives:

- enhance the opportunity to reconcile work and family life, and
- contribute to the effective and efficient operation of the enterprise.

3. Family-Friendly Policies

Appropriately designed Family-Friendly Policies can bring benefits to both employees and employers. For employers, the benefits can include:

- the retention of skilled and experienced staff;
- reduced absenteeism;
- improved productivity;

- a more highly motivated workforce; and
- an enhanced corporate image.

From the perspective of employees the benefits can include:

- an opportunity to better balance their working and family lives;
- greater equality of opportunity between men and women; and
- a fairer sharing of family responsibilities between men and women.

This National Framework does not attempt to impose any single measure or model of non-statutory family-friendly policy or practice. Both ICTU and employers (IBEC and Public Sector employers) are committed to the development of family-friendly workplaces and will encourage and support the development of such workplaces in every practical way. There are many examples of family-friendly workplace policies and practices to choose from, depending on the needs of both employees and employers. The following are examples of family-friendly practices that are appropriate for discussion at enterprise level by agreement between employers and unions:

- Job-sharing
- Work-Sharing
- Part-time work
- Flexitime
- Flexi-place/Teleworking
- Term-time working

Within the provisions of existing legislation, the following issues are also appropriate for discussion at local level:

- Maternity leave;
- Adoptive leave;
- Parental leave;
- Force Majeure leave.

4. National Framework For Family-Friendly Policies

The Government and the Social Partners agree that a National Framework for Family-Friendly Policies should be established to support family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise. The purpose of this National Framework will be to identify actions to be undertaken by the social partners at national level which support the development of family-friendly policies in the workplace. The focus of this activity will be to support and guide the voluntary development and implementation of family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise in accordance with the objectives detailed in paragraph 2 above.

5. Key Activities

IBEC, Public Sector employers and ICTU agree to undertake the following actions within the National Framework:

- Promote the implementation of family-friendly policies in accordance with the objectives detailed in paragraph 2 above;
- Identify relevant options for enterprise-level family-friendly policies and practices;
- Assess the impact of such policies and practices with regard to the objectives outlined in 2;
- Review the outcome of the SME Family-Friendly Project undertaken by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and propose relevant action to develop family-friendly practices;
- Develop practical guidelines at national level to assist in the implementation of family-friendly policies and practices at enterprise-level;
- Develop a Code of Practice, within the context of the existing legislative framework, on the manner in which statutory Parental and Force Majeure Leave can be taken;
- Identify any potential barriers and impediments to the provision of family-friendly policies that meet the needs of working parents and identify possible solutions to such difficulties. In this connection, management, unions and employees could, jointly and on a co-operative basis at enterprise level, examine ways of overcoming any such barriers that may exist: consultation with local childcare groups/providers should be considered in this context;
- Disseminate information on appropriate and relevant national and international experience with regard to the operation of family-friendly policies in the workplace;
- Identify best-practice and disseminate it to employers and trade unions;
- Monitor and report on developments in respect of family-friendly policies; and
- Provide training to management, union, employer and workplace representatives on the identified relevant family-friendly options and on best practice methods of implementation.

6. Support Structures for Implementation

A National Framework Committee will be established charged with the task of implementing this agreement. The Committee will be comprised of representatives of IBEC, Public Sector employers and ICTU. The Committee will be supported by a secretariat provided by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and additional support, where appropriate, will be provided by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The activities of the National Framework for Family-Friendly Policies above will be supported by a specific budget to be provided within the Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

7. Monitoring and Review Mechanisms

The National Framework Committee will monitor and review progress on an annual basis.



Framework II for Prosperity and Economic Inclusion

2.1 Overall Context

The key objectives of this Programme are:

- to underpin Ireland's competitiveness and develop our economic prosperity on a sustainable basis, and
- to use that increased prosperity to enhance our quality of life in the context of a fairer and more inclusive society.

Macroeconomic Policy

1. The central macroeconomic policy goals of this Programme can be summarised in terms of stabilisation, growth and social justice. In particular, the Programme aims to further enhance living standards and reduce social exclusion over the Programme period on a basis which will prove sustainable over the longer term, and to position the economy for further advance thereafter.
2. The Programme is predicated on, and dependent upon, achieving continued strong non-inflationary economic growth. GNP can average about 5.6% per annum over the period 2000-2002 on the basis of sustained improvements in productivity, provided international competitiveness is maintained and emerging supply-side constraints are overcome. Given our EMU membership, stability-oriented policies are even more vital than heretofore to achieve this outcome in the increasingly globalised and integrated international economy.
3. It is recognised that the capacity to realise the goals of this Programme depends on achieving this level of growth. If economic growth exceeds this level, and subject to the principles below, it may be possible to apply additional resources in a balanced way to accelerate progress towards the priority objectives of the Programme, including social inclusion. Equally, if growth falls below this level, it may be necessary to make more gradual progress in order to maintain the principles below.

Key Principles

4. Sustaining economic advance will accordingly require continued observance of the following key principles in order to maintain the competitiveness of the economy and both domestic and external confidence in its potential for growth:
 - full adherence to the spirit of this Programme throughout its term;
 - conduct of fiscal policy over the Programme period in a fashion which is consistent with economic stability, in particular low inflation, and which will fully adhere to the spirit of the Stability and Growth Pact;
 - conduct of tax and expenditure policies in a fashion which ensures that initiatives undertaken in the course of the Programme will be sustainable into the longer term;
 - prioritisation of public capital investment in order to overcome emerging infrastructure deficiencies and bottlenecks which otherwise have the potential to undermine the economic growth envisaged; and
 - continuance of the partial pensions pre-funding now in train.

5. In conditions of strong growth and against a background of particularly favourable demographic trends, fiscal policy will be conducted with the goal of maintaining significant budgetary surpluses in each year of the Programme. This fiscal parameter will lead to a further reduction in the burden of national indebtedness, freeing up further resources to underpin the sustainability of public policies. It therefore constitutes an overriding principle in the implementation of the Programme.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness and Social Inclusion

6. It is necessary to work towards the creation of a society in Ireland which responds effectively to the constantly evolving requirements of international competitiveness understood as the necessary condition of continuing economic and social success. At the same time, the Programme recognises that there is a reciprocal relationship between competitiveness and social inclusion. Competitiveness helps to generate the resources to enhance social inclusion, increased social inclusion facilitates enhanced competitiveness.

Competitiveness Challenges

7. The recent report by Forfás *Enterprise 2010: A New Strategy for Enterprise in Ireland in the 21st Century* provides a comprehensive analysis of the environment facing the enterprise sector over the next ten years. Competitiveness challenges facing Ireland include:
 - the new and intensified competitive forces unleashed by such factors as globalisation, the Single European Market, EU enlargement and the pace of technological change;
 - significant skill and labour shortages, inadequate transportation infrastructure, inadequate supply of affordable and social housing, prevailing high construction price inflation, deficits in the childcare area, and unbalanced regional development;
 - the lack of scope, as a consequence of EMU membership, for exchange rate and interest rate adjustment to offset economic shocks, together with our continued high level of dependence on Sterling and the economy's vulnerability to any reversal of the strength of Sterling and the US dollar; and
 - the need to improve, as compared to many competitor countries, in critical areas such as human resources, R&D and innovation and e-commerce, particularly in the indigenous industry sectors.

Competitiveness Priorities

8. These challenges will be addressed by measures contained in this Programme and effective implementation of the National Development Plan. Priorities will include:
 - the development of the Information Society, the promotion of Lifelong Learning, deepening of Research and Development and developing World Class research excellence through Technology Foresight, streamlining of the planning process, and institutional reform.
 - the capabilities of indigenous enterprise will be developed through the use of measures such as Benchmarking Best Practice and World Class Business techniques to improve their performance and competitiveness. Mechanisms will also be developed to benchmark the competitiveness of ports and airports.
 - complementing the new benchmarking orientation will be continuance of the wide-ranging process of regulatory and competition reform and, within that context, appropriate levels

of resourcing for the Competition Authority and Utility Regulators. The recent programme '*Reducing Red Tape: An Action Programme of Regulatory Reform in Ireland*' will be implemented. An OECD Country Study on Regulatory Reform will be completed by end 2000.

- the Government will publish a discussion paper on Governance and Accountability in the Regulatory Process, which will be the basis for the debate on, inter alia, the economic and social aspects of the regulatory process, prior to finalisation of a formal Government policy.
- an essential dimension to deepening competitiveness throughout all areas of the national endeavour, will be ongoing development of the process of modernisation throughout the public service.
- sustained improvement in our international competitiveness rankings. Policies in support of this will be kept under review, having particular regard to the recommendations of the National Competitiveness Council.

Euro Changeover

9. The Social Partners are agreed that the changeover to euro notes and coins from 1 January 2002 cannot be used to justify price increases.

Sustainability

There is a need to ensure that the achievement of improvement in living standards in the shorter term is consistent with the long-term sustainability of economic and social progress, including protection of the environment

10. NESC will be requested to consider the development of a framework by June 2001 to bring into operation national progress indicators to measure economic, social and environmental development. This will encompass the availability and use of new forms of data sources, including Time Use Surveys, National Household Accounts and National Satellite Accounts.

2.2 Public Transport

Objectives

- To deliver major improvements in Ireland's public transport infrastructure and services in order to:
 - provide a well-functioning, integrated, public transport system;
 - provide better access to and from work;
 - enhance competitiveness and sustain economic progress; and
 - contribute to social cohesion.

Actions

Dublin Public Transport

1. There will be comprehensive investment in Dublin public transport over the period 2000 to 2006 in order to improve the capacity and quality of the public transport system and to provide an effective alternative to commuting by car. The objectives of the investment will be to:
 - increase DART capacity by almost 7,400 places (39%), and increase suburban rail capacity by 7,800 extra seats (26%) (additional to the 60% increase in DART/suburban rail capacity currently being implemented under the DTO Short-Term Action Plan) and provide extra services at peak times;
 - further develop the suburban rail network following the recommendations of the Strategic Rail Study;
 - introduce light rail in Dublin;
 - increase bus capacity in Dublin by 22,000 seats and expand the bus network to provide a better mesh of radial, orbital, local and feeder services;
 - provide 3,700 park and ride spaces, in addition to the 2,700 being provided under the current programme, and introduce integrated ticketing; and
 - support the land use framework in the Strategic Planning Guidelines.

Regional Public Transport

2. There will be substantial investment in public transport in the regions over the period 2000 to 2006 in order to:
 - complete the Railway Safety Programme 1999 to 2003 and implement a renewal/upgrading programme for mainline rail;
 - provide 450 new buses to upgrade Bus Éireann's rural transport fleet; and
 - provide 110 new buses to upgrade Bus Éireann's urban fleets in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

Public Transport Partnership Forum

3. A Public Transport Partnership Forum will be established, including representation from the various partnership pillars. The Forum will provide a mechanism for consultation on public transport matters, particularly:
 - the development of overall public transport policy;
 - strategies for the development of the public transport system;
 - public transport investment requirements, priorities and programmes; and
 - mechanisms for the improved delivery of public transport services, infrastructure and facilities.
4. The Forum is not intended to duplicate other consultative structures and arrangements (such as those provided for in respect of the Dublin Transportation Office) and should not delay the delivery of public transport improvements. The Department of Public Enterprise will convene the Forum and provide secretariat services. The Forum will have access to independent consultancy services, where required.
5. The Forum will not have a role in relation to pay or conditions of employees in public transport providers or any other matters appropriate to industrial relations procedures. However, workplace partnership structures will be established in CIE and its subsidiary companies.

Accessibility

6. All new and upgraded rail and bus stations and light rail vehicles and suburban railcars financed under the NDP will be accessible to mobility impaired and disabled people. All buses purchased by CIE from 2000 for use on urban services will be low-floor buses. A provision of £10m will be used to improve accessibility to existing public transport facilities not otherwise benefitting under the investment programme. A Public Transport Accessibility Committee will be established, including representation from disability groups, to advise the Minister for Public Enterprise on accessibility issues.

Public Transport Initiatives in Rural Areas

7. A pilot programme building on the experience and best practice of the ADM Rural Transport Initiative will be established to support the development of local or community-based public transport initiatives in rural areas with a view to development of policy in this sector.

Public Private Partnerships

8. The potential for PPP projects in the public transport sector will be actively pursued and the Framework for PPPs, when developed by the PPP Advisory Group, will be taken into account in this regard.

2.3 Infrastructure and Service Delivery

Objectives

- To ensure efficient, cost effective and timely delivery of the infrastructure provided for in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, which sets out investment in excess of £22 billion in national and regional economic and social infrastructure.
- To increase efficiency in the management and use of infrastructure.
- To improve service quality for transport users.
- To maximise the contribution of Public Private Partnerships, consistent with the principles of efficiency and best value for money and taking account of wider economic, social and environmental objectives.
- To facilitate delivery of the additional housing supply required to meet the targets in the National Development Plan.

Actions

National Development Programme (NDP)

1. The NDP infrastructure investment will be implemented through the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme and the Regional Operational Programmes for the BMW and S/E Regions respectively. The Social Partners will be represented on the Monitoring Committees for these Operational Programmes.

Cabinet Committee on Infrastructural Development

2. The Cabinet Committee on Infrastructural Development will oversee a comprehensive package of policy measures to ensure the efficient and timely delivery of infrastructure, including:
 - improved programme and project management;
 - use of Public Private Partnerships;
 - provision of necessary resources to Government Agencies and Local Authorities;
 - the introduction of appropriate institutional, administrative, legal and regulatory reforms to remove unnecessary delays in the delivery of infrastructure, including the efficient and fair implementation of CPOs. The Government will work to enact the Planning and Development Bill, 1999 by Easter 2000 and ensure early and full implementation of its provisions;
 - reviewing the adequacy of the existing institutional arrangements for the delivery of public transport services, infrastructure and facilities and introducing any necessary changes;
 - following the current review of the 1932 Road Transport Act, legislation will be enacted to provide a modern regulatory framework for the provision of bus services. Legislation will also be enacted to provide for a modern regulatory framework for railway safety; and
 - a National Communications Strategy based on the key messages of the NDP will be implemented in consultation with the social partners, focusing in particular on the benefits arising from the delivery of the proposed infrastructure.

Public Private Partnerships

3. Public Private Partnerships will make a very significant contribution to the implementation of the NDP, drawing on the experience gained with the current Public Private Partnership pilot projects. The NESC point out that the success of PPPs would be enhanced by establishing a clear framework to assess the appropriateness of PPPs for infrastructure projects and to guide their implementation. The NESC also points out that the framework should take into account the wider economic, social and environmental objectives and these should be embedded in the assessment of any procurement method. Elements of an appropriate framework will be developed by the PPP Advisory Group, if possible, within the first six months of this Programme, for use in the implementation of PPPs under the NDP.

2.4 Balanced Regional Development

Objectives

- To achieve more balanced regional development and a reduction in the disparities between and within the two regions (the Border, Midlands and West region and the Southern and Eastern region).
- To benefit the less developed regions through increased prosperity, and the more developed regions through reduced congestion pressures.

Actions

Infrastructure Investment

1. The Government will implement an infrastructure investment programme in order to deliver regionally balanced, economically and environmentally sustainable, development. This will be based on a broad definition of infrastructure, encompassing both economic and social dimensions, as well as prioritising the potential for enhanced infrastructure links with Northern Ireland.

National Spatial Strategy

2. A National Spatial Strategy will be developed to provide a framework for addressing the long-term spatial implications of policy formulation and decision making on major investment in all modes of infrastructure. The Strategy will be finalised by end-2001 following consultation with the social partners and others and will take account of available experience in this area including in other EU countries.
3. The Strategy will guide the future development role of Irish cities and towns and rural areas, including the links between urban and rural areas, and build on their interdependence in a manner which contributes to balanced regional development.
4. A small number of new regional gateways which are best suited to serve as a catalyst for developing their wider zones of influence will be identified in the context of the National Spatial Strategy to support a more even spread of development throughout the country.
5. The potential of smaller towns and villages and rural areas will be fully supported, paying particular attention to rural development in line with the White Paper on Rural Development.

Employment

6. The level of new foreign and indigenous investment in the Border, Midlands and Western (BMW) Region will be increased. IDA Ireland will seek to ensure that, in the period 2000-2006, at least 50% of all new jobs from future greenfield projects will be in the BMW region. In pursuit of this overall objective, consideration will also be given to the need to develop disadvantaged urban areas, in line with the provisions on Urban Disadvantage in Framework III.
7. Sectors, including tourism, with particular potential to contribute to balanced regional development will be identified for appropriate support under the National Development Plan.

Western Development Commission

8. The strategies being pursued by the Western Development Commission, in particular the operation of the Western Investment Fund, will foster enterprise and social development in the Commission's region.

2.5 Rural Development

Objectives

- To progress the vision set out in the White Paper on Rural Development for the development of rural communities. Particular emphasis will be placed on the development of towns and villages where the local economy is heavily dependent on agricultural hinterlands.
- As set out in the White Paper, the objective of Government is to promote the economic and social development of rural communities in which there will be:
 - vibrant sustainable communities;
 - sufficient income/employment opportunities to allow people to live in dignity;
 - access to public services, including education, social and other services, housing, transport and infrastructure;
 - participation in decision-making structures affecting them;
 - maintenance of cultural identity;
 - respect for the rural environment and sustainable development; and
 - protecting the environment and the preservation and enhancement of the culture and heritage of rural areas, including Gaeltacht areas.

Actions

1. These objectives will be supported by a range of policies including in the areas of enterprise, transport, health, housing and education.
2. The National Development Plan gives practical expression to many of the commitments in the White Paper - overall investment under the NDP which will directly impact on Rural Development will be of the order of £6.7 billion.
3. Regional development will be balanced so that the benefits of economic and social progress will be distributed throughout rural areas and will be sustainable.

Rural Proofing

4. Procedures for rural proofing of all national policies are in place and will be supported by detailed guidelines for Government Departments early in the period of this Programme. The operation of these procedures will contribute significantly to integrating the strategy for economic and social development of rural areas with the objectives and principles of other policy initiatives and, in particular, of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Rural Development Structures

5. Complementing recently established institutional arrangements, a National Rural Development Forum will be set up early in this Programme, comprising Government Departments, State Agencies, the Regional Assemblies and Authorities, Local Authorities, the social partners, local development bodies and the wider voluntary and community sector.

6. The integration of policies at county level will be advanced through County Development Boards, which arise from implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems.
7. The deliberations of the recently established Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture will be taken into account, particularly in the context of the Rural Development Forum and the Rural Advisory Training Committee.

LEADER

8. The new EU LEADER programme will contain a major emphasis on innovative or pilot type measures, but the underlying principles will remain - i.e. a bottom-up process with area-based, local action groups implementing local development programmes.
9. Provision, amounting to £55m, will be made in respect of funding a mainstream rural development programme, supporting LEADER type activities which may not be eligible under LEADER+.
10. The importance of continuity in the delivery of LEADER and LEADER-type rural development programmes is recognised by the Government. In this context, every effort will be made to secure the earliest implementation of the LEADER+ and mainstream LEADER-type measures.

2.6 Small Business and Services

Objectives

- To increase productivity amongst existing Small Business, particularly through the adoption of ICTs and e-commerce and the use of Benchmarking/Best Practice techniques, while creating a climate supportive of new business start-ups.
- To support Micro-Enterprises and to develop entrepreneurship in a more dynamic way.
- To increase the sectors' productivity by improving education and training levels and thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the traded sector of the economy.
- To realise the full potential of the services economy for further increases in employment and exports.
- To achieve better regional dispersment for the services sector as a whole.
- To identify and address the constraints on the growth of international tradeable services, particularly in the case of indigenous companies, and to continue to expand the sector rapidly from its current relatively small base.
- To develop the Financial Services sector so that it will adapt responsively to rapidly changing circumstances while, at the same time, providing greater protection to consumer interests.
- To build on the successes of recent years in the Tourism sector and, in particular, to successfully manage the challenges presented by an environment where public sector financial support, primarily in the form of EU funds, is declining.

Actions

Small Business

1. Regarding Small Business, supports will be provided for training, the promotion of ICTs and e-commerce, marketing support, regional networks, and development of the Seed and Venture Capital industry.
2. A Market Development Strategy to assist small business will be developed by the Government, particularly in the areas of teleworking, e-commerce and languages.
3. Support for Micro-Enterprises will be continued and reinforced. A partnership approach will underpin value-for-money service delivery.
4. Particular attention will be paid to assisting companies which strive for enduring competitive advantage through the utilisation of ICTs, skills development and innovation.
5. Continued emphasis will be placed on improving the supply and lowering the cost of finance to start-up and growing businesses, particularly through promotion of a vibrant venture capital market for the high-tech sector.
6. Start-your-own business supports for women, the long-term unemployed and marginalised groups will be developed through collaboration between State agencies, local development bodies and the social partners.

City and County Enterprise Boards

7. The City and County Enterprise Boards will continue to support local enterprises (10 employees or less), so as to encourage business survival and growth, to develop the sustainability of local economies and to maximise employment opportunities. In that context, they will be increasingly re-oriented towards supporting mentoring and management development.
8. The County Enterprise Boards' activities will be more closely aligned with the Local Authorities and, in particular, their plans will be consistent with, and an integral part of, the broader social and economic development plans that will be drafted by the City and County Development Boards.
9. There will be a particular emphasis on promoting the benefits of e-commerce and communications technology throughout the State and, particularly, within the BMW Region. These objectives will be supported by the regulatory, competition, administrative and planning reforms set out in this Programme.

Services

10. The *Strategic Study on the Development of the Services Sector*, commissioned by Enterprise Ireland, will focus on proactive regionalisation and the identification of those internationally tradeable services with the greatest potential for Irish companies.
11. Regarding the Internationally Tradable Services Sector, the Government, through IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, will continue to foster development, particularly of Irish owned businesses, with a special focus on high value-added, high skills projects.
12. The *Strategy for the Development of International Financial Services in Ireland* will continue to be progressively implemented.
13. During the first year of this Programme, the recommendations of the Working Group on the Retail Sector to the Board of FÁS will be examined.

Tourism

14. The focus regarding Tourism will be on skills development, on marketing Ireland overseas, on improving the quality of tourism products across the country, on achieving a better regional balance of tourism growth, on ensuring that tourism development respects the quality and absorption capacity of local communities and landscape, and on reducing seasonality.
15. The Tourism industry's Quality Employer Programme will be supported and implemented with the full involvement of employees and their representatives.
16. CERT will continue to promote training for all levels of the tourism and hospitality industry and, in conjunction with the social partners, will review training needs in key sectors including the licensed trade.
17. The Tourism industry, while receiving State support for marketing Ireland overseas, will develop ways of obtaining adequate voluntary contributions from individual businesses in the sector.

Arts and Culture

At a time of unprecedented economic development and growth in Ireland, it is important that the arts sector, which is crucial to the well being and development of society, is not left behind.

18. The Arts Council's second Arts Plan covering the period 1999-2001, which has been approved by Government, will see a substantial increase in the State's investment in the arts sector up to 2001.
19. The social partners recognise the value and need to continue the investment in support of the development of quality arts and culture infrastructure. Under the NDP, the Government are committed to the provision of £388m towards the development of cultural, social and recreational infrastructure throughout the country. Part of this provision will be used for the implementation of a specific capital programme to support new arts and culture projects at regional, urban and community levels, as well as the re-development of existing cultural infrastructure facilities.

2.7 Industrial Policy (with Particular Emphasis on Vulnerable Sectors)

(a) *Indigenous Industry*

Objectives

- To reposition indigenous manufacturing enterprises generally to achieve scale, thereby enabling them to upgrade from low tech, low productivity activities to higher value activities, with higher quality jobs.
- To help Irish-owned companies to meet the challenges of rapidly changing international markets, promoting in particular diversification of markets in respect of indigenous enterprise and optimising linkages with FDI within Ireland.
- To support balanced regional development and to achieve a strategic mix of industries in various geographical locations throughout the country.
- To ensure that business expenditure on R&D is substantially increased.

Actions

1. State assistance will be re-focused away from capacity expansion to upgrading enterprises in terms of employee and management skills, new forms of work organisation, research and innovation (including in the interests of clean production), marketing, technology and design.
2. The development of Irish-owned businesses will be encouraged and supported by the relevant State agencies through:
 - assisting companies to build the scale necessary to compete effectively;
 - supporting in-company training to develop the skills of management and employees to international best practice standards;
 - supporting enterprise-led approaches, such as that embodied in the Skillnets initiative, in consultation with management and unions/employees;
 - expanding trade promotional activities and consulting with business in trade policy development;
 - supporting international market development, including increasing the number of companies that operate in international markets;
 - assisting strategic planning on a sectoral basis;
 - supporting product and process development through direct support for in-company R&D, through building technology innovation networks and through doubling the number of indigenous companies spending at least £100,000 on R&D;
 - helping with the provision and availability of suitable financing by working closely with private sources; and
 - developing and deepening linkages between indigenous industry and FDI.
3. The range of relevant measures in the NDP will be progressed, including those aimed at increasing the productivity and scale of indigenous industry, addressing the indigenous industry's low export propensity, improving its access to affordable risk capital, and responding to increasing competition in global markets.

4. The proportion of assistance allocated by Enterprise Ireland and Shannon Development towards developing 'capability' will be increased from 40% in 1998 to 65% in 2003 and then reviewed as to how much greater the shift should be.

Vulnerable Sectors

5. Vulnerable Sectors will continue to be monitored. Proactive measures will be adopted to help enterprises to reposition themselves and, in the event of closure, to promote an integrated development package for the area affected, covering the attraction of new enterprise and facilitating the re-employment of the workers.

(b) *Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)*

Objectives

- To build on our success in attracting FDI to Ireland.
- To achieve a better regional distribution of manufacturing and internationally traded services employment, with a particular emphasis on the BMW region
- To increase the quality of employment and to more deeply embed foreign-owned companies in Ireland.

Actions

6. The State will continue, subject to EU State Aids rules, to offer an attractive overall package to mobile investment.
7. The industrial development agencies will implement a programme, aimed at embedding existing companies by encouraging Irish subsidiaries to add strategic functions to their operations with a view to moving up the parent company's value chain.
8. The relevant State agencies will identify and develop activities and sectors that are high growth, high tech and strategically important in terms of Ireland's development needs, including leading edge e-commerce business.
9. To meet the R&D and skills needs of a knowledge-based and high value-added economy, it will be necessary to strengthen the research capability in the Third Level and State research institutes and in industry; this will be achieved through the major programme of RTDI set out in the National Development Plan.
10. The number of overseas companies spending at least £100,000 on R&D will be doubled.
11. Strategic Development Zones, as provided for in the Planning and Development Bill, 1999, will be used by the development agencies to cut the lead time for establishing strategic industries.
12. Selective support will be provided for FDI, particularly in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region - with IDA Ireland being committed to seeking to ensure that, over the period of the NDP, at least 50% of all new jobs from greenfield projects will be in the BMW region. There will be a clear differential in the incentives offered for different regions.

2.8 Construction

Objectives

- To ensure an efficient and competitive construction sector in order to facilitate the cost-effective delivery of the infrastructure requirements set out in the NDP, including the required housing output.
- To increase the capacity of the construction industry in a sustainable way to ensure delivery of the NDP and in the process substantially ease construction price inflation and thereby diminish its adverse implications for inflation more generally.
- To maximise the capacity of the indigenous construction sector and promote the role of Irish firms in international consortia bidding for major projects.
- To promote quality and safety in construction.

Actions

1. Measures will be adopted to maximise the capacity of the indigenous construction sector by aiding product and process innovation and by encouraging buildability within the industry. Where appropriate, joint ventures between Irish and European contractors to bid for major infrastructure projects will be encouraged.
2. The manpower and training needs of the construction sector, including options for the recruitment of additional workers, access for adults into craft occupations, the timely provision of apprenticeship training and facilitating different forms of work organisation, will be addressed in a strategic manner in full consultation with the social partners.
3. The decisions of the Forum for the Construction Industry will be supported as it implements the recommendations of the Strategic Review Committee Report and develops its role to address new strategic issues, including those related to capacity, efficiency, qualification and productivity.

Contracting

4. Mechanisms will be introduced early in this Programme, agreed by the relevant social partners, to deliver in practice efficient, transparent and fair contracts, tendering and contractual procedures for traditional and new procurement methods
5. Under the above mechanisms, standard PPP contracts and tendering conditions and procedures will be considered. The question of a client contribution to PPP tender bid costs will be negotiated.
6. It remains Government policy to use accepted standard contract conditions at tender stage and for construction. The Forum for the Construction Industry is currently developing a Code of Best Practice underpinning this commitment. In the interim, best industry procedures and established good practice will continue to be observed. The relevant social partners will be fully consulted on any amendments to the accepted contract conditions and established industry good practice.

Safety

7. The joint CIF/ICTU initiative on safety in the construction industry will be implemented. Options for similar approaches to other high risk sectors will be examined in consultation with ICTU and IBEC

Recycling

8. The Forum for the Construction Industry will, by mid-2000, produce a voluntary plan for the industry, in partnership with clients, to meet targets for re-using or re-cycling Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste, as laid down in the National Waste Management Strategy - *Changing Our Ways* (1998). These targets will require the re-use or re-cycling of 50% of C&D waste by 2003; and 85% by 2013.

2.9 Housing and Accommodation Supply and Affordability

Objectives

- To aim to ensure that every household has access to affordable, secure, good quality housing appropriate to their needs.
- To ensure that housing supply is brought more into line with demand and that the Government's estimate of housing requirements set out in the NDP of 500,000 new dwellings over the next ten years is achieved in a planned, coherent fashion.
- To ensure that new housing development and infrastructural planning and development will proceed in an integrated, environmentally sustainable manner, and will promote regionally balanced economic development.
- To ensure a sustainable pattern of social housing provision which will facilitate the development of socially integrated communities.

Actions

Housing Supply

1. Future housing development will be underpinned by integrated infrastructural investment in water, sewerage, roads, public transport and social and community infrastructure. The extent of new housing requirements will be fully reflected in physical planning and planning for public transport.
2. The supply of zoned serviced land will be maintained at a level to support the required housing output. More efficient use will be made of zoned land through increased residential densities in appropriate locations together with better design.

Planning and Development Bill

3. The Planning and Development Bill, when enacted in 2000, will:
 - oblige each Planning Authority to prepare a Housing Strategy which provides for the housing of the existing and future population of their area; and
 - provide that up to 20% of the land zoned for residential purposes be made available for social and affordable housing.

Integrated Area Plans

4. The requirement under the 1999 Urban Renewal Scheme, that a minimum of 15% of the space provided in the total area covered by an Integrated Area Plan should be for social housing, will ensure additional integrated housing provision.

Rural Housing

5. Rural housing needs will be addressed in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and the White Paper on Rural Development.
6. Local Authorities will take account of the specific housing needs of rural communities when drawing-up their housing strategies under the Planning and Development Bill when enacted.

Housing Forum

7. As part of the arrangements for overseeing the implementation of this Programme, a Housing Forum will be established by the Department of Environment and Local Government. The Forum will include representatives of the social partners and relevant Government Departments and will meet quarterly to:
 - monitor developments in relation to the supply and affordability of housing;
 - monitor the implementation of the housing Objectives and Actions set out in Frameworks II and III of this Programme in the context of the targets set in the NDP;
 - provide the social partners with an opportunity to contribute to the further development by the Department of the Environment and Local Government of policy responses in respect of the housing issues identified in this Programme; and
 - involve the social partners with Government in tackling constraints on the achievement of the housing supply targets referred to in the second objective above.

2.10 Energy

Objectives

- To ensure that Irish energy policy supports and enhances the economic competitiveness of all business sectors, supports employment and ensures security of supply.
- To take cost-effective actions towards meeting Ireland's obligations on CO₂ abatement having due regard to considerations of sectoral fairness and social equity.

Actions

Electricity and Natural Gas

1. The requirement of competitiveness and of liberalisation of the Irish energy market will require semi-State companies in the energy sector to reposition themselves strategically, using a rigorous process of benchmarking against best performing utilities worldwide. An appropriate regulatory framework for the electricity market will take account of the needs of rural customers, the disadvantaged and older people and will ensure that any public service obligation is matched with appropriate compensation mechanisms. The regulatory framework will be exercised in a manner which best protects the interests of all categories of final customers.
2. The on-going provision of a high quality electricity infrastructure, including increased interconnection with the Northern Ireland and European grids, will be ensured in order to sustain continuing economic growth and the demands of a modern economy.
3. Effective competition in the natural gas and electricity markets will be promoted through a facilitatory regulatory framework and appropriate independent regulation. The regulatory regime will promote competition as well as investment in the development of the natural gas and electricity networks.

Exploration

4. Oil, gas and mineral exploration will be promoted in line with best international environmental standards and with a view to enhancing the security of supply and maximising the return to the Irish economy in terms of the use of Irish goods, services and employment.

Sustainable Energy

5. In line with the Green Paper on Sustainable Energy, energy consumption and related Greenhouse Gas emissions will be reduced below the levels they would otherwise reach to assist meeting Kyoto targets. This will be achieved, within the parameters of the National Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy when approved by Government, using energy efficiency measures, the Flexibility Mechanisms allowed for under the Protocol (including emission trading), and taxation based on a framework designed to complement other measures at least cost. Policies will be applied equitably across all sectors, with a focus on least cost options and taking account of social equity and employment considerations, as well as the competitive position of the economy and those sectors and companies most affected by these policies.
6. The contribution of renewable sources of energy will be brought to its optimal level through a wide range of initiatives including at rural and local community level. This will be increased where technological advances permit.

2.11 Agriculture

Objectives

- To ensure that farm families have increasing living standards in line with the norm in our economy, recognising:
 - that farm income has suffered a decline of almost 20% over the three years 1997 to 1999, due to the BSE crisis and unfavourable international markets; and
 - the growing importance of off-farm income in supporting the living standards of a number of farm families.
- To ensure that the agriculture sector further develops its competitiveness through investment, structural reform and upgrading of human resources, so that it will be able to survive and prosper in the increasingly demanding and competitive EU and world markets.
- The building blocks of agricultural development will be:
 - the strengthening and development of a core of full time farms which will be viable both in providing an income at least equivalent to the average industrial wage and sufficient funding for ongoing investment in the farm enterprise;
 - growing opportunities for sustainable off-farm income;
 - an improved farmer age structure;
 - an emphasis on moving up the value chain in produce development and meeting the highest environmental and food safety standards;
 - a rural environment of the highest standard;
 - the protection of Ireland's core agricultural interests in the context of EU enlargement and the WTO negotiations;
 - the highest possible standards of animal health and welfare;
 - the highest possible standards of plant health; and
 - the operation of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (D/AFRD) and support agencies at the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of quality service to all their clients.

Actions

EU and WTO

1. Seek recognition in the WTO negotiations from non-EU members that the contribution of agriculture is vital to the European economy, society and environment and that the European model of agriculture must be safeguarded. This can be best achieved by preserving the *Agenda 2000* agreement and, in particular, by retaining the system of direct payments, ensuring adequate tariff protection and by maintaining export refunds to bridge the gap between EU and world market prices.
2. Seek to ensure that adequate financial provision at EU level is made to cater for the agricultural implications of the enlargement of the Union.
3. Implement the current phase of *Agenda 2000* and the further phases, which are provided for in the period up to 2006, in the time-scale laid down. Where issues of national discretion arise, this discretion will be used to support competitiveness, structural reform and social equity.

National Development Plan 2000-2006

4. All parties recognise the very significant allocation of £3.7 billion for the agri-food sector in the National Development Plan. The measures included in the NDP will make a significant contribution to the development of farming and farm holdings, protecting the food chain and the environment and promoting structural change. The Government are committed to achieving the earliest agreement with the European Commission on the various NDP measures and so ensure their introduction at the earliest opportunity.
5. Measures to support on-farm investment will facilitate agriculture in improving its competitiveness and in improving environmental standards. Investment aid will be directed to achieving and maintaining viability, based on the improved conditions of the schemes negotiated, following the consultation process between the D/AFRD and the farm organisations which is close to completion.
6. The demand-led nature of the main on-farm investment measures, (i.e. farm waste management, dairy hygiene, animal welfare and installation aid) is such that their continued operation needs to be assured over a significant time span. The Government are committed to the uninterrupted operation and funding of these measures, and any additional funding needs that may arise during the life of this Programme will be addressed. In addition, the standard costings used to determine grant aid payable will be reviewed annually.
7. The funding under the NDP for the CAP accompanying measures, - REPS and the Early Retirement Scheme - will be reviewed in the NDP Mid-Term Review, with the objective of ensuring that the schemes remain open for the term of the Plan.
8. With regard to the need, under the arrangements agreed in *Agenda 2000*, to develop a new scheme for the payment of Compensatory Allowances in Disadvantaged Areas, and taking account of the resources provided in the NDP, the D/AFRD in discussions with the farm organisations is committed to introducing a system which will protect the payment levels to the categories of farmers for whom Disadvantaged Areas payments are an important element of their total incomes. A Task Force representative of the D/AFRD and the farm organisations will finalise its work on the development of a new scheme by the end of March 2000.
9. New entrants to agriculture will be encouraged through an improved Young Farmer Installation Aid Scheme and the introduction of the new Young Farmer Development Programme, providing higher grant aid for farm investment for the duration of the Programme.

Livestock and Livestock Products

10. The Government's approach to the beef sector will be determined by the need to maximise both producer incomes and the contribution of the sector to the economy. New structures will be introduced covering a number of important issues, which will allow the entire beef sector to go forward in a positive manner:
 - cattle price transparency will be developed through the publication by D/AFRD of the prices paid by named meat plants on a weekly basis for each grade of steers, heifers and cows, and publication of carcass classification results; and
 - a market price transparency mechanism will be introduced to provide credible and relevant information on market price returns. This mechanism shall be subject to independent verification.
11. The Government accepts the need to have an adequately funded marketing and promotion programme for Irish beef.
12. The Government will also continue to facilitate the live export trade and will seek to reopen those markets to which we do not currently have access.
13. The Government will give priority to a review of the EU sheepmeat regime, with the objective of ensuring a support system which reflects the income gap between Irish and other EU producers.
14. In order to continue to improve the structure of milk production, the prime objective of the new milk quota system will be to permanently allocate quotas to active milk producers, on a priority basis, and to reduce the cost of this quota through increased availability.

Animal Disease Eradication

15. All parties involved agree to the adoption of necessary measures with the objective of reducing current levels of, and ultimately eradicating, Brucellosis, TB, and other significant animal diseases from the national herd. To reduce the incidence of TB by 50%, and to make significant progress towards the eradication of brucellosis, within the next four years, the following measures will be taken:
 - as the primary constraint on containing and eradicating TB is the existence of a significant reservoir of infection amongst the wildlife population, the Government will:
 - commit specified staff resources in each District Veterinary Office (DVO) to carry out investigative work into the causes of breakdowns; and
 - in addition to current arrangements relating to wildlife, take a pro-active approach in each DVO area, using 75 dedicated Departmental and Farm Relief Service personnel, to the removal of all sources of infection in the 20% of the country which yields some 50% of current TB reactors; the distribution of these resources will be finalised in consultation with the farm organisations.
16. In line with the recommendations of the Steering Group on the Systems Review of D/AFRD, the structure of the Department is being reviewed and, in that context, the management of the disease eradication scheme will be considered. Allocation of staff resources to various duties attaching to DVOs will be settled under the Strategic Management Initiative, which is currently being implemented across the Department.

17. The Government recognise the financial hardship faced by farmers who suffer disease breakdowns and the dissatisfaction with aspects of the current compensation regime, and accept that farmers should be adequately compensated. Accordingly, it is agreed to introduce an on-farm market valuation system. The arrangements, including the detailed operational arrangements, will be finalised with the farming organisations with the benefit of independent expertise. The proposed operational date is 1 September 2000.
- Additional measures relating to movement controls will be considered in the framework of the Animal Health Forum.
 - Further measures may be operated in specific areas where TB levels are high, in consultation with the Animal Health Forum.
 - A monitoring committee, consisting of Departmental, veterinary, and farmer representatives, will be established in each DVO area to review the progress of the Disease Eradication Programme at local level.
 - Farm organisations would have a direct involvement in the monitoring of the delivery of the Programme at national level through the Animal Health Forum and its various sub-committees.
18. Appropriate measures will be taken to contain and eradicate other significant diseases from the national herd.
19. In 2003, the position will be reviewed and revised targets will be set for a future period.

Customer Service

20. Building on the success of the Charter of Farmers' Rights and the Customer Service Action Plan, and recognising the crucial importance of direct income payments, including the relevant CAP accompanying measures, to the financial position of farmers, D/AFRD will further improve the services it provides to its customers and advance the availability of e-Government. The Department will:
- introduce a new Protocol by 30 June 2000 for direct payments dealing specifically with applications, inspections, administration, penalties and their categorisation, payment deadlines, appeals, and monitoring. The D/AFRD undertakes to meet the payment schedules in the Protocol. The Government will give priority to providing the necessary personnel and ICT resources to meet the deadlines in the Protocol, consistent with efficiency and effectiveness;
 - automate and streamline to the extent possible its documentation and procedures in relation to FEOGA schemes and, to that end, maximise the use of the data collected under the Cattle Movement Monitoring System (CMMS), thereby permitting use of the CMMS data to allow for automatic payment of supports where it is practicable, conforms with EU rules, and is advantageous to the customer;
 - work towards providing and accepting all relevant documents in electronic form, to the extent that this is legally possible;
 - establish on a statutory basis, in accordance with the principles of natural justice, an independent accessible and properly resourced Appeals Unit whose remit will include all FEOGA schemes paying directly to individual farmers and which will take account of the penalties and their categorisation as set out in the agreed protocol;

- press the European Commission to re-examine the penalty regime with particular reference to exclusion penalties applicable to direct payment schemes, and to apply the maximum proportionality in the imposition of all penalties;
- establish a monitoring committee, under an independent chairperson and including representatives of the social partner farm organisations, to review performance against targets including inspection targets;
- pursue with the European Commission the implications of the possible loss of extensification premium for herds which are locked up due to animal health regulations;
- use the possibilities in the relevant EU regulations to cater for farmers who are precluded from applying for the Suckler Cow Premium during the normal application period due to their herds being de-populated at the opening of that period; and
- not introduce any new charges on farming without full prior consultations with the farm organisations.

Farmer Taxation

21. The Finance Bill, 2000 will implement the various general relieving measures in the Budget in the income tax, capital acquisitions tax and capital gains tax codes. Farmers will benefit significantly from these general relieving measures. In addition, the Finance Bill will provide for a number of farm specific taxation incentives. These are:

- the increase in the farmers flat rate VAT addition from 4% to 4.2% from 1 March 2000;
- the continuation for another three years to 5 April 2003 of the special capital allowances scheme for farm pollution control, together with an increase from £30,000 to £40,000 in the overall expenditure limit for the scheme;
- the continuation to 31 December 2002 of the special stamp duty relief on the transfer of agricultural land and buildings to young trained farmers; and
- allowing incorporated farmers to choose to have capital acquisitions tax assessed under either the 90% business relief provisions or the 90% agricultural relief provisions, whichever is the more beneficial.

22. The following new special farmer taxation proposals will be included in the Finance Bill, 2000:

- increasing from two-thirds to 100% the special stamp duty relief on the transfer of agricultural land and buildings to young trained farmers;
- devising a special targeted relief for the purchase of milk quotas under guidelines to be issued by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, while continuing the existing tax treatment for the sale of milk quotas; and
- increasing from £40,000 to £50,000 the overall expenditure limit for the special capital allowances scheme for farm pollution control, while reducing the total write-off period from 8 years to 7 years and allowing the 50% element to be claimed in a more flexible way over the period than at present.

23. Farmers will of course also benefit from the major package of personal tax reductions over the next three years which is outlined elsewhere in this Programme.

2.12 Food, Marine and Forestry

(a) Food

Objective

In the light of the findings of the Food Industry Development Group (FIDG), the overall objective of the Government is to maximise the potential of the food industry, and its multidimensional contribution to the economy, through a focus on market-orientation and competitiveness.

Actions

Food Industry Development Group (FIDG)

1. A package of investment measures will be undertaken to address the main recommendations of the FIDG, in particular in relation to the following:
 - the over-reliance on commodity type products and limited progress in moving to higher value-added production;
 - the scale-related difficulties in the sector;
 - the need to adhere to the highest possible standards of food safety and quality and to provide the public with timely sufficient information on the same by the relevant agencies;
 - the need to continue to target growth areas within the sector, such as food ingredients, and the consumer food area; and
 - providing the necessary support for the development of the sector in terms of capital investment, research, technology and innovation, marketing and promotion, and the development of the human resources available to the sector. In line with the commitment to developing partnership at the level of enterprise, support will be focused, in consultation with unions and management, on developing the skills of workers in this sector and on improving workplace relations.
2. In association with these investment measures:
 - closer relationships will be developed between producers, processors retailers and consumers to ensure that high standards of food quality, safety and traceability are achieved throughout the industry; and
 - greater economies of scale will be encouraged through rationalisation and consolidation where appropriate.

Changes in Food Retail Sector

3. In the light of the major changes in the Food Retail sector deriving from the increasing concentration of ownership in the sector on a world wide basis, the National Institute for Transport and Logistics will seek to facilitate the development of a co-operative strategy among representatives of food manufacturers. This will aim to address the impact of centralised distribution in the indigenous market and the challenge of building export capability for added-value food products through awareness campaigns, networking and information exchange, as well as access to third party advice at company level.
4. In the light of the major changes referred to above, it is also essential that fair trading conditions continue to prevail in the marketplace.

Food Exports

5. In recognition of the fact that over 30% of Irish Agri-Food exports are sold outside the EU, the Government will endeavor to protect the level of export support for value-added food products at EU level. In addition, attention will be focused on access to world markets in the context of the Seattle round of the WTO negotiations.

(b) Marine

Objectives

- To balance the objectives and parameters of EU Common Fisheries Policy with the potential to develop the sector in coastal regions where alternative work opportunities are few.
- To maximise the value-added potential of our fisheries resource throughout the supply/demand chain.
- To realise the significant further potential of aquaculture production for sustainable development.
- To ensure the inclusive management, conservation and development of our inland fisheries resource to the highest standards and to realise its full potential in terms of the social and economic benefits which it brings to the regions and rural farming and local communities.

Actions

6. Opportunities for the fishing industry in the Review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) 2002 will be maximised, including pursuing the longstanding case for a significant increase in Ireland's quota share and more effective fisheries management systems within the CFP framework, through an effective strategic negotiating position, informed by the research and conclusions of the National Common Fisheries Policy Review Group and the recommendations of the NESG on Fisheries Policy.
7. A first-class national fish and shellfish health monitoring and research capability will be developed and resourced to provide the highest service delivery standards to the aquaculture and fisheries sector, ensure safe products of top class quality for the consumer in line with the Food Safety Authority and export requirements and maintain and protect Ireland's high fish health status.

Aquaculture

8. The sustainable expansion of the aquaculture industry will be promoted with the objective of achieving critical mass in production, diversification, quality, technology and cost-competitiveness and enhancing EU and international market opportunities.

Fish Processing

9. The fish processing sector will be supported to create a competitive value-added capability of scale at national and international level through development of new products, technology and scale, including building effective networks among the SMEs in the processing sector.
10. Investment support strategies for the medium to long term will be informed by a comprehensive review of the processing sector to be carried out in early 2000.

Inland Fisheries

11. Mechanisms will be developed to ensure the involvement, on an equal footing, of all key stakeholders, including the farming community, in the sustainable development of inland fisheries.
12. The farming community will be represented at key negotiation and decision-making level within catchment management structures.
13. Protocols, co-operation and consultation between farmers and the Regional Fisheries Boards will be further developed and agreed in order to secure the social and economic benefits of inland fisheries conservation and development.

(c) *Forestry*

Objectives

- To develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national, economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment, and supportive of climate change commitments.
- To increase processing capacity and/or increase utilisation of existing capacity in order to process the substantial forecast growth in supply.
- To win back market share at home and to exploit export opportunities to the UK in particular, having regard to its geographical proximity and high import volumes.

Actions

14. Continued implementation of the Strategic Plan for Forestry, with higher financial incentives for extensive additional afforestation. There will be particular emphasis on farm afforestation.
15. Support for forestry development, focussed on strategic measures such as harvesting equipment, forest roads, woodland improvement, downstream development and public awareness aimed at maximising forestry's significant contribution to regional development.
16. There will be funding for targeted training programmes for the forestry sector, directed towards improving the skills of the increasing number of participants in the sector, particularly among farmers, as well as funding for forestry research. Such research will be geared towards improvements in product development and marketing, better knowledge of environmental issues, farm forestry and socio-economic issues and communications and information technology. COFORD (Council for Forest Research and Development) will continue to co-ordinate research activity and transfer technology and information.
17. Product development and marketing will be addressed through Enterprise Ireland's strategies to encourage greater participation in R & D and increased networking within the sector, leading to new processes and innovations, and by exploring market opportunities abroad and increasing responsiveness to end-user requirements by developing new wood-based products.
18. The public notification system will be continued as a practical measure to increase acceptance of afforestation in rural communities.

19. The Government will review, with the European Commission at the Mid-Term Review, the application of EU forestry regulations under which Coillte is ineligible for forestry premia. In the meantime, Coillte will continue its policy on behalf of farmers through the Farm Partnership Schemes.

Planning

20. The Planning and Development Bill, 1999 replaces the general forestry exemption with an exemption for the thinning, felling and replanting of trees, forests and woodlands and ancillary works, but not including the replacement of broadleaf high forest by conifer species. The exemption for initial afforestation will continue to be given in planning regulations made under the Act to ensure that small scale farm afforestation schemes will be unaffected by the change.

2.13 Environmental Policy

Objectives

- To promote sustainable development through ensuring the necessary balance between the environmental, economic and social dimensions of the development process.
- To maintain a high quality environment as a source of competitive advantage by supporting our food and tourism industries, by developing a leading position in environmental technologies and by making Ireland an attractive place for people to work and live.

Actions

National Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy

1. Following approval by the Government, a National Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy will be implemented to enable Ireland to meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. It will identify measures in the energy, transport, industrial, commercial, services, residential, agricultural and forestry sectors and in relation to waste. Policies and measures in the Strategy will be applied equitably across all sectors.
2. The Strategy will focus on least-cost measures, including increased energy efficiency, and emissions trading and other flexible measures, and taxation. The Government will take account of competitiveness and other social and economic needs and the views of the social partners in the design and deployment of these policy instruments.

Waste Management

3. Waste management will be modernised to provide an integrated, cost effective and environmentally efficient infrastructure which will ensure a high level of environmental and natural resource protection (including for food production), maximise the recovery of materials and energy from waste and support economic development in line with EU policy and best practice.
4. Policy initiatives will be developed to support an expansion of recycling activity and improved waste recovery performance.

Other Measures

5. A wide range of other measures will be undertaken to protect and enhance the environment and progress towards sustainable development. These include:
 - investment in environmental infrastructure under the National Development Plan;
 - eco-auditing of Government policies;
 - intensified action to improve water quality, including through the development and implementation of broad-based catchment management strategies;
 - implementation of a sustained programme to combat litter pollution at national and local levels in conjunction with interested parties;
 - active participation in EU and other international fora to address regional and global environmental issues; and

- development of approaches to raising community and individual awareness of environmentally responsible behaviour, including recognition of the balance between individual rights and the common good - for example, in the context of waste management and the planning process.

Sustainable Development

6. COMHAR will be a key forum for advancing the national sustainable development agenda through social partnership and promoting further integration of environmental considerations into economic and social policy generally.
7. Local Authorities will be encouraged and supported to further develop and implement, in partnership with local communities, local Agenda 21 actions aimed at achieving sustainable development in their areas.

IPPC Directive

8. The Department of the Environment and Local Government will give full consideration to the concerns of the farming organisations in regard to thresholds for intensive agriculture in the context of the transposition of the IPPC Directive. It will continue negotiations to ensure that the licensing thresholds set will meet the objective of environmental protection, while having full regard to the question of relativities between threshold requirements in the Directive and the integrated-based structure of the Irish pig sector.

Flooding

9. The Government will consider ways of improving the management of inland waterways, with a view to reducing the damage done by flooding.

GMOs

10. It is the Government's policy to pursue a positive but precautionary national policy position on the release of GMOs into the environment, based on scientific risk assessment and management.



**Framework III
for Social Inclusion and
Equality**

3.1 Social Inclusion

The framework for addressing poverty and social exclusion will have regard to the NESC Strategy Report *Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice*. The NESC Report states: “Citizenship rights encompass not only the core civil and political rights and obligations but also social, economic and cultural rights and obligations which are embedded in our political culture and which underpin equality of opportunity and policies on access to education, employment, health, housing and social services. Citizenship obligations refer to such obligations as the payment of taxes and fulfilment of obligations implied by access to services and benefits. ...There is a strong case for giving increased priority to social inclusion within public spending. ...Consistent with these aims, the Council in this Strategy report advocates a three-pronged approach to problems of poverty and exclusion, covering social welfare, mainstream public policy programmes and a special investment package”.

- During the course of this Programme, the Government will introduce progressively social inclusion measures with a total cost in the year 2003 of £1.5 billion.
- Over the period of this Programme, the Government will progressively introduce social inclusion measures, other than social welfare and child care measures, reflecting the priorities under this Framework, which will cost not less than £200 million in 2003.

Objectives

- Within the fiscal framework underpinning this Programme to pursue policies which reduce poverty and social exclusion, build an inclusive society, reduce marginalisation and strengthen recognition of citizenship obligations in those contexts.
- To create the conditions where people can achieve economic independence.
- To develop the process of Poverty Proofing as a means of mainstreaming poverty issues and to strengthen the institutional arrangements which are in place to support the NAPS.
- To review the targets under the original NAPS framework.
- To promote cross-departmental action and integration to address poverty issues comprehensively, using the SMI process to develop cross-cutting agendas.
- To provide relevant data and data collection systems for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, including systems of measuring poverty among groups not currently included (e.g. people living in institutions, Travellers and the homeless) and new studies to
 - (i) complement the current *Living in Ireland* and *Household Budget Surveys*, and
 - (ii) address the gender dimension of poverty.
- To promote broader awareness and understanding of the issues to be addressed by the proofing process - e.g. poverty, inequality, gender inequality, and rural issues.

Actions:***National Anti Poverty Strategy***

- In consultation with the relevant actors, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) will be updated, the underlying methodology reviewed, the existing targets reviewed and revised where appropriate, and possible new targets will be considered in consultation with the social partners, under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/accommodation. This process will be completed within the first 18 months of this Programme.
- The NAPS analysis will be updated to include emerging causes of poverty (e.g. racism).
- The Employment Action Plan, the National Development Plan and other relevant policy documents will be consistent with the strategies to be pursued in addressing poverty.
- Funding for the Anti Poverty Networks will be continued and its level reviewed. The forthcoming White Paper on Relations between the Community and Voluntary Sector and the State Sector will look at the criteria for funding, including how funding will be provided for new emerging needs.
- Mechanisms for strengthening the involvement of the social partners in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will be considered.

Poverty Proofing

- The pilot poverty proofing arrangements will be reviewed early in 2000 in consultation with the social partners, and poverty proofing will be extended on a phased basis to a local level through the Local Authorities and Health Boards.
- A piloting of social inclusion units will be undertaken by five Local Authorities during the lifetime of this Programme.

Other Developments

- The strategic results areas for an inclusion and equality framework will be reviewed with a view to identifying appropriate new areas - e.g. substance abuse, violence against women and suicide.
- New opportunities for the involvement and participation of local communities in the democratic process will be identified and created.
- The Irish Sports Council's proposals to develop local sport and recreation programmes, through the establishment of local sports partnerships, will be supported and funded. These partnerships will promote the development of sport and recreation, and will develop leadership co-ordination and direction, particularly in disadvantaged areas. In developing these proposals, the Irish Sports Council will engage with the relevant statutory agencies and community and voluntary interests in identifying the issues which need to be addressed.

3.2 Income Adequacy

Objectives

- To provide every person with sufficient income to live life with dignity.
- To ensure that the real value of Social Welfare payments is maintained and where possible enhanced to ensure that all share in the fruits of economic growth.
- To develop proposals to progress the individualisation of Social Welfare payments in the context of continuation of joint assessment of means.
- To remove poverty traps, particularly for low paid workers, and improve the real income position of employees.

Actions

1. Achievement of income adequacy will be progressed through:
 - specific measures developed within this Framework;
 - the arrangements for pay which target those on low incomes;
 - the introduction of a statutory national minimum wage; and
 - tax provisions in accordance with the objectives of this Programme which benefit those on low but taxable incomes.
2. In the context of the increased living standards provided for in this Programme, substantial progress will be made over the period of this Programme towards a target of £100 per week for the lowest rates of social welfare. The issue of relative income poverty will be examined by the Working Group (provided for below) to be established to examine benchmarking and indexation issues. In the event that economic growth in excess of the expected rates on which this Programme is based generates additional resources, achieving increased rates will be a high priority.

Social Welfare Payments

3. Recognising the complex issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments, a Working Group will be established with an independent Chairperson to examine the issues, including their long-term economic, budgetary, PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications, in light of trends in economic, demographic and labour market patterns and to report by April 2001.
4. Child Benefit, as a key mechanism to reduce levels of child poverty and to provide child income support, will be substantially increased over the period of this Programme, with a priority focus towards £100 per month for the third and subsequent children.
5. Over the course of the Programme, Child Dependent Allowances will be payable to all social welfare recipients where the child is under 22 and in full-time education.
6. All rates of social welfare will be increased in real terms over the life of this Programme. The rate of increase will reflect the availability of resources and increasing rates will have a high priority in the event that economic growth in excess of the expected rate on which this Programme is based generates additional resources.

Social Insurance System

7. Working Groups will be established:
 - to produce proposals to progress the implementation of administrative individualisation within the Social Welfare system, and
 - to produce proposals for the development of a fully inclusive social insurance model which would facilitate combining work and family responsibilities in the context of changing working and social patterns.
8. The importance of the role of the Social Insurance System in the overall provision of social protection is recognised. The establishment of a Social Insurance Fund Board with representation from the social partners will be examined.

Carers

9. A new social insurance-based Carers' Benefit and associated protection of employment rights as announced in Budget 2000 will be implemented. The valuable contribution of Carers is being supported through increases in Respite Care Grants, extra funding for the Carers Association and further allocations to the Health Boards for the benefit of Carers.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

10. In the context of the forthcoming review of the SWA System, a user-friendly publication will be produced outlining CWO guidelines on the operation of discretion.
11. The issue of clawbacks in supplementary welfare payments (whereby increases in welfare payments lead to decreases in other allowances and payments) will be considered in the context of the SWA review.

Other

12. Social Welfare legislation will be amended in 2000 to allow claimants who could be eligible for more than one type of unemployment payment to choose the payment which gives greater benefit.

3.3 Urban Disadvantage

Objectives

- To tackle the spatial concentration of unemployment, poverty and exclusion in urban communities.
- To improve the lives of people living in disadvantaged urban communities by helping them to acquire the skills and supports necessary to avail of employment and development opportunities.
- To empower and support the involvement of local communities, in particular those affected by poverty and social exclusion, in the regeneration of their own areas.
- To improve the physical and social infrastructure of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods through a programme of targeted investment.

Actions

Local Development

1. An integrated programme of local development will be based on the experience of Sub Programme 2 of the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999. Funding has been provided under the new National Development Plan to ensure the smooth transition from the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development to the new Regional Programmes.
2. An URBAN II Initiative, which will include EU funding of €5m, incorporating best practice from the existing URBAN Initiative, will be introduced.
3. The four Irish Territorial Employment Pacts will be funded during the period of this Programme. The Pacts are engaged in mobilising social partner support to tackle unemployment at local level.

Drugs

4. Local Drugs Task Forces will continue to be funded to undertake initiatives to combat drugs misuse in their areas. In addition, funding will also be provided to urban areas outside the Local Task Force areas where an emerging drug problem is evident.
5. Funding will be provided from the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund for the provision of facilities, and through support services for young people at risk of becoming involved in drug misuse.
6. Subject to the evaluation of the pilot phase of the project, the Springboard Initiative under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children will provide funding for projects to support vulnerable families and children.
7. The overall operation of the National Drugs Strategy will be reviewed and evaluated in the period of this Programme. As the number of drug misusers taking treatment increases, the requirement to provide training and employment opportunities to assist them towards a full recovery will also increase. In the context of the review of the National Drugs Strategy, workplace initiatives dealing with drug misuse will be considered.

8. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in conjunction with the Garda Authorities and the Probation and Welfare Service, will continue to develop programmes for young persons at risk of offending.

Integrated Services Process

9. The experience of the Integrated Services Process will be taken on board in policy development and will be used to inform the delivery of public services to communities in disadvantaged areas.

Community Development Programme

10. Additional funding will be made available to expand the number of groups participating in the Community Development Programme under the aegis of the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs.

Urban and Town Renewal Schemes

11. The Urban Renewal Scheme will continue to make a strategic contribution to renewing the infrastructure of designated areas under the scheme. A new Town Renewal Scheme is being introduced which will encourage the renewal of small towns.

Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems

12. The Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development systems has set a framework in place for more integrated structures. County/City Development Boards are currently addressing urban disadvantage through the design of strategies for economic, social and cultural development in their areas.

State Agencies

13. The Industrial Development Authority and other Government Agencies, in pursuit of their overall objective of balanced regional development, will have regard to the needs of urban disadvantaged communities.

Other

14. Strategies being pursued elsewhere in this Programme (including those in relation to employment, affordable housing, childcare and income adequacy) will also contribute to addressing urban disadvantage.
15. The principles of partnership and involvement of the social partners, all State Agencies and local communities will continue to mark the development and implementation of initiatives to combat urban disadvantage.

3.4 Rural Poverty

Objectives

- To address poverty and social exclusion in rural areas in a comprehensive and sustained manner.
- To promote the economic and social development of rural communities so that the overall targets of the NAPS can be achieved in rural areas.
- To empower and support the involvement of local communities, in particular those affected by poverty and social exclusion, in the regeneration of their own areas.
- To continue to improve the physical and social infrastructure in smaller towns and villages having regard to the resources of the National Development Plan.

Actions

White Paper on Rural Development

1. The strategy set out in the White Paper on Rural Development provides the basis for action to achieve the objectives set out above.

Rural Proofing and Access to Services

2. Procedures for rural proofing of all national policies are in place and will be supported by detailed guidelines for Departments early in the period covered by this Programme. Taken in conjunction with other policy proofing arrangements (in particular poverty proofing and equality proofing), issues of rural poverty will be mainstreamed in a comprehensive way.
3. Access to key public services (including education, transport and healthcare) will be improved.

Local Government Reform

4. The strategies for economic, social and cultural development being drawn up by the County/City Development Boards will provide a framework for addressing rural poverty at county level.
5. Measures to promote the participation and empowerment of rural communities will include community involvement in Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) under Local Government reform, as well as the establishment of the Rural Development Forum set out in the White Paper on Rural Development.

Local Development Framework

6. An integrated programme of local development will be based on the experience of Sub-Programme 2 of the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999. Funding has been provided under the new National Development Plan to ensure the smooth transition from the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999 to the new Regional Programmes.
7. The continuation of the LEADER Programme and of the local development initiatives of the rural Area Partnerships will support the development of the rural economy. Resources will be allocated for targeted measures, including community enterprise, community development, services for unemployed people and community capacity building, in accordance with the provisions of the National Development Plan.

Community Development Programme

8. The number of Community Development Programme projects will continue to be expanded in rural areas.

Farm Assist

9. The Farm Assist Scheme provides income supports for low-income farm families, and is targeted in particular at low-income farmers with children. The scheme will continue to benefit from general increases in social welfare rates. The scheme will be enhanced and its operation will be reviewed during the period of this Programme to ensure that it continues to meet its objectives.

Town Renewal Scheme

10. The Town Renewal Scheme will make a strategic contribution to renewing the infrastructure of designated areas under the Scheme and will encourage the renewal of small towns.

General

11. The strategies being pursued elsewhere in this Programme, particularly in relation to rural development, lifelong learning, employment, healthcare, affordable housing, enterprise, transport and education, will have a particular impact on rural poverty.

3.5 Local Governance

Objectives

- To maximise the involvement and participation of local communities in the democratic process through the continued reform of Local Government structures and processes.
- To enhance the policy making role of elected representatives.
- To ensure greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of Local Government at all levels.
- To ensure that the integration of Local Government and local development structures builds on the strengths and values of both systems.
- To allow local sectoral interests, including the social partners, to participate alongside elected representatives in the development of policy for their Local Authorities by way of Strategic Policy Committees.
- To proceed with the programme of Local Government renewal, strengthening local democracy and focusing on quality customer service and value for money.
- To enhance the role of Local Government in local economic, social and cultural development, in particular through the work of the new County/City Development Boards.
- To embed the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in Local Authority actions, policies and initiatives.

Actions

1. New Local Authority Strategic Policy Committees will allow local sectoral interests to participate alongside elected local councillors in the development of policy.
2. A Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development will be drawn up by each County/City Development Board. These strategies, which will be in place by 2002, will be the framework for Local Authority, local development, and State agency actions at local level.
3. The County/City Development Boards will have an explicit social inclusion focus in their strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, as well as a clear focus on the long term economic development of their areas .
4. The Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems will continue to monitor and drive the County/City Development Board process.
5. The Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, and the Combat Poverty Agency will jointly introduce the NAPS initiative in Local Authorities.
6. Local Authorities will continue to expand their role in social inclusion.
7. The Local Government reform process seeks, as a matter of policy, to include participation by representatives of the social partners in its deliberative mechanism by way of Strategic Policy Committees and County/City Development Boards. The process will also seek to develop consultative arrangements between the social partners and the monitoring committees which have been set up to monitor the implementation of Integrated Area Plans.

3.6 Targeted Investments in Disadvantaged Areas

Objectives

- To develop a specific integrated policy focus, across the Social Inclusion measures identified in the National Development Plan, directed at the social groups who are excluded, especially where cumulative disadvantage is pervasive.
- To tackle, in particular, the spatial concentrations of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, following objective selection criteria in the 25 most deprived urban and rural communities, including Local Authority housing estates with the greatest development needs.
- To stem the social and economic costs of social exclusion by developing a range of integrated measures such that the physical, social and community infrastructure of designated communities is developed to allow them to harness the social capital and capacity necessary for economic and community development.

Actions

1. An Interdepartmental Committee will be established to identify and clarify the range of existing and proposed social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan from which integrated targeted intervention measures can be developed.
2. This Committee, following detailed consultations with the social partners, when formulating its proposals will have regard to the experiences and implications of:
 - the Local Development Framework;
 - the Integrated Services Process and the Integrated Area Plan Process;
 - the URBAN Initiative (especially the consultative and delivery mechanisms developed by Local Authorities to implement this initiative);
 - the Territorial Employment Pacts;
 - the National Drugs Strategy (incl. the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund);
 - the Community Development Programme;
 - the Family Services Project;
 - the Integration of the Local Government and Local Development Systems; and
 - the consultative, planning and construction timeframes for infrastructural projects.
3. The Committee will make recommendations to the Government by December 2000, enabling the 25 areas to be designated with a prioritised list of measures that can be implemented within a three year time frame.
4. The Committee will be charged with exploring all avenues and actions that can be front loaded, within their budget lines, at the 25 designated areas, following their designation. Due account must be taken of existing and planned delivery mechanisms. It is acknowledged that substantial increases in funding are planned for social inclusion measures under the NDP. This process seeks to ensure that these funds and actions are co-ordinated and targeted at the areas of greatest need.

3.7 Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation

Objectives

- To aim to ensure that every household has access to affordable, secure, good quality housing appropriate to their needs.
- To increase the supply of social housing (both Local Authority and voluntary sector) and affordable housing to meet rising needs, in accordance with the targets set in the NDP.
- To improve the physical condition of existing social housing stock.
- To comprehensively address the problem of homelessness.
- To meet the accommodation needs of other specific groups i.e. Travellers, older people, people with disabilities, and women experiencing violence in the home.
- To reform the private rented residential sector taking account of the recommendations of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector.

Actions

New Housing

1. The Local Authority housing programme will be expanded to deliver a total of 22,000 new house starts in the four years 2000 - 2003.
2. The Department of the Environment and Local Government has established a Voluntary Housing Unit to develop all aspects of the sector. The Unit will have a mechanism for active consultation with voluntary housing providers and other relevant interests. The voluntary housing programme will be expanded to deliver a total of 5,400 additional units in the four year period 2000 - 2003.
3. The Department of the Environment and Local Government will examine new models of voluntary housing, including employer housing and expansion of the definition of voluntary housing.
4. The targets set out in the National Development Plan for the provision of affordable housing for low to middle income purchasers under the Local Authority Affordable Housing Scheme and the Shared Ownership Scheme will be achieved. Local Authorities will be supported in implementing the social and affordable housing provisions set out in Part V of the Planning and Development Bill when enacted.
5. The operation of the Tenant Purchase and Shared Ownership Schemes will be kept under review by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Private Rented Sector

6. The forthcoming report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector will form the basis for reforming the sector and, in particular, for addressing a number of issues, including security of tenure, appropriate regulation and enforcement; achieving an appropriate balance between the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants; measures to increase investment in, and supply of, rented accommodation; and the removal of constraints to the development of the sector.

Homelessness

7. The recommendations of the forthcoming report of the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness, which will deal with how to put in place a range of accommodation and other services provided by both statutory and voluntary agencies, to provide a continuum of care, recognising the varying and diverse needs of homeless persons, will be examined urgently.

Home Improvement Measures

8. Increased funding is being provided to develop further the range of targeted home improvement measures. These measures include the Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grants Schemes, the Task Force on Special Housing Aid for the Elderly, and the scheme of improvement works in lieu of Local Authority housing.
9. Improvements to Local Authority housing stock, including regeneration of Ballymun and inner city flat complexes and funding for the Remedial Works Scheme, will be continued.

Student Accommodation

10. The Government will evaluate the impact of the incentives introduced in the Finance Act, 1999, on the supply of accommodation for students and will consider further action in the light of the results of the evaluation.

Traveller Accommodation

11. Local Traveller Accommodation programmes adopted during the lifetime of this Programme, including the target for Traveller specific accommodation set by each Local Authority, will be monitored and the procedures evaluated in the light of their effectiveness in meeting the backlog of Traveller accommodation provision.

Housing/Estate Management

12. Measures to improve the management of Local Authority housing estates / flat complexes, including more effective participation by tenants and residents with the relevant Local Authorities, will be kept under review by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. An inter-agency approach will be adopted, building on the experience of the Integrated Services Process, to ensure that wider community development aspects are incorporated.
13. The development of professional accreditation standards for housing management will be explored.

Building Regulations

14. The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will amend Part M of the National Building Regulations by mid-2000. The focus of the amendment of the Regulations is to make houses visitable by people with disabilities. This will require houses which are subject to application for planning permission to comply with Part M as amended.
15. The mandating of visitable new housing on or after 1 January, 2001, will be a significant step towards achieving Lifetime Adaptable Housing (LAH).
16. The question of progressing towards full LAH throughout the house, including upper level(s), will be kept under review in the light of experience of the implementation of the planned Building Regulations.

Housing Forum

17. The Housing Forum referred to in Framework II will, as part of its terms of reference, monitor the implementation of the housing measures set out in both Frameworks II and III of this Programme.

Other

18. The need to develop strategies to increase local community support for the provision of housing and accommodation for groups facing discrimination will be addressed.
19. A housing information and advice infrastructure will be provided.

3.8 Social Economy

Objectives

- To promote the emergence and consolidation of the social economy.
- To maximise the potential of the social economy to generate employment that is sustainable and of high quality, subject to labour market constraints.
- To regenerate both urban and rural communities by providing urgently needed local services, employment opportunities and experience for people who have been distanced from the labour market.

Actions

Social Economy Programme

1. A dedicated Social Economy Programme will be introduced, based on the principles and recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the Social Economy, set up under *Partnership 2000*, to which the social partners are committed.
2. When fully operational, the dedicated Social Economy Programme will provide for an annual investment of £41 million. Resources from the NDP will be made available to allow for the immediate start-up of Social Economy initiatives. It will be funded partially through a reallocation on a phased basis of a proportion of funding currently committed to the Community Employment (CE) scheme. It will include a reallocation of participants and supervisory staff currently committed to CE. Funding from the remodelling of the FÁS Community Enterprise Programme will also be available. Funding will be kept under review.
3. The Programme will provide a range of services, encourage new types of services and provide employment along a continuum between commercial and statutory service provision.
4. The Programme will be particularly targeted at disadvantaged communities and long-term unemployed people.
5. The Operating Framework for the Programme, developed by the Monitoring Committee, will be implemented at both national and local levels, involving community interests and organisations in planning, implementation and monitoring at local level.
6. The Social Economy Programme will provide funding for three types of enterprise:
 - Community Businesses, ultimately financed from trading income alone and which would be expected to move into self sustaining viability in the medium term;
 - Deficient Demand Social Economy Enterprises, where the demand for particular goods and services within a community is not matched by resources to pay for them, due to disadvantage or low density of population; and
 - Enterprises based on public sector contracts, where public sector expenditure in disadvantaged areas and communities is sub-contracted to local social economy enterprises.

3.9 Supporting Voluntary Effort and Participation

Objectives

- To enhance the quality of life for citizens and civil society by promoting, encouraging and sustaining all forms of voluntarism and participation.
- To promote the participation of people from low income groups and young people in representative democratic processes.
- To enhance the capacity of communities experiencing disadvantage (whether geographical or sectoral) to articulate their collective interests and to participate in community activity, in partnership with public authorities.
- To develop training and support mechanisms so that individuals, communities and organisations can develop a self-sustaining ethos grounded in volunteering and can engage with their communities and civil society as a whole.
- To support the community and voluntary sector and be informed by its views and experiences when formulating and devising strategies to tackle disadvantage, exclusion and poverty.

Actions

White Paper

1. A White Paper on Relations between the Community and Voluntary sector and the State Sector will be published in April 2000. It will recognise the role of the Community and Voluntary sector in policy development, in the provision of services and development activities, and will provide for greater assurance in regard to the funding of the voluntary and community sector. It will also provide for the establishment of a monitoring / implementation committee with representation from the sector.
2. The institutional machinery underpinning all forms of civil participation will be strengthened and nurtured, especially that part which focuses on disadvantage and low participation.
3. A range of Community and Voluntary sector based supports will be provided to promote, sustain and develop voluntary effort and participation in the context of the White Paper.

UN Year of the Volunteer

4. The UN Year of the Volunteer will provide a focus for activity to support volunteering. Before then, a National Committee on Volunteering will be established, with participation from relevant interests, which will devise strategies and actions for supporting and developing volunteering.

Foundation for Investing in Communities

5. The “Business in the Community” activities of the Foundation for Investing in Communities will involve innovative private sector actions which will lead to greater investment by businesses and their employees. This will channel financial and other resources to voluntary and community based projects in disadvantaged communities.

Encouraging Voter Participation in Elections

6. A new Electoral Participation Initiative will be instituted with the task of encouraging maximum voter participation in elections, including a voter education programme. The initiative will focus particularly on communities experiencing disadvantage and on young people.

3.10 Healthcare

Objectives

- To improve the health status of the population, capitalising on the significant expansion of health service resources in recent years.
- To improve access to quality healthcare services in order to strengthen social inclusion and cohesion and also to monitor socio-economic health inequalities.
- To promote models of primary/community healthcare.
- To promote general health and well-being through strengthened health promotion policies, health research and the creation of a supportive environment, with particular emphasis on at risk groups as indicated in lifestyle surveys or named in NAPS.
- To improve the effectiveness of the health service, using the significant increases planned in health spending over the period of this Programme.

Actions

Implementation of Health Strategies

1. Significant progress will be made in implementing the strategies outlined in the National Health Strategy - *Shaping a Healthier Future*. It will take account of a range of strategies and policies (including the Health Promotion Strategy, the Plan for Women's Health, the National Cancer Strategy, the National Cardiovascular Strategy, the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme Review and the forthcoming Children's Strategy).
2. Strategies being pursued elsewhere in this Programme (including those in relation to income adequacy and equality measures) will also have a significant impact on health outcomes.

Health Infrastructure

3. The Health Capital Strategy set out in the National Development Plan will allow major capital investment in health infrastructure to be provided on a planned basis. The NDP will provide significant extra capacity in the health services for the provision of step down facilities, rehabilitation, convalescent beds and other related measures. Community Nursing Units for older people will be planned to ensure greater integration with hospital services.

Review of Bed Capacity

4. The whole question of bed capacity in both acute and non-acute settings will be a matter for immediate attention by the Department of Health and Children in conjunction with the Department of Finance and in consultation with the social partners, with specific reference to the trend in demands for health services in the last 10 years. Integral components of this review of capacity will be examinations of:
 - the day work carried out in hospitals with a view to establishing the adequacy and appropriateness of day care facilities, given the 9-10% per annum increase in day activity in recent years; and
 - the organisation and use of operating theatre facilities, with a view to possible increased efficiency in the area.

Health Promotion

5. A new Health Promotion Strategy 2000 - 2005 is at an advanced stage of drafting. Health promotion and education activities will be further developed, in partnership with the community, and will be targeted at specific areas such as smoking, healthy eating, and lifestyle changes. All Health Boards will continue to earmark funding for health promotion to be delivered at the level of the workplace. Health promotion programmes and evidenced-based health screening programmes will be developed in consultation with the social partners. The new strategy will include a range of specific actions targeted at communities and groups at risk, with a focus on community development approaches to health and literacy-sensitive promotional material.

Medical Cards

6. The Health Board CEOs are examining the operation of the Medical Card scheme and will consult with the social partners by the end of 2000. Particular emphasis will be placed on the needs of families with children, and on removing anomalies and barriers to take-up, including information deficits.

Drugs Services

7. Treatment and rehabilitation services for drug misusers will be expanded. Health Board structures and information systems in this area will be strengthened.

Mental Health

8. Legislation will be enacted to reform the laws on mental health in order to promote and foster higher standards and more modern practices in the delivery of mental health services including community care. The Department of Health and Children will support initiatives to provide independent advocacy services for people who are involuntarily detained under the provisions of the new Mental Health Bill.

Women's Health

9. The Women's Health Council has been put on a proper administrative footing. A Director and support staff have been appointed, with adequate financial resources. The Council are now in an improved position to give effect to their Strategic Plan which has, as a priority, the monitoring of the implementation of the Plan for Women's Health.
10. The Plan for Women's Health will be evaluated so as to progress its implementation. Both evaluation and implementation will have specific actions and targets with respect to women experiencing disadvantage.

Services for People with Disabilities

11. The Department of Health and Children, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Finance will set up and participate in a Working Group which will consult with the social partners to examine the feasibility of introducing a Cost of Disability Payment.
12. Services for persons with an intellectual, physical or sensory disability will be further extended and developed, having regard to the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities and to assessments of need carried out by the Department of Health and Children. In relation to people with an intellectual disability and to autism, there is still a backlog of need for residential, respite and day services. The Department of Health and Children is committed to clearing this backlog over the next three years.

13. Capital funding for development in these areas will be based on the funding in the National Development Plan, including the provision of substantial additional residential, respite, and day care facilities. In the context of the development of a national database for physical and sensory disability services, an examination of the needs of this group will be carried out.
14. The Government are committed to the development of the range of support services, including home supports, to enable people with disabilities to live in the community with the maximum degree of independence. The Department of Health and Children will ensure that in developing services in relation to implementing the report *Towards an Independent Future*, priority is given to respite care day care and home supports comprising home helps, home care attendants and personal assistants.

Children

15. Child protection services will be strengthened, including the provision of training and personnel, based on the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children - *Children First*. The National Children's Strategy, when completed, will underpin child protection and child care services generally.

Travellers' Health

16. The Traveller Health Advisory Committee is currently drafting a national traveller health strategy which will be published by the Minister for Health and Children early in the life of this Programme. The policy will provide for:
 - the appointment in each Health Board of an appropriate person to co-ordinate initiatives in relation to Traveller health, where such a person has not already been appointed; and
 - regular reports by the Traveller Health Units in health boards to the Traveller Health Advisory Committee in the Department of Health and Children, to include details in relation to the spending of funding allocated to the Boards for Traveller health.

Suicide Prevention

17. Suicide prevention programmes will be developed in all health board areas, in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on Suicide. The particular concerns regarding suicide and young people will be addressed. All recommendations of the Task Force on Suicide will be implemented during the period of this Programme.

Community Health Services

18. Within the terms of the NDP, a programme of refurbishment and upgrading of community health centres is to be completed during the period of this Programme. In the context of Health Boards' consideration and planning of new health centres, the Department of Health and Children proposes to recommend to Boards that such centres should, where appropriate, be multi-functional providing a comprehensive range of services for different care groups.
19. At least four pilots of differing models of primary care services will be carried out which will explore ways of moving further towards 24 hour seven day primary care. These pilots will be monitored and evaluated in conjunction with the social partners and reported on during the course of this Programme. This is aimed at the further development of a responsive out of hours community based health service, one of the main objectives being to reduce the numbers of people who need to be admitted to acute hospitals while still providing service appropriate to their needs.

20. Consultative fora will be established at regional level, involving all community-based health service staff, including GPs, to facilitate the provision of an integrated community-based health service.

21. In addressing the challenge of access to healthcare services in rural areas, the commitments in the White Paper on Rural Development will be adhered to. The local health centres which are to be provided under the NDP will include facilities for information technology support and training support for health professionals in rural areas.

Skills Needs of Health Service

22. A Health Services Skills Group will be established involving the social partners, relevant Government Departments and agencies and third level institutions, with a representative Steering Group. The role of this Group will be to:

- identify in a systematic way the skills needs of different sectors of the health service, including theatre personnel, and advise on the actions needed to address them;
- develop estimating techniques that will assist in anticipating future skills needs of the health service and their associated resource requirements;
- advise on the promotion of the education and continuous training needed to meet the skills needs of the sector;
- advise on how to improve awareness amongst job seekers and school leavers of the opportunities for skilled employment in the health sector; and
- in the context of the emerging community-based services, to examine the role and skills needs of care workers.

Welfare of Health Service Workers

23. The Department of Health and Children will introduce a pilot welfare scheme for health service workers following discussion and agreement with health service employers and trade unions.

24. The Department of Health and Children will have a review of security arrangements in Accident and Emergency units in hospitals carried out in consultation with hospital management and unions. Additional revenue resources will be made available to implement the findings of this review.

Health Research

25. Resources will be allocated to health research as part of a comprehensive approach to ensuring adequate medium and long-term planning of health provision. Data systems will be adapted to enable dis-aggregation of health access and outcomes across NAPS target groups. This data will be monitored and reported on at national level.

26. A Working Group will be set up in 2000 to identify the scope for developing a NAPS framework within the health sector.

Other

27. Progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Nursing will be made through the monitoring mechanism established under this Programme.

3.11 Older People

Objectives

- All retired persons should have an adequate income to enable them to live in dignity and to share the benefits of economic growth.

Actions

1. During the period of this Programme, the level of State Old Age pensions will be improved in line with the commitments given in the Review of the Government's *Action Programme for the Millennium*.
2. Administrative individualisation of old age pension payments will be examined by the Working Group considering the feasibility of administrative individualisation within the overall Social Welfare system.
3. Where they meet the contribution conditions, persons caring for older people will benefit from the new social insurance based Carers Benefit as announced in Budget 2000.
4. The Report of the National Council on Ageing and Older People, *The Future Organisation of Home Help Services in Ireland* represents a comprehensive review of home help services. This report is being implemented and its implementation will be monitored and reported on over the course of the Programme.
5. The Equality Authority has established an Advisory Committee covering the rights of older people. Recommendations emerging from the Equality Authority in relation to older people will be considered by the social partners to establish how they might be carried forward.
6. In accordance with the commitment in *Partnership 2000*, the Government will continue to review the income tax allowance and exemption limits for those over 65 years with a view to further assisting the position of the aged.

3.12 Equality

Objectives

- To create a fair and inclusive society by putting in place a strategic framework for action on equality in accordance with the NESC Strategy Document.
- To develop an effective equality infrastructure which will support the achievement of equality objectives in the nine categories covered by equality legislation.
- To ensure that the necessary institutional structures are in place and that they are enabled to play their role in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality.
- To develop arrangements, including administrative procedures, for mainstreaming equality issues.
- To provide a range of supports for groups experiencing disadvantage and inequality.

Actions

While the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will provide overall support and advice on equality, all Departments and agencies will have a key role to play in supporting equality of opportunity and bringing about changes in attitude.

Legislative Framework

1. A legislative framework has been put in place and will underpin activity and policy in the area of equality covering the following categories: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. This framework will be augmented by the provisions of the Equal Status Bill when enacted.

Institutional Support

2. A number of new institutions, including the Equality Authority, the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations, and the National Disability Authority, have been established whose remit is to contribute to equality areas. The National Committee on Racism and Interculturalism also has a contribution to make.
3. The strategies set out elsewhere in this Programme, particularly those in relation to childcare and healthcare, are closely linked to equality issues and these will be pursued in an integrated way.

Equality Proofing

4. The *Partnership 2000* Report on Equality Proofing will inform the development of equality proofing. An initial learning phase of proofing will be commenced during 2000 and its core elements will reflect the recommendations contained in the Report. The participation of the groups named in the Employment Equality Act, 1998, will be facilitated in relation to the Equality Proofing process.
5. The review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will also have a significant impact on equality matters, with particular reference to integrating equality proofing with other proofing systems.

Monitoring

6. Monitoring of outcomes from an equality perspective will be a key requirement. Monitoring mechanisms including a number of relevant committees and institutional arrangements are being put in place to address the matter.

Equality at Enterprise Level

7. The importance of developing equal opportunities at enterprise level is underscored by the framework agreed between IBEC, ICTU and Public Service Employers, as set out in Annex III to Framework I.

Advisory Committees

8. The Equality Authority has established Advisory Committees covering the rights of older people and equality issues in relation to sexual orientation. Recommendations emerging from the Equality Authority in relation to these Committees will be considered by the social partners to establish how they might be carried forward.

Gender Equality

Mainstreaming Gender Equality

9. In the light of the recommendations in the Gender Proofing Guidelines set out in the *Partnership 2000* Report, and commitments in the National Development Plan, the Government will mainstream gender equality issues across all Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan. This will include gender impact assessment and the development of indicators to promote equal opportunities between women and men in respect of all Operational Programmes and measures, including the mandatory inclusion of equal opportunities among the project selection criteria for all measures.
10. The Equality Authority will work with State agencies with a view to promoting gender equality.
11. A review of the overall structures for monitoring and implementation of present commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, and the recommendations of the Second Commission on the Status of Women will be undertaken.

Disaggregated Data

12. A co-ordinated strategy including the relevant Government Departments, the Equality Authority and the Central Statistics Office will develop a system for the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data for women and, in relation to health, education and training, for Travellers.

Pay Differentials

13. A consultative group, chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, and including the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and the social partners will:
 - oversee the finalisation of the ESRI Report on Male/Female Wage Differentials, undertaken following a commitment in *Partnership 2000*;
 - consider its recommendations including the case for a sectoral analysis in both the public and private sectors; and
 - develop proposals for action/s to address issues identified in the Report for consideration by Government.

14. Measures to tackle gender segregation in the labour market will be established. This will be pursued under Equality Positive Actions of the National Development Plan.

Women in Decision Making

15. The low representation of women at decision making levels will be examined by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in consultation with the social partners, during the course of this Programme. The work being done under the SMI process will be used to further enhance the position of women in management roles in the Civil Service and the wider Public Service.

Tackling Violence Against Women

16. The work of the Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and the Regional Committees which have been established will inform the measures to be implemented to support women who are victims of violence and will assist in making progress towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Specifically, this will provide for improved funding for the provision of services to victims, for the provision of emergency accommodation, education programmes, research, the undertaking of a Public Awareness Campaign, the establishment of a National Referral Helpline, and the establishment of perpetrator programmes. Clear criteria in relation to the allocation of funding will be developed in conjunction with the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women. The Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Health and Children will progress these measures.
17. A review of the structures for monitoring and implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women will be undertaken by the end of 2001.

Disability

Legislative Reform

18. A Disabilities Bill will be prepared and published during the period of this programme. It will provide a legislative basis to advance and underpin participation by people with disabilities in society and will involve consultations with the social partners.

Accessibility of Public Services

19. Each Government Department will ensure that reasonable steps are taken to make its services and those of agencies under its remit accessible to people with disabilities. To facilitate effective action and acceptable standards in this regard, the National Disability Authority will issue guidelines in accordance with international norms and will award an accessibility symbol to compliant public offices. Government Departments and agencies will take all reasonable action to qualify within five years.
20. Adequate resources will be provided to the National Disability Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to monitor, guide and audit progress towards the achievement of this commitment.

Statistical Needs

21. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will put arrangements in place to review and identify key statistical needs in relation to people with disabilities or categories of people with disabilities for the purposes of informing policy, planning and the delivery of services.

Transition to New Structures

22. Following the implementation of the structures outlined in the Report of the *Establishment Group for the National Disability Authority and Disability Support Service*, it is accepted that the year 2000 is a transition year. Health Boards and other relevant organisations will ensure that robust plans for the training, work and employment of people with disabilities are in place for implementation during the period 2001 - 2003. New employment and training arrangements will have, as a priority, clear progression routes for people with disabilities from sheltered work, supported work and sheltered employment to employment options in the open labour market.
23. During the transitional period of year 2000:
- the Department of Health and Children will focus on the development of a suitable training policy document for persons with a disability, in consultation with the social partners and people with disabilities, embracing the appropriate recommendations of the NACTE Report and the introduction of a Code of Practice for the operation of Sheltered Workshops;
 - in this context, the Working Group on a Code of Practice for Sheltered Workshops will become operational immediately. The Code will address workplace conditions and relations and specifically, contractual status and remuneration; and
 - a review of funding of sheltered workshops will be undertaken by the Department of Health and Children and reported on in Autumn 2000.

Vocational Training

24. FÁS will review existing vocational training programmes for people with disabilities with a view to achieving a more integrated, mainstreamed approach. There will be an increased emphasis, for people with disabilities in vocational training, on progression to employment.
25. Existing funding mechanisms for training of people with disabilities will be reviewed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS with the objective of streamlining the system and achieving consistency of approach with other participants on FÁS courses.
26. FÁS will continue to improve the accessibility of its premises for people with disabilities and will provide technical aids, where required, for the provision of vocational training, counselling and guidance.

Employment of People with Disabilities

27. Every Department will take appropriate action to ensure that agencies under its aegis achieve the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service at an early date.
28. A review of the employment of people with disabilities in the Civil Service will be undertaken to ascertain the ongoing adherence to the 3% employment quota.
29. The integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market is a major objective of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, from the perspectives of both social inclusion and labour supply.

30. The social partners have a major role to play in raising awareness and promoting the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. To that end, the following commitments will be pursued:

- the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will provide funding to the social partners to engage in joint actions/initiatives to stimulate awareness and promote the employment of people with disabilities in enterprises;
- the Employment Support Scheme will be vigorously promoted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in collaboration with the social partners. Funding for the scheme will be increased over the lifetime of this Programme with a view to achieving a target of 1,000 placements;
- funding available to employers under the Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant Scheme for adaptations to the workplace to accommodate people with disabilities will be increased over the lifetime of this Programme;
- to assist the integration of people with disabilities in the workforce, grants will be available to enterprises for disability awareness training programmes;
- grants will be available to employers to train or re-train employees who acquire a disability in the course of their working lives;
- the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, with FÁS, will strengthen the profile of the Positive to Disability Scheme which recognises enterprises that take a positive approach to the employment of people with disabilities;
- the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will examine existing disincentives to people with disabilities taking up employment and will seek to address those disincentives in consultation with other Departments; and
- the National Supported Employment Programme will be further developed over the period of this Programme in consultation with the social partners and relevant organisations. Ensuring high standards in the operation of the programme and ensuring that people with disabilities are afforded full employment status and rights will be primary considerations.

Sheltered Employment

31. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will review existing sheltered employment models and will consider their role and potential for enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Refugees

32. The Refugee Act, 1996, as amended will be implemented, including the appointments of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Chairperson of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, as well as the establishment of a Refugee Advisory Board. The Government continues to be committed to the target of reducing the processing time for applications to a period of 6 months.

33. A comprehensive strategy for the integration of refugees, including employment and training issues, will be developed as quickly as possible.

34. Policy on providing for asylum seekers' needs will be developed in consultation with Government Departments, State agencies, NGOs and social partners.

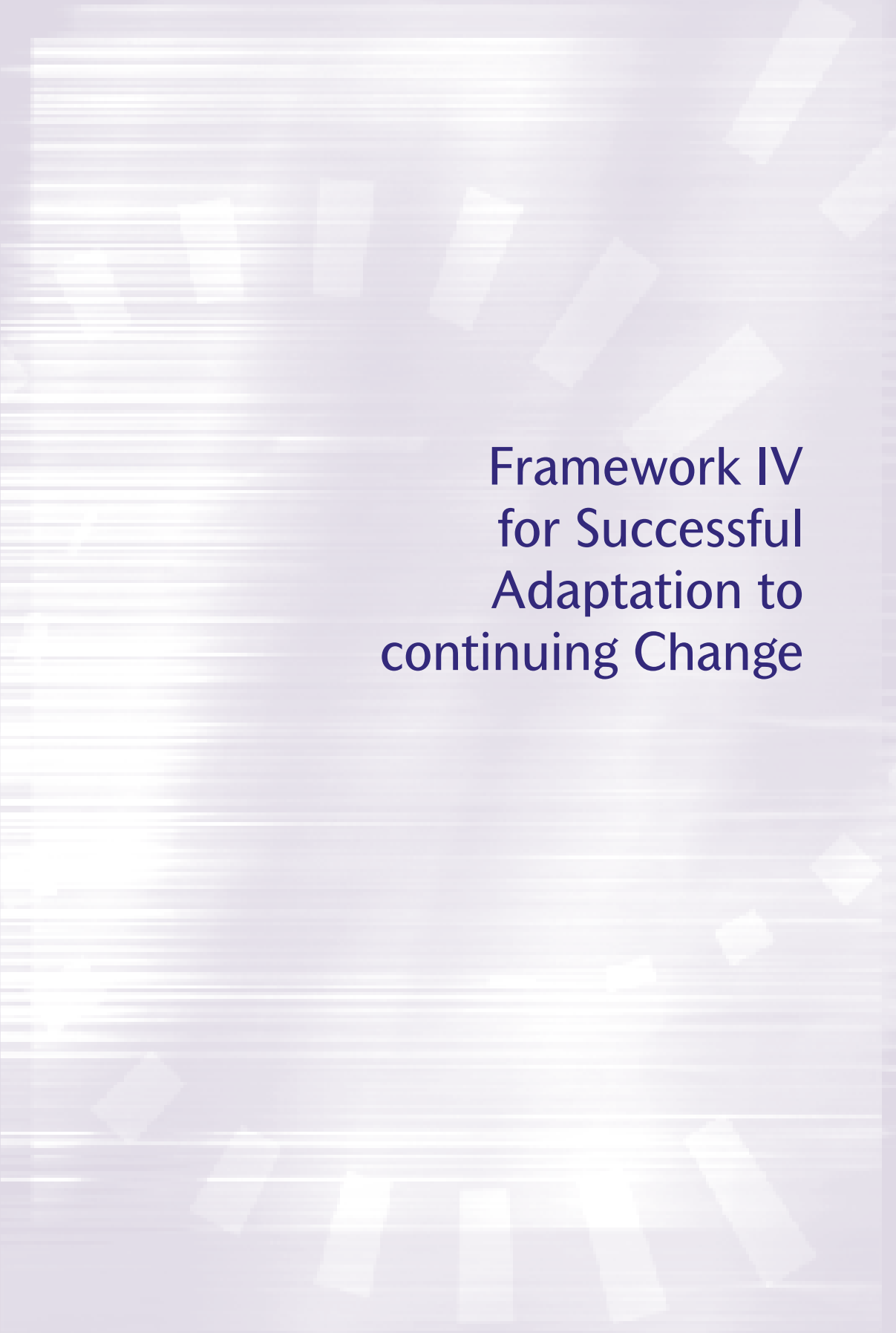
35. Adequate training will be provided for public sector workers, particularly those involved in the delivery of services to those from culturally diverse backgrounds.
36. Refugee interest groups, along with relevant Government Departments, will be represented on the statutory Refugee Advisory Board, whose remit is to advise the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on all aspects of asylum policy.
37. The role and funding of NGOs and community organisations will be reviewed and any funding available will be allocated in a cohesive and co-ordinated manner with due regard to their role in supporting asylum seekers and refugees and promoting a tolerant inclusive society.

Racism

38. Increased funding is being provided for the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism to enable it to undertake additional measures to address racism, to promote positive inclusion of minority ethnic groups, and to develop public awareness initiatives at both national and local level.
39. In view of the growing number of non-nationals finding employment in Ireland, preventing racism in the workplace is of growing importance. Building on the IBEC/ICTU code of practice against racism in the workplace, specific measures will be developed by IBEC and ICTU in conjunction with the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform and the Equality Authority as appropriate.

Travellers

40. The enactment of the Equal Status Bill, together with the Employment Equality Act, 1998, will give Travellers statutory protection against discrimination.
41. The importance of improved relations between the Traveller community and the settled community is recognised and will continue to be pursued, in particular through the Traveller Communication Strategy.
42. Implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling community will continue to be monitored by a committee of Government Departments, Traveller interests and the social partners. A progress report on the recommendations is currently being drawn up and will inform policy and activity in relation to Travellers.



**Framework IV
for Successful
Adaptation to
continuing Change**

4.1 Lifelong Learning

The NESC defines Lifelong Learning as learning over the entire life-span. It includes all learning activity, whether formal or informal, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and promoting personal fulfilment. This definition is consistent with the approach taken by other international bodies such as the OECD and the EU.

Objectives

- To provide a framework of supports, which will facilitate the achievement of universal attainment of literacy and numeracy by the completion of primary education and ensure the centrality of universal literacy and numeracy in all lifelong learning policy and practice.
- To ensure optimum participation in, and benefit from, education by children at risk and facilitate retention to completion of upper second level education.
- To provide a continuum of education provision from early childhood to third level targeted at tackling educational disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity and participation.
- To promote the achievement of high standards for all students, irrespective of background.
- To monitor the participation in education of specific groups identified in the NAPS as being most at risk and implement positive action strategies where needed.
- To eliminate unqualified early school leaving and promote optimum participation in and benefit from education and in particular, significantly increase school completion to upper second level.
- To ensure that appropriate second chance education and training opportunities are made available for those who left school early and for adults who wish to re-enter the system.
- To ensure that educational programmes and services are accessible to people in rural areas.
- To grow competitiveness and employment by supporting increased productivity through enhanced skills development at all levels of the workplace and by facilitating labour market adaptability in response to rapid technological and structural change.
- To promote the quality, responsiveness and relevance of the education and training system, both formal and non-formal, in meeting personal, social and economic needs, and in promoting citizenship, social inclusion and community advancement.
- To promote a high level of participation (by international standards) in post-secondary education and in ongoing education and training.
- To significantly increase the participation by disadvantaged groups in third level education.
- To promote the community dimension of education at every level of the system and its participation in addressing educational disadvantage.
- To deepen business-education linkages and co-operation, including in the context of curriculum formulation and resource allocation, as appropriate.
- To develop and put in place the appropriate structures to support a strategic framework for the promotion of Lifelong Learning.
- To develop a Lifelong Learning culture in the workplace.

- To ensure the provision of educational opportunities on a lifelong basis to support citizens' participation in social and economic life, targeted at those with less than upper secondary education and with a focus on meeting the demands of economic and technological change.
- To raise awareness and ensure access to learning activities at all levels of society.
- To develop further enterprise-led training processes and solutions to respond to the human resource competitive challenge.
- To ensure that resources are allocated on the basis of greatest need.

Actions

Early Childhood Education

1. The recommendations of the White Paper on Early Childhood Education *Ready to Learn* will be implemented on a phased basis. This will include the establishment of the Early Childhood Education Agency, the development of a quality framework for early education, promotion of a Quality in Education mark for providers in the sector, and the provision of targeted interventions in early education for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs.
2. A co-ordinated early literacy measure will be put in place through a public awareness campaign, promotion of a national reading initiative, improvements in the effectiveness of the school remedial service through the implementation of the recommendations of the 1998 review of the service, the development of culturally appropriate supports, including home/school/community co-operation, the development of support materials and the systematic monitoring of progress.
3. The strategy to prevent early school leaving and to support optimum participation in education to completion of upper second level education will include a range of actions at first and second levels as follows:
 - targeted improvements in school staffing;
 - at primary level, emphasis will be placed on improvement in class size in the early grades;
 - at second level, further improvements will have regard to the work of the Expert Group established by the Minister for Education and Science to look at issues of teacher allocation and deployment;
 - enhancement of the home/school/community liaison and remedial services;
 - continued expansion and development of the National Educational Psychological Service in line with the 1998 Report to the Minister for Education and Science - the target will be to ensure that all schools will have access to a service by the end of 2004;
 - the establishment of a National Educational Welfare Service, including representation by the Community and Voluntary pillar, to promote school attendance and to support children at risk to remain in school;
 - the implementation of the integrated plan to tackle educational disadvantage, *The New Deal – A Plan for Educational Opportunity*, to include annual reviews of the achievement of programme objectives;

- the establishment of an Education Disadvantage Committee, which will play an important role in informing the detailed implementation of the Plan above;
- the promotion of community links, including the role of the community and voluntary sector;
- the development of youth work responses;
- the further strengthening of the educational guidance service in schools and the further development of its links with social partner organisations;
- the development of specific measures to support the participation by Travellers and children with disabilities; and
- the consideration of a strategy to enable young parents to participate in education and training.

Teaching Profession

4. In December 1999, the then Minister for Education and Science announced the provision of 1,000 additional teaching posts in schools with effect from the beginning of the school year 2000/2001. Because of difficulties in the current supply of trained primary teachers, this allocation will be on the basis of 800 post-primary and 200 primary teachers. In this Programme, it is proposed to provide a further additional 1,500 teaching posts and, in view of the earlier imbalance, 900 of these posts will be for primary schools and 600 for post-primary schools. The 600 post-primary posts will be allocated in three annual tranches of 200 over the period of this Programme. The allocation of primary teachers will be made in the light of the teacher supply position emerging over the period of the next few years. The targeted distribution of these posts will be determined in consultation with the Partners in Education.
5. The recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary Principal will be implemented over the period of this Programme, insofar as they refer to the staffing levels at which principals become administrative principals, time to allow for teaching principals to attend to administrative functions, in-service training for principal teachers and the provision of clerical and care-taking services in schools.

Education Welfare Board

6. The Education (Welfare) Bill proposes to raise the school leaving age to 16, or completion of lower second level education, whichever is the later. The Bill provides for the registration with the Educational Welfare Board of young people aged between 16 and 18 years who intend to leave school early. The Board will draw up a plan for the further education and training of the individual, and will require that the person concerned makes all reasonable efforts to carry out the plan. It is on this basis that the Board will issue a certificate entitling the young person to work. It will not be possible for a young person aged between 16 and 18 years to be employed without a certificate. A total of £4.25 million is being allocated over the next three years for the initial establishment of the Board and the implementation of the Bill when enacted.

Special Needs Education

7. Additional resources will be provided to develop a comprehensive support service for assessment and delivery of special needs education. A Planning Group has been established on the structures and policies needed for this purpose. The Group will consult with the social partners and will be advised by the recommendations contained in the commission report on the status of people with disabilities.
8. The Department of Education and Science will appoint a dedicated high level official to take a lead role in co-ordinating the development of a continuum of supports to facilitate Traveller participation in education at every level of the system.

Education in Response to Changing Needs

9. The quality of schooling and the responsiveness of education to emerging social and economic needs will be improved through:
 - enhanced staff development programmes;
 - implementation of curricular reforms;
 - a strong emphasis on school planning and development;
 - promotion of strategies to address learning difficulties;
 - the review of junior and senior cycle programme in terms of their promotion of key educational objectives including high standards for all students and the elimination of unqualified early-school leaving, with a particular emphasis on the Leaving Certificate Vocational and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes;
 - promotion of information and communications technologies in teaching and learning; and
 - significant investment in the renewal and provision of school buildings so that modern standards are met in all schools.

Barriers to Education Participation

10. The operation of the existing scheme for exemption from second level exam fees will be reviewed to improve its effectiveness for low income families and individuals in time for the 2001 Certificate Examinations.
11. In order to address barriers to participation, progress will be made in improving the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance with respect to tapering, rate of allowance and income thresholds. Progress will also be made in ensuring that all disadvantaged children can avail of an improved school meals scheme.

Science and Languages

12. Specific initiatives to enhance the science, technology and language dimensions of provision will be implemented. This will include expanding the language focus in primary schools, addressing issues of teacher supply, and promoting the wider teaching of Italian, Spanish and other languages at second level. Strategies to increase the uptake of science will be undertaken involving staff development, capital investment, curriculum change and financial inducements to schools.

Education and Interculturalism

13. Specific resources will be provided for the education of refugees and asylum seekers. This will involve the provision of an additional teaching post on a temporary basis for a period of up to 2 years for primary and post-primary schools which have 15 or more non-English speaking pupils to ensure appropriate English language provision. These arrangements will be subject to review. In addition, the Refugee Language Support Unit, established under the auspices of Trinity College, will be provided with a budget of the order of £1.2m over the period of this Programme to co-ordinate action for language tuition for refugees to assist them along the pathway to independent living. The Adult Literacy Service will also provide assistance in this area.
14. Initiatives to promote inter-culturalism and anti-racism in all schools will be progressed through the *Social Personal and Health Education* and *Civic Social and Personal Education* programmes. This issue will also be progressed in the other formal and non-formal areas of the education system.

Second Chance Education and Training

15. Appropriate second chance education and training for those who left school early will be provided through a strengthening and consolidation of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes.

National Youth Advisory Committee

16. Participation by young people in non-formal education through youth work will be significantly enhanced and developed through:
- implementation of the Youth Work Amendment Act;
 - the provision of a strategic direction for the development of youth work will be provided through the implementation of the National Youth Work Development Plan, currently being devised by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee; and
 - ensuring the continued development of the Youth Service in advance of the implementation of the National Youth Work Development Plan.

Back-to-Education Initiative

17. In order to provide opportunities for those with inadequate educational levels or skills to access quality learning opportunities, a major expansion of provision of educational courses for young people and adults will be implemented through a Back-to-Education Initiative within the Further Education Sector. This will be achieved through a major expansion of part-time options under VTOS, Youthreach and the PLC programmes. The current number of places available for long-term unemployed people and other marginalised groups will be maintained. A proactive strategy will be undertaken to ensure maximum participation by marginalised groups, particularly the long term unemployed. Investment over the period of this Programme will total £425m and will provide for an increase of up to 11,900 part-time places annually. This will be important in providing opportunities for those in employment to upgrade their skills.

ICT Skills

18. A particular priority is to upgrade the skills of adults in the population with less than upper second level education. Within the measure, provision will be made for an Adult Basic ICT Skills programme.

Agricultural Training

19. A Task Force on Agricultural Training has been established to review the training needs of those involved in agriculture. The Task Force will deal with all relevant issues, including certification, progression and the capital investment needs of Teagasc centres, as well as private agricultural and horticultural colleges. The Task Force will also examine the future development needs of the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme.

Adult Guidance Service

20. Based on the experience of the pilot Educational Adult Guidance Service established in 2000, a national programme will be implemented on a phased basis with co-ordinated linkages to the employment services, including the guidance, counselling and psychological measure for early school leavers in Youthreach, Community Training Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres. Investment in this area over the period of the Agreement will total £6.9m.
21. Youthreach and other non-mainstream education programmes will be reviewed so as to ensure their effective operation.

National Adult Literacy Agency

22. There will be a rapid expansion of adult literacy services, and literacy/numeracy development will be integrated into ongoing education and training programmes as necessary. Over the period of this Programme, investment in the adult literacy service will total £30m, compared with a base provision of £5.665m in 1999. This will enable up to 46,000 persons to benefit from the programme. In addition, a TV literacy series will be developed in collaboration with National Adult Literacy and RTE. This will be complemented by an increased focus on Foundation and Level 1 places within the Back-to-Education initiative, so that literacy students can progress to part-time certified learning options. The Department will work closely with employers and trade unions to promote literacy for those in the workplace.

Post-Second Level Participation, including by Mature Students

23. Investment will be sustained and enhanced so that Ireland is well within the top quarter of OECD countries in terms of the participation of the population in post second level education and training, and in the quality of that education and training.
24. The Strategy will include a review of administrative, technical and management structures and guidance, student and ancillary services in the PLC sector.
25. Places will be provided to support access by mature students to third level education, allied with the promotion of “adult friendly” policies.
26. A Group will be established, with appropriate social partner involvement, to examine and report on barriers to participation by mature students in higher education. The Group will advise the Department of Education and Science on the development of a co-ordinated framework to promote access by mature and disadvantaged students to third level education, building on the experience of current initiatives.
27. Participation by disadvantaged groups in third level education will be encouraged through the provision of significant additional investment. Flexible entry, delivery and accreditation arrangements, linkages with second level schools, actions to promote mature student participation and outreach, community education and support programmes will form part of the approach. Access, transfer and progression will be actively promoted within the context of the National Qualifications Framework.

28. Additional financial supports for disadvantaged students, including disadvantaged mature students, will be put in place, targeted at those most in need.
29. A Study will be finalised of completion rates in Universities and Institutes of Technology which will make recommendations on how best to improve participation and retention within the third level sector. This will include initiatives to encourage female take-up in non-traditional disciplines. The views of the social partners will be sought on the findings of the study.
30. Both the Points Commission and the Review Committee on Post-Secondary Education and Training Places noted the lack of information about demand from mature students. The Higher Education Authority has been requested to undertake market research to establish the level and range of demand from mature students. In the light of the outcome of this research, measures will be designed to meet mature student demand and ensure flexible, innovative responses to mature students needs for consideration by Government. These measures will be based on the recommendations of the Points Commission and the Review Committee's Report.
31. Colleges will aim to provide that, by 2005, 15% of intake each year will comprise students aged 23 or over. A cross-faculty approach will be promoted and in the light of the outcomes of the research mentioned above, individual faculty targets will be set. Increasing the mature student intake over the next 5 years, in line with the Review Committee's recommendations, will involve increased part-time provision and other flexible options, such as distance learning opportunities.

Community Dimension

32. The community dimension of education and involvement by the community in education provision will be supported through:
 - development of closer linkages between education and area-based partnerships, allied with improved co-ordination and integration of education, welfare, health and justice policies, and increased opportunities for participation by the community and voluntary sector;
 - enhancement of home/school/community links;
 - promotion of parent participation in school decision-making, allied to strategies to support their children's learning;
 - promotion of cross community linkages within school-based programmes at both primary and second-level;
 - development of after-school supports in co-operation, where appropriate, with community and voluntary organisations;
 - provision and expansion of youth services, especially in disadvantaged areas;
 - development of the role of community education providers within the adult education sector;
 - expansion and consolidation of the Women's Education Initiative, including expanded support for projects that specifically tackle women's educational disadvantage, and the creation of relevant positive action initiatives by the Department of Education and Science. This approach will also be expanded to meet the needs of other marginalised groups;

- conducting research to examine women's and men's different learning styles and needs, and the implications for provision of education and training;
- establishment of an Education Sub-Group reporting to the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women; and
- the provision of resources for development of education and training in the prison service, in addition to provision for former prisoners and their families.

Strategic Framework for Lifelong Learning

33. A Strategic Framework for Lifelong Learning will be developed through:

- publication of a White Paper on Adult Education early in 2000. This will provide for the establishment of a National Adult Learning Council on a statutory basis to promote and co-ordinate the development of the sector and for a major expansion in lifelong learning opportunities. The Council will include representation from education and training providers, learners, social partners, community and voluntary interests, participants and accrediting bodies. Liaison with stakeholders in the field, monitoring of an agreed co-ordinated strategy and support for staff development and research will form part of the approach. The work of the Council will pay particular attention to promoting access to adult education by the disadvantaged and by those with disabilities, as well as promoting the development of learning opportunities for those in the workplace; and
- as a priority, and in the context of adaptation to continuing labour market change, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will establish a Lifelong Learning Task Force in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science. The Task Force will have the full involvement of the Social Partners and relevant implementation bodies. The Task Force will draw on the resources of a Reference Group comprised of representatives of enterprise and the learning community. The Group will work intensively over a six month period and will have a strong focus on the development of proposals for consideration by Government.

Task Force on Lifelong Learning

34. Key steps to be followed by the Task Force will be:

- identify existing Lifelong Learning (LLL) providers and programme provision;
- map existing provision in terms of its adequacy/coverage; and
- identify, propose and cost priority actions on LLL, based on expanding or modifying existing provision or the development of new initiatives, with particular reference to the achievement of the objectives set out above and to the identification and resolution of implementation issues arising.

35. A key aim of the Task Force will be:

- the development, as a matter of priority, of specific initiatives to upgrade the skills of workers in low paid sectors and those facing the challenge of rapid technological change. These initiatives will focus on promoting and enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications. Within the context of the NDP, resources will be made available from the National Training Fund to finance these initiatives.

36. Key issues to be addressed by the Task Force will include:

- supports, including information and advice, to assist people to identify learning opportunities appropriate to their needs and source suitable learning opportunities;
- enhancement of access to education and training with particular emphasis on financial issues, such as fees and educational leave, and on measures to support the reconciliation of learning and family life;
- increasing the diversity and flexibility of provision and promoting the responsiveness of education and training institutions to the needs of adults, with particular attention being given to those who are disadvantaged;
- the further development of linkages between firms and training and education institutions;
- initiatives to significantly increase training, learning and progression opportunities for people faced with the challenge of rapid technological change, taking due account of the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs; and
- initiatives to help people currently outside the workforce to upgrade their skills and/or acquire new ones.

Progression Pathways and Accreditation

37. Work will be progressed speedily to implement the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act. A key goal will be to ensure the development of appropriate structured pathways between education and training which will provide for systematic progression to higher levels of qualification. Mechanisms for accreditation of work-based learning and of prior learning will form an important part of the approach.

Competitiveness and Employment

38. Competitiveness and employment will be further promoted through:

- examining the need for enterprise-led initiatives, such as the pilot programme 'Skillnets' and those developed under Framework I (Workplace Relations) focusing on upskilling and prioritising those in employment;
- encouraging further development of linkages between firms and education at all levels. Linkages between business and education links programmes should be expanded. In this connection, the positive role of IBEC's Business-Education Links Programme is acknowledged. Similarly, dialogue and liaison between business and third level institutions, aimed at ensuring flexible and appropriate learning provision for adults, should be facilitated. In that regard, the positive role of the IBEC/CHIU and IBEC/IT Joint Councils is also acknowledged;
- developing initiatives to underpin the enhancement of modern language skills for those in employment. Models, such as IBEC's 'European Orientation Programme', could be expanded or provide templates for further action by employers;
- providing appropriate education and training programmes for those who have left school early and for adults who are unemployed;
- increasing significantly the research, science and technology capacity in higher education institutions, and strengthening the role of science, languages and ICTs in initial and adult education;

- developing support services in the education sector, such as guidance, counselling and childcare;
- developing further the national traineeship system, aimed at increasing participation levels and the range of provision; and
- support for social partners in improving women's participation in apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships

39. In particular, efforts will be intensified immediately to resolve the apprenticeship problem with a view to ensuring that each apprentice will receive their statutory education/training rights on schedule and to clearing the existing backlog. The task of addressing and clearing the existing backlog at phases 4 and 6 will be given top priority. Progress will be reviewed at end September 2000.

40. In addition, a Special Task Team, representative of Government, Employers and ICTU under the aegis of this Programme, will be empowered to examine and bring forward proposals that will ensure that the future delivery requirements for apprenticeship training are met.

4.2 Labour Market

Objectives

- To create a society in which access to the labour market is open to all.
- To mobilise labour supply by tapping into potential pools of labour to support sustainable low inflationary growth.
- To improve the quantity and quality of existing and potential labour supply.
- To enhance opportunities for women, including returners, and disadvantaged groups to access the labour market.
- To continue the task of addressing the shortage of specific skills, especially in relation to those sectors experiencing particular difficulties.
- To provide a range of relevant supports to the unemployed and to ensure that the full range of Active Labour Market Programmes will be such so as to be fully responsive to changing market, social and individual needs, thereby embracing competitiveness, employability of individuals and social inclusion.
- To effectively eliminate long-term unemployment and to seek to ensure that mass unemployment does not recur.

Actions

Consultations on Overall Policies

1. The Employment Action Plans (EAPs) and the Operational Programmes under the NDP will be the principal means for progress and, in terms of both preparation and monitoring, substantive and timely engagement with the social partners will take place. FÁS will update its Action Plan on Long Term Unemployment in consultation with the social partners.

Access by Women

2. The recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on Access by Women to the Labour Market under *Partnership 2000* and the review of the FÁS Return to Work scheme will be progressed without delay, particularly with a view to enhancing the employability and skills of women returning to the labour market.

Community Employment Scheme

3. In accordance with the Government's decision to reduce the number of participants on Community Employment (CE) from 37,500 to 28,000 by the year 2003, the Social Economy Programme, referred to in Framework III, will be funded, in part, through a reallocation of the resources equivalent to 5,000 CE places.
4. A Special Working Group, comprising the social partners and representatives of Government Departments, will be established early in 2000 to:
 - identify the key essential services currently being provided through CE; and
 - assess the implications of those services for CE in terms of: (i) budget; (ii) number of places (having regard to the planned reduction of 4,500 places, as per the Government decision); and (iii) the objectives of CE (including the provision of community services).
- The findings of the Special Working Group will be considered by Government.

Standing Committee

5. The Standing Committee on the Labour Market, on the basis of a Report by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment by end May 2000, will examine, identify and develop appropriate supports to meet the needs of those people who, because of age, literacy, or other barriers, are unlikely to succeed in getting and keeping a job in the open market.

Access by People with Disabilities

6. As set out in the Equality section of Framework III, a range of measures will be taken to improve integrated labour market opportunities for people with disabilities. Disincentives to people with disabilities entering the labour market will be examined and addressed as part of this process. FÁS will review existing vocational training programmes for people with disabilities, with a view to achieving a more integrated, mainstreamed approach. There will be an increased emphasis on people with disabilities in vocational training and in progression to employment.

National Employment Service Reform

7. The Local Employment Services will be integrated within the National Employment Service, and combined with a more active engagement process with clients, the prospects of progression by the unemployed into market employment will be improved. The development of the National Employment Service, which is the responsibility of FÁS (recognising its legislative obligations under the Labour Services Act 1987 and its tripartite structure), will be carried out in consultation with the social partners, including on the relevant NESF Reports, through the medium of the National Employment Service Advisory Council.
8. The provision of Job Clubs will be increased within areas and communities of disadvantage.

Overall Appraisal of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs)

9. In broad terms, spending on ALMPs will shift to training in order to better reflect market and individual needs.
10. Complementing the above, an Overall Appraisal of ALMPs will be undertaken, in participation with the social partners, taking into account the recommendations and findings of all relevant reports and studies commissioned under the *Partnership 2000* Agreement and those otherwise undertaken over the duration of that Agreement, as well as experience of the FIT Initiative. The aims of the Overall Appraisal will be:
 - to ensure that they contribute to national competitiveness by increasing labour supply, through the integration of unemployed persons into the labour market;
 - to eliminate any unnecessary anomalies between various interventions and to secure the fullest possible measure of overall synchronisation;
 - to re-orient ALMPs, including the development of the training component of Community Employment, so that the collective focus will be on the needs of disadvantaged groups (the long term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers who have the right to work, and women, dependent spouses and young people who are disadvantaged) with the aim of progression onto the open labour market;

- to shift the emphasis towards training and progression, including the enhancement of progression pathways between education and training and workplace through specific skills training and pre-labour market programmes;
- to determine total costs (including deadweight costs) and to assess for each intervention the likely impact of the national minimum wage;
- to set targets in respect of participation and progression by different groups currently on ALMPs, taking due account of overall deliverability, whether in relation to the adequacy of resources of the delivering agent or the availability of people to fulfil the programmes' objectives;
- to develop improved methods of disseminating information on labour market measures to appropriate target groups; and
- to consider alternative approaches to addressing inequality of access to the labour market.

Monitoring

11. Over the course of this Programme, the performance and relevance of ALMPs will accordingly be systematically monitored and evaluated, including the benchmarking of progression, with the necessary data collection systems for the Overall Appraisal being put in place. The Appraisal will take place under the auspices of the Standing Committee on the Labour Market.

Travellers

12. The recommendations in the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community on economic activities will be progressed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in consultation with representatives of the social partners, inclusive of the national Travellers' organisations.

Immigration

13. Immigration policy will be developed, as appropriate, to address the needs of the labour market. The social partners will be consulted before the modalities of such a policy have been prepared - currently being developed by the Interdepartmental Committee which has been set up by the Government, chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which is due to report back to Government by end-February, 2000.

4.3 Childcare and Family Friendly Policies

Objectives

- To meet the diverse needs of parents and children, including key target groups, by supporting the development of childcare services which are accessible and of high quality.
- To enhance the opportunities and remove disincentives to participation by parents in economic and social activity through appropriate childcare.
- To increase the number of childcare places available in both the private and the community sectors.
- To develop an equitable framework to support financially parents in meeting their childcare needs.
- To ensure that the development and well-being of children are addressed in the childcare sector, including the early educational needs of children.
- To ensure the quality of childcare provision across the country, through appropriate inspection, regulation, and personnel training systems.
- To support family life, to offer choices for families and to offer equal opportunities for both men and women to play an active caring role in families.
- To seek to encourage the growth of family-friendly policies in employment, including parental leave, care arrangements, work sharing and more flexible working arrangements.

Actions

Functional Responsibility

1. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will undertake overall responsibility for co-ordinating childcare service delivery arrangements.
2. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee will facilitate integrated national and local childcare strategies to co-ordinate the delivery of new and existing childcare services.

National Children's Strategy

3. The National Children's Strategy, which is currently being prepared, will provide a holistic view of the interests and needs of children. Arrangements for the co-ordination and delivery of childcare supports will therefore be set in the context of the Strategy and may be adjusted to reflect that Strategy.

Development and Expansion of Childcare Facilities

4. In accordance with the National Development Plan, childcare facilities will be developed and expanded. In particular:
 - over the period 2000 - 2006, building on existing initiatives in childcare, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme will be expanded so as to provide:
 - capital grants for community based childcare facilities;
 - grants towards staffing costs for community based childcare services;

- training supports;
 - supports to enhance the national voluntary childcare organisations; and
 - innovative, flexible measures which promote the development of facilities for children with special needs and services in areas of particular disadvantage.
- local childcare networks will be developed and encouraged to provide mutual support and disseminate information and learning materials; and
 - a new Capital Grant Scheme will be introduced for independent childcare service providers.
5. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will assist in the development of out-of-school hours childcare services by community groups.
 6. The Department of Education and Science will support the development of after-school childcare services by school managements.
 7. The Department of Education and Science will also provide assistance for a scheme which supports the childcare costs of participants in VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Programmes.
 8. The Department of Health and Children will support the development of an advisory service by Health Boards.
 9. The social partners will be consulted and involved as a matter of policy in regard to childcare services. Social partner participation on County Childcare Committees will be facilitated.

Regulatory Framework

10. The regulatory framework, to ensure that childcare facilities are staffed and operated to acceptable standards, will be implemented.

Completion Process

11. The Government, recognising the progress made in these negotiations, and following a completion process with the social partners, will adopt, before the end of 2000, an equitable strategy to support parents in meeting their childcare needs, for implementation in the period of this Programme. This completion process will address proposals such as those put forward in these negotiations, which included proposals for direct payments per child.

Family Friendly Policies

12. Measures to promote greater sharing by men and women of the caring responsibilities carried out within the home for children and dependent family members will be developed.
13. The importance of family friendly policies is underscored by the National Framework agreed between IBEC/ICTU and the public sector employers, details of which are given in Annex IV to Framework I.

Maternity Protection Legislation

14. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in line with the *Action Programme for the Millennium*, has commenced the review of the Maternity Protection legislation. The Department will set up a Working Group, including the Social Partners, early in 2000, with a view to completion of the review by September 2000.

Parental Leave

15. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will, in 2001, conduct a review of the operation of the Parental Leave Act, 1998, in consultation with the social partners.

Carers

16. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will introduce legislation to provide for the protection of employment rights for up to fifteen months in the case of persons who take leave from their employment to take up caring duties.

Family Support

17. A Family Affairs Unit has been established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, with a range of responsibilities in relation to developing policy and services to support families. In the context of this Programme, the Government reaffirms its commitment to protect families through administrative, economic and social measures to support the stability of the family. It will do so in a number of ways:
- support for the work of the voluntary organisations providing marriage, child and bereavement counselling services will continue to be a high priority in the development of Government policy to prevent marital breakdown;
 - the Family Mediation Service, now available in 10 regional centres throughout the country, will be further developed and established on a statutory basis; and
 - the Family Services Pilot Programme, available in three local offices of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, will be developed and expanded and made available to an increased number of families throughout the country. The Programme provides improved access to information for families, using the local office as a one-stop-shop. Individual attention and greater access to services and supports are intended to enhance the capacity of those in the most difficult family circumstances and to improve their personal situations.

4.4 Information Society

Objectives

- To accelerate Ireland's transition to an Information Society with a view to increasing economic competitiveness, employment, social inclusion and participation.
- To achieve a balance between the economic, social and societal aims which will position Irish society and the economy so as to improve the living conditions of all citizens, including in the work context.

Action - Strategic Framework

In line with *Government's Action Plan on Implementing the Information Society in Ireland*, policy will aim: to build the human capacity to manage and shape the emerging Information Society and to participate in eBusiness, eOrganisations and eGovernment; to foster affordable and inclusive Information Society infrastructure and services; and to enable the participation by those who are currently excluded.

Access for All

1. There will be increased investment, in line with the Government's Action Plan and associated funding arrangements, to provide a phased roll-out of community-based access to the Information Society, having particular regard to the Partnership Areas and the recommendations arising from the Information Society Commission's examination of *IT Access for All*.
2. Resources will be dedicated to further develop the *Schools IT 2000 Programme* and related initiatives, with the objective of ensuring that all pupils have access to ICT facilities in keeping with their educational needs. The target is to reach an integration level of at least 8:1 at primary level and 5:1 at second level on a phased basis. The target will be regularly reviewed in light of international developments.
3. The Information Society Commission will further develop its work in promoting equality of access to the Information Society, including a focus on reducing access costs.

Education and the Learning Society

4. A National IT Literacy Programme, accessible to all, will be introduced, using internationally recognised models and standards at affordable rates.
5. Resources will be made available through agencies such as the Information Society Commission and the National Centre for Partnership to promote targeted awareness of the Information Society, including by the social partners.
6. The new models of work, that are needed for learning organisations to emerge, will be introduced in co-operation with the social partners.

Infrastructure

7. The Irish communications sector will be developed so that it ranks in the top decile of OECD countries (NDP), by continuing *inter alia* to invest in advanced telecommunications capabilities and by encouraging greater competition and reduced costs.
8. The recently concluded agreement with the international telecommunications provider, *Global Crossing*, will be implemented in order to provide high capacity, low cost, international connectivity.
9. The roll-out of advanced communications and e-Commerce infrastructure throughout Ireland will continue to be encouraged and supported to facilitate regional development, including appropriate use of funding under the Community Support Framework.
10. Digital TV and associated interactive, multimedia and Information Society services will continue to be developed.

E-Business

11. A legal, regulatory and administrative framework will be established which will create a favourable and competitive environment for the development of electronic commerce and digital industries.
12. There will be a continuing focus on awareness campaigns and e-Commerce infrastructure initiatives to build on recent progress, such as the IBEC/Information Society Commission campaign for SMEs and the campaign by the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland.
13. Full advantage will be taken of funding and support frameworks such as the EU Fifth Framework Programme and the Technology Foresight Fund for Research and Technological Development.
14. Programmes will be developed and implemented to assist indigenous Small Business to make the transition to e-Commerce and internet-based business, to support businesses and other organisations in deriving the benefits of the Information Society, and to help modernise the work environment in order to maximise employment potential and quality.
15. Means of facilitating greater use of electronic payment systems in the economy will be examined by a Working Group on which the social partners will be represented.
16. Legislation will be enacted to facilitate development of e-Commerce in particular through the recognition of electronic signatures, and the accordance of legal validity to electronic contracts, and to facilitate development of appropriate certification agencies and services.
17. Legislation will be enacted to give effect to an EU Directive on the protection of consumers in respect of 'Distant Contracts'.
18. Comprehensive benchmarking indicators will be developed to monitor Ireland's progress in implementing the Information Society relative to other countries.
19. Ireland will be developed as a world class location for the digital content, multimedia and e-Commerce industries, including through the establishment of MediaLab Europe in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the development of a 'multimedia village' as a centre for content and multimedia generation and distribution.
20. Building on the Forfás report, *E-commerce - The Policy Requirements*, the e-Commerce policy agenda will be pursued, with particular attention being given to the threats and opportunities facing Small Business in the global digital economy.

Teleworking

21. Ireland will be developed as a “telework friendly” location, including endorsement by the social partners of the Teleworking National Advisory Council’s Code of Practice, as well as a review of the relevant fiscal and environmental structures.
22. Government will introduce teleworking options into mainstream public service employment and, additionally, all publicly-funded organisations will develop a teleworking policy for implementation by 2002.

Irish Content

23. An extensive range of web-based information, content and interactive services, of particular interest or relevance to Irish citizens, businesses and other organisations, will be developed, including by public bodies.

eGovernment

24. Investment and resources will be provided to upgrade Government and State Agency IT systems and networks to create highly accessible and user-friendly public information services, including development of the REACH initiative. Attention will be given, in particular, to upgrading and developing the IT resources of the Labour Court, the Labour Relations’ Commission and the Employment Appeals Tribunal.
25. A programme will be put in place to promote user-friendly and “design-for-all” websites and web-based material generally and, in particular, to ensure that all Government websites will follow sound design and access principles and will provide comprehensive and timely information.
26. Further consideration will be given, including by the Information Society Commission, to additional ways of protecting the right to privacy.

4.5 Promoting North/South Partnership

Objectives

- To develop mutual understanding and reconciliation on the island of Ireland.
- To promote North/South and all-island consultation, co-operation and common action in all areas of mutual interest.
- To contribute through such consultation, co-operation and common action to the achievement of the overall national objectives of a dynamic, competitive economy and a just and inclusive society.
- To reduce and, where possible, to remove barriers to interaction between the two jurisdictions.
- To eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort and to achieve economies of scale, using human and financial resources to maximum effect.
- To create synergies and new opportunities for economic growth and social development.
- To intensify efforts to address the special needs of the Border region, having regard to the overall priority attached to balanced regional development and to the mutual benefits of more effective Cross-Border co-operation.
- To encourage all economic and social sectors to participate actively in the development of North/South and all-island co-operation and, in particular, to involve the social partners to the greatest possible extent alongside the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.
- Programmes such as the IBEC/CBI/ICTU Joint Work Programme should be enhanced to further the strategy of progressing economic growth and social inclusion. The private sector dimension will be particularly important in progressing the economic and business agenda. Models such as the IBEC/CBI Joint Council and the CCI/NICCI Chamberlink should be enhanced to further this strategy.

Actions

1. The full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement will be supported and worked for.
2. Everything possible will be done to promote the successful operation of all of the Institutions under the Good Friday Agreement - in particular the North/South Ministerial Council and the six Implementation Bodies.
3. The six areas agreed for initial co-operation within the framework of the North/South Ministerial Council (aspects of transport, agriculture, health, environment, education and tourism) will be vigorously pursued.
4. The Government will seek to ensure that the North/South Ministerial Council addresses, in a structured and systematic way, all other matters of mutual interest and in consequence takes appropriate decisions on co-operation and common action where mutual benefit is perceived.
5. All Council decisions, insofar as they require action by the Government, will be implemented fully.
6. Mechanisms to ensure effective consultation between the social partners, North and South, and the Council and the Implementation Bodies will be actively pursued.

7. In addition, the Government will work for agreement with the Northern side on the early establishment and effective functioning of the independent North/South Consultative Forum envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement. The proposals to be brought forward will be informed by consultation with the social partners and other interests.
8. In addition, the best ways to ensure the effective communication of the views of the social partners to the Implementation Bodies and sectoral formats of the North/South Ministerial Council, and to make full use of their expertise, will be actively examined.
9. The opportunities for co-operation as set out in the Common Chapter of the National Development Plan, including specifically in the sectors listed in it (Energy; Communications and Electronic Commerce, Human Resource Development, Agriculture, Tourism, Transport, Environment, Education and Health) will be pursued noting the substantial overlap with the areas of co-operation identified for initial consideration by the North/South Ministerial Council.
10. Maximum use will be made of continuing EU funding of the INTERREG and other relevant Community Initiatives, and of the Peace Programme, to assist in the achievement of objectives for North/South partnership, working with and through the Special EU Programmes Body.
11. Work will continue on the detailed arrangements in relation to the INTERREG III and Peace II programmes, building on the diverse strengths of the previous rounds of these programmes, and in particular to ensure that the Peace Programme will continue to emphasise reconciliation, the inclusion of marginalised groups and groups most adversely affected by the conflict, and capacity-building in the community and voluntary sectors, thereby supplementing the focus of mainstream structural funding on infrastructure and on productive investment.
12. Interaction and co-operation between the social partners, North and South, and between individual firms and organisations, will be further developed, including in the wider context of the East/West relationship in all its forms.
13. Joint consideration will be promoted of human rights issues and the reinforcement of a human rights culture on the island of Ireland, including through educational and awareness programmes in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights, involving anti-poverty strategies, and through the establishment of the Joint Committee of Representatives of the two Human Rights Commissions, North and South, which is provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.
14. The social partners will invite their counterparts to participate on a regular and appropriate basis on issues of mutual interest. The social partners with the support of Government will, separately and together, promote initiatives which specifically focus on:
 - improved labour market strategies;
 - administrative procedures for cross-border workers and the application of relevant EU legislation;
 - enhanced co-ordination in effective training and strategies to address skills and labour shortages;
 - lifelong learning, building on the work of the social partners to date, focused on the availability of and access to lifelong learning opportunities for cross-border workers; and
 - the promotion of social inclusion and equality.
15. The social partners will seek to work with the North/South Ministerial Council and the Implementation Bodies in taking appropriate consequent action.

4.6 Commitment to the Wider World

Objectives

- To firmly establish the vision of a country that participates in, and contributes to, the European Union and other supra-national bodies on an equal footing with our European partners.
- To bring about positive consequences for the reputation of Ireland and its citizens.
- To promote the resumption of WTO negotiations within a fair framework.
- To deepen the process of dialogue with the Asia Pacific and African regions.
- To ensure that Ireland plays an active and effective part in promoting genuine self-sustaining development in developing countries and that our policies are consistent with such development - in particular, that Official Development Assistance will continue to remain focused on the aim of poverty reduction in developing countries.
- To address the special needs of those Irish emigrants abroad who are particularly marginalised or at greatest risk of exclusion.

Actions

Our Emigrants Abroad

1. A Task Force will be established, under the chairmanship of the Department of Foreign Affairs and comprising social partner and other relevant interests, to develop a coherent long-term approach to our emigrants and their needs, building on the initiatives already being undertaken by that Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
2. A research project will be undertaken to identify the number of Irish prisoners abroad and their needs for services in prison.

Ireland's Relationships with our EU Partners

3. Ireland will participate actively in the EU and other international fora, building on our achievements to date and with a particular emphasis on:
 - influencing the trend of EU policy discussions on issues such as employment, partnership, competitiveness, social inclusion and the environment;
 - playing our part in the preparations for enlargement and in the enlargement process itself, looking to our own long-term interests as well as those of the Union as a whole;
 - taking a leadership role in development co-operation and in the affirmation of citizenship rights at an international level;
 - optimising the advantages of our location within the EU, together with our success in attracting high levels of investment in leading-edge technology from other locations, particularly the US; and
 - sharing with our EU partners the lessons to be learned from our experience of combining the openness of an economy with a partnership approach to the management of change and the pursuit of social inclusion.

4. A programme will be put in place to adjust Irish public awareness of EU matters away from the direct cash transfers, which will be of diminishing importance, and towards the more indirect but still substantial benefits to this country arising from the social, economic and cultural development of the EU.

EU Treaty Reform

5. Ireland will play an active part in the development of the IGC and in the reform process surrounding the EU Treaties.
6. Ireland will encourage the bringing forward of Directives, based on Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, on discrimination and racism in the fields of employment and access to goods and services, as well as a Community Action Programme on Counteracting Discrimination.
7. An ambitious response to Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty will be pursued.
8. In the context of the Lisbon European Council, the Government will advocate progressive policies in the domains of employment, lifelong learning and the Information Society, concentrated on best practice to combat social exclusion.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the EU Institutions

9. Civil dialogue at EU level will be encouraged through supporting the establishment of more structured meetings between European NGO's and the European institutions, the development of stronger associations within the NGO sector itself and the provision accordingly of adequate funding to the sector.

WTO Negotiations

10. Ireland will promote, along with our EU Partners, the aim of a broad-based round of world trade negotiations while, at the same time, protecting the compromises reached among EU Member States on *Agenda 2000*, thereby endeavouring to ensure, in the context of any resumed WTO negotiations, that the EU achieves full accommodation for the European model of agriculture.

Official Development Assistance

11. The progress of recent years will be continued towards meeting the interim target of 0.45% of GNP expended on Official Development Assistance (ODA), set ultimately to the UN target of 0.7%.

Third World Debt

12. Now a contributor to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and to the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, Ireland will continue, in all international fora, to press for a generous and flexible response by both bilateral and multilateral creditors to debt relief.
13. Ireland supports close co-operation between the Bretton Woods Institutions, other donors, both bilateral and multilateral, and the Governments of developing countries in a new approach to the reduction of poverty, with a view to meeting the UN goal of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.
14. Ireland will continue to encourage the international community, including bilateral creditors, to take a generous and flexible approach to the heavily indebted poor countries.

International Labour Standards

13. Ireland will encourage the inclusion of a 'social clause' in international labour standards, especially with regard to the abolition of child labour.



Framework V Renewing Partnership

5.1 Building on the significant progress made under Partnership 2000

Under *Partnership 2000*, there has been significant progress in social partnership at national, local and enterprise/organisational levels. This progress confirms the validity of the approach adopted in *Partnership 2000* and provides valuable new information on the nature of successful partnership and the factors which enable its development.

Government and the social partners agree to build on these developments through a strategic focus on the achievement of the objectives in the series of Operational Frameworks in this Programme.

5.2 Monitoring and evaluation as the Programme progresses

Regular monitoring and evaluation as implementation progresses are recognised as key determinants of the effectiveness of the Programme.

It is important, therefore, that arrangements be put in place at a number of levels to monitor progress in implementing the Programme and that the information generated be used to further develop the partnership process.

To support this Programme, the social partners agree to put in place a framework to ensure ongoing and effective monitoring of performance in achieving the objectives of the Programme. The proposed new arrangements are set down in the following paragraphs and are in line with those already set out in Framework I.

5.3 Developing Partnership at the National level

Partnership at the national level plays a central role in overall implementation of the Programme. The existing structures will be developed to focus on the key strategic issues arising at the national level and on overall monitoring of how the Operational Frameworks are being implemented.

The following arrangements are proposed:

- A meeting of all the parties to the Programme, chaired by the Taoiseach, will be convened annually;
- The Central Review Mechanism, representing the four pillars in the partnership process, will identify the appropriate arrangements to oversee the implementation of the four Operational Frameworks in the Agreement, to assess progress, and to address the strategic issues arising in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Programme;
- Quarterly meetings of members of the four pillars, under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach, will be held to review and monitor the operation of the Programme;
- Any of the social partners may raise an issue regarding any aspect of the operation of the Agreement with the Chairman of the Central Review Mechanism. Following consultation with the social partners, the Chairman may convene a special meeting of the parties to the Programme;
- Government will consult with the social partners - taking account of the mechanisms set out in this Framework and the recommendations put forward in the NESF Report - *A Framework for Partnership - Enriching Strategic Consensus through Participation* - and will then request NESF to undertake benchmarking of progress in respect of the appropriate elements of the Operational Frameworks.

5.4 Partnership at the Framework Level

An important element of the Programme will be the effective implementation of each of the four Operational Frameworks. These are:

- Framework I: Living Standards and Workplace Environment
- Framework II: Prosperity and Economic Inclusion
- Framework III: Social Inclusion and Equality
- Framework IV: Successful Adaptation to Continuing Change

The Central Review Mechanism will agree procedures to monitor and evaluate the implementation of each of the four Operational Frameworks in order to ensure that the objectives of the Frameworks are implemented over the period of the Programme. These procedures will operate at a number of levels:

- at national level with Government Departments/organisations;
- in joint working parties, where appropriate; and
- with Local Authorities and local communities.

The National Economic and Social Forum will be required to take account of the objectives of the Operational Frameworks when setting their work programme.

5.5 Partnership at the Level of the Enterprise

Enhancing Workplace Relations through Partnership for Competitive Enterprises and Workplace Environment set out in Section 1.3 of Framework I of this Programme recognise the central importance of agreement at enterprise level in further developing the partnership process. They also set out clearly the definition, principles and topics which will inform/underpin this process.

The social partners also agree to build on the existing valuable experience gained through the National Centre for Partnership, the PACT project, the SIPTU ADAPT project, the NWO project and other work, to learn and disseminate the lessons of partnership.

IBEC and ICTU and the proposed enhanced National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) (see paragraph 7 below) will work together to develop guidelines to assist enterprises in embarking on and successfully putting in place partnership arrangements. The important role of institutional support in this context is recognised by the parties, and the results of the current evaluation of partnership development will inform the partnership process and the type and nature of joint monitoring and evaluation which should take place.

5.6 Partnership in the Public Service

As set out in Framework I, progress to date in Modernising the Public Service has been driven by sectoral strategies developed under the SMI. These strategies are now being advanced through the participative structures put in place under *Partnership 2000* to involve all public servants in the change process.

Implementation of the modernisation programme will continue to be advanced under the partnership arrangements in place and refined under this Programme to meet better sectoral and organisational needs and circumstances. The agreed specific performance indicators, as indicated in paragraph 3 of the Public Service Pay Agreement set out in Annex II to Framework I, for each sector will be developed through the existing partnership structures.

5.7 Institutional Support for Enterprise/Organisational Partnership - the Role of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP)

It is clear that employers, employees and unions will play the leading role in the development of partnership in their organisations so as to enhance organisational capability. Their work can be facilitated and enhanced by supportive institutional bodies. This approach is one which encourages each organisation to achieve the highest possible standards in its chosen approach to partnership and involvement. It also encourages active, ongoing comparison between:

- models of partnership and involvement;
- practices in the workplace
- strategies for improving enterprise performance and partnership.

National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP)

It is important that the appropriate institutional arrangements and resources are in place to support this level of partnership. The National Centre for Partnership has an important role to play in this process. Maintaining our competitive strength and an environment conducive to innovation requires a new focus on improving the capability of enterprises, whether public or private. This leads to a greater emphasis on the quality of jobs and on performance. In this regard, the growing importance of new forms of work organisation, adaptation to change and lifelong learning need to be recognised. In order to meet the new challenges and goals set out in this Programme, it is proposed to enhance the role of National Centre for Partnership which will now be called the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP). The Centre, which will be located within the Office for National Economic and Social Development alongside NESD and NESF, will work with IBEC and ICTU in supporting the deepening of partnership including through:

- deliberation, consensus-building and dissemination;
- monitoring;
- research and analysis; and
- training and facilitation.

The Centre will work together with the relevant Government Departments and Agencies who have a role in the development of enterprise performance. The roles of other organisations in both the public and private sectors which contribute to partnership development will also be considered in this context as will funding issues arising.

Following consultation with IBEC and ICTU, proposals will be made to Government on the detailed arrangements to be put in place to give effect to the strengthened institutional structures required.