

Department of the Taoiseach

Annual Report

2005

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ISBN 0 7076 9125 7

Mission Statement

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

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Bertie Ahern, TD
Taoiseach
with special responsibility



Tom Kitt, TD
Minister of State
European Affairs
as Government Chief Whip
and for the Knowledge Society



Noel Treacy, TD
Minister of State for

A Message from the Taoiseach

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

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

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

Bertie Ahern, TD
Taoiseach

Introduction by the Secretary General



Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dermot McCarthy', written in a cursive style.

Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General

Chapter 1

The Role of the Department of the Taoiseach

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

Strategy Statement

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

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

The Role of the Department

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

The Department’s three key functions are:

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

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

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

- Northern Ireland
- European Union and International Affairs

- Economic and Social Policy
- Social Partnership
- Public Service Modernisation
- The Knowledge Society and e-Government.

A Whole of Government Perspective

Operating at the heart of Government requires:

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

Overall Strategic Objective 1 - Supporting the Government

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

Key Objectives:

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

The Government Secretariat

The Government Secretariat is at the centre of Government, and supports Government decision-making by providing a comprehensive and effective service for Cabinet meetings, in co-operation with other Government Departments. It also acts as a link between the President, Taoiseach and other Government Departments.

The Secretariat’s central position allows it to contribute to many cross-cutting issues for which it is not directly responsible, and to play a co-ordinating role in relation to Cabinet Committees, which make a significant contribution to Government policy-making.

An updated version of the *Cabinet Handbook* was completed during the year, taking account of, among other things, developments arising from the implementation of eCabinet. Additional guidelines on certain consultancy contracts were also included, arising from the Quigley report of January 2005. The Quigley report dealt with procurement issues, which had arisen during the tenure of a Minister in the OPW and the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. The additional

guidelines have given the Secretary General to the Government and the Government Secretariat a role in examining certain procurements, where there is an element of direct service to a Minister or where a Minister has suggested that a name be included in procurement.

Meetings of the Government

In 2005, 48 Government meetings were held; 837 memoranda were submitted to Government; and 837 formal decisions and 121 informal decisions were recorded. The Government Secretariat made all the arrangements for a Government meeting successfully held in Cork in June, to mark Cork's year as European City of Culture, and for a programme of cultural events undertaken by the Cabinet in that city.

eCabinet

Throughout the year the Secretariat worked with other Departments in managing the substantial change process arising from the implementation of the eCabinet system. This process resulted in a complete change in the way Government memoranda are drafted, circulated, submitted and considered at Cabinet.

eCabinet has led to considerable efficiencies and benefits due to instant, secure transmission of cabinet documentation. In 2005, eCabinet supported some 25,000 acts of electronic transmission of documents, while the consultation process on Government Memoranda has been greatly improved. There has been a dramatic reduction in the volume of paper moving between Departments, and in the time taken for consultation. All users, including Ministers, can access information more quickly, as the system brings increased clarity to the presentation of Government Memoranda. Innovative formats are used to help users make the adjustment from reading hard copy to accessing content on-screen.

eCabinet provides a seamless service from drafting stage to Cabinet consideration, and has attracted considerable interest at home and abroad. A number of other countries and organisations have viewed the system in operation or sought information on its benefits. In addition, the project was short-listed for the prestigious European Commission eGovernment Good Practice 2005 Awards, which were presented in Manchester in November 2005.

Government Legislative Programme

The Government Legislation Committee, which is chaired by the Government Chief Whip, liaises with Government Departments on legislative proposals. Thirty-four Bills were enacted in 2005. The Department also supports the Chief Whip in his role on the Committee on Procedures and Privileges of Dáil Éireann, the Sub-Committee on Compellability, and the Dáil Reform Sub-Committee.

Relations with the President

Article 28.5.2 of the Constitution provides that the Taoiseach shall keep the President generally informed on matters of domestic and international policy. The Office of the Taoiseach maintained regular contact with the President's Office and ensured that the Taoiseach's commitments under Article 28.5.2 were fulfilled.

The Department prepared and co-ordinated briefing for the Taoiseach's regular meetings with the President. The Taoiseach met the President in Áras an Uachtaráin on five occasions during the year. The Department also contributed to the organisation of State and official visits abroad by the President, and provided speech material and advice/information to her.

Office of the Attorney General, Chief State Solicitor's Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Law Reform Commission

During 2005, the Department continued to work with the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Chief State Solicitor, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Law Reform Commission, in achieving their objectives, which include the provision of legal advice and support to the Government.

All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution

As in other years, the Department provided grant-in-aid for the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, and acted as liaison between the Committee and the Taoiseach/Government. A report on the Family is due in January 2006.

Emergency Planning

The Department was represented on, and contributed to, the work of the Task Force on Emergency Planning, and the Interdepartmental Working Group. The Task Force meets regularly to review various emergency planning and response issues, to report to Government and to ensure a co-ordinated and effective response to large-scale emergencies.

The Government Press Office & Communications Unit/Government Information Service

In 2005, the Government Press Office (GPO) continued to provide a comprehensive information service to the national and international media, and to the public, on behalf of the Government, the Taoiseach, Ministers of State and the Departments in relation to all matters relating to the Government.

The Government Press Office

Government policy and initiatives are communicated in an effective and timely way to the media. The GPO operates a round-the-clock rota system, which gives the media access to a Government spokesperson on a 24-hour basis. The GPO is in a position to be both reactive and proactive, and provide a quality service to its customers.

The GPO receives requests from both the media and the public for information on various issues, including requests for copies of press releases and speeches from the relevant Departments. The GPO facilitates these requests by utilising an electronic media tracking system.

Emergency Planning

The Government Press Office has worked to encourage and foster closer links between Press Officers and the Emergency Planners in various Departments, to promote a more focused and co-ordinated approach to emergency planning at cross-Departmental level.

Website

One of the key priorities of the GPO is the ongoing development of a user-friendly Government website that is informative and easily accessible (www.taoiseach.gov.ie). The GPO ensures that major policy documents/Department reports are published in both Irish and English to comply with the Department's official language scheme. The site is updated on a regular basis.

The Communications Unit

In 2005, the Communications Unit continued to provide a media information service to Government Ministers and their Departments. It furnished news updates and transcripts, which ensured that Departments were kept informed in a fast and efficient manner of any relevant news developments. The Communications Unit has upgraded its technology to improve sound quality of doorstep interviews and increase its range of services.

The Government Information Service

The GIS produced, edited and issued *Ministerial Public Engagements*; these documents are produced on a weekly basis and issued electronically to the national and provincial media. It dealt with queries from the public via phone, email and letter.

The GIS liaised closely with the National Development Plan/Community Support Framework Information Office, to heighten public awareness and understanding of the National Development Plan. The GIS continues to assist the Government Press Office with one-off events, which involve large media accreditation and co-ordination.

Chapter 3

Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Taoiseach

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

Key Objectives:

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

Supporting the Taoiseach

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Department is involved in the policy priorities of the Taoiseach and Government, and assists in developing long-term planning and a co-ordinated approach to policy, across the Government system. The Department’s role in supporting key aspects of policy, which is set out in detail in the following chapters, includes:

- Progressing implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and Irish interests in European and international circles
- The formulation of macroeconomic and budgetary policy
- Developing the national infrastructure necessary for continued economic progress
- Maintaining and developing social partnership
- Promoting public service modernisation
- Pursuing social inclusion measures to ensure the benefits of success are fairly shared
- Ensuring that Ireland takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the Knowledge Society.

The Private Offices of the Taoiseach, the Government Chief Whip and the Minister of State for European Affairs

Key aspects of the work of the Department entail providing support to the Taoiseach, Government Chief Whip and the Minister of State for European Affairs, including the provision of protocol and speech writing services.

The Private Office of the Taoiseach

In 2005, the Taoiseach's Private Office continued to support him in his role as Head of Government and in his Parliamentary, Departmental and Public roles. This involved: managing the Taoiseach's diary commitments; processing the large volume of postal and email correspondence; dealing with telephone enquiries; and ensuring that the Taoiseach received Government papers, briefing material, speeches and Parliamentary Question material in time.

The Taoiseach undertook 29 official visits to foreign countries in 2005. This included leading a trade mission to China, attending three European Council meetings in Brussels and attending the funeral of Pope John Paul II in Rome. The Office undertook the arrangements and preparations for the Taoiseach for these visits. The Office also had frequent contact with other Prime Ministers' Offices/Administrations.

In order to ensure that the Taoiseach had a quality, efficient and effective service the office was staffed on Mondays to Fridays from 8.30 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. The staff co-operated with this arrangement willingly and on occasion, whenever necessary, worked outside these hours.

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

The Office organised the Taoiseach's bilateral meetings with all Ministers and Ministers of State to review the implementation of the Agreed Programme for Government and other priority issues. It acted as the point of contact between the Taoiseach and other Ministers, Members of the Oireachtas, other Government Departments and all Divisions of the Department.

The significant volume of correspondence received in the Office was dealt with in line with the Department's Quality Customer Service (QCS). The Office monitored correspondence throughout the year to ensure that the targets were met as best as possible, given the diverse nature of correspondence received in the Office.

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

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

- Assisted with the organisation and agreement of Dáil business
- Prepared the legislative programme on a sessional basis, the weekly Dáil schedule, and the Dáil sessions calendar
- Co-ordinated with the offices of the Opposition Whips
- Provided necessary briefing documents, material for parliamentary questions, speech material and information on the passage of Bills through both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Private Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs

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

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

Protocol Service for the Taoiseach in his Representational and Ceremonial Duties

The Taoiseach’s programme of domestic engagements in 2005 came to approximately 428 official functions, all of which were planned and managed by the Department. A Protocol Officer was on duty on each occasion.

Incoming Visits

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

- Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Antanas Valionis
- Prime Minister of Lesotho, the Right Honourable Pakalitha B. Mosisili
- President of the Republic of Hungary, H.E. Ferenc Mádl
- Foreign Minister of East Timor, Mr. Ramos Horta
- Emperor of Japan, His Majesty Emperor Akihito
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Right Honourable Mr. Peter Hain M.P.
- Former US President, Mr Bill Clinton
- President of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Svetozar Marovic
- President of the European Commission, Mr. Jose Manuel Barrossa
- Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable Paul Martin
- Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai
- Prime Minister of New Zealand, H.E. Ms. Helen Clark
- President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos
- President of The Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Georgi Parvanov

Death of Pope John Paul II

The Department of the Taoiseach was involved in a number of aspects surrounding the death of Pope John Paul II. These included:

- Instruction to Half Mast the National Flag
- Protocol assistance at the Mass for Pope John Paul II in the Pro Cathedral
- Protocol assistance at the signing of the Book of Condolence
- Organisation of a Minute's Silence at Government Buildings
- Protocol assistance at the Sunset Service of Remembrance, Phoenix Park

National Day of Commemoration

As usual, the Department organised the annual National Day of Commemoration, which was held this year on Sunday 10 July 2005 at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. Prior to the event, and following a review of procedures, a number of changes were implemented which streamlined and improved the ceremony. In particular, the Military ceremony was changed to include a march past the President and Taoiseach.

Recital by the Palestrina Choir in Government Buildings

The Department organised a reception, after the recital of Christmas Carols by the Palestrina Choir in Government Buildings.

Speechwriting

The Speechwriting Unit ensured the provision of high-quality speeches for the Taoiseach in a timely manner, to enable him to carry out his public engagements during the year. Approximately 270 speeches were either drafted or edited for consistency of style within the Unit during 2005. These included: key-note addresses at major policy conferences, addresses to various interest groups and at award ceremonies; and the launch of major infrastructure projects, Government strategies and publications, services for people with disabilities, new social services, affordable and social housing developments, major sports facilities, exhibitions, cultural events, and books.

The Unit also prepared a range of messages during 2005. These included messages of goodwill for events that the Taoiseach was unable to attend, messages for inclusion in commemorative publications and forewords for books.

Chapter 4

Strategic Priority A - Northern Ireland

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

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

- Progress on implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) published four reports during 2005. These reports showed a positive trend, particularly with regard to IRA activities. They

also showed the complexity of the transition away from paramilitarism on all sides and identified serious issues that remained to be addressed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relations with the UK, the USA, and Canada

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

Chapter 5

Strategic Priority B - European Union and International Affairs

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

Ireland’s Interests in the EU

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

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

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

Period of reflection on the European Constitution

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

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

Lisbon Agenda

The Irish EU Presidency in 2004 initiated a mid-term review of progress under the Lisbon Agenda. This Review acknowledged the scale of the challenge facing Europe, in particular the widening growth gap with other major world economies. The European Council subsequently agreed, early in 2005, that the Lisbon Agenda would be relaunched as a Partnership for Growth and Employment.

Under the relaunched Lisbon Agenda, each Member State is required to prepare a three year **National Reform Programme**. This will take account of twenty-four integrated guidelines covering macro-economic, micro-economic, and employment policies. The European Commission will focus on measures at EU level to reinforce the Member States’ programmes.

The European Council agreed to focus on two urgent priorities – growth and employment. It also endorsed action in two complementary areas –social cohesion and sustainable development. The Commission’s *Communication on the Social Agenda* addresses tackling poverty and disadvantage, and will help to promote social cohesion. Likewise, the declaration on *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development*, which was adopted in June, is a basis for achieving sustainable growth.

Ireland’s **National Reform Programme** was sent to the European Commission on 28th October, following consultation with the social partners, and consideration by both Houses of the Oireachtas. It draws heavily on the *Programme for Government* and on the social partnership agreement, *Sustaining Progress*. The Programme identifies the various priorities, policies and actions Ireland is pursuing to deliver on the Lisbon Agenda.

Overall, Ireland is performing well on many of the key Lisbon indicators, and is able to report strong progress against most of the twenty-four guidelines. The main goal for the next three years is to sustain and build on the progress of recent years.

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

Spring European Council

The Spring European Council took place on 22/23 March and adopted Conclusions on the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, and endorsed the report from the Finance Ministers' Council (ECOFIN) on improving the Pact. It also reached agreement on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda.

June European Council

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

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

In October, Heads of State and Government held an informal meeting at Hampton Court at the invitation of Prime Minister Blair, in his role as President of the European Council.

The theme of the meeting was the opportunities and challenges of globalisation, and the discussion focused on the competitive challenges posed by China, India and other emerging economies.

December European Council

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

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

The agreement on the Financial Perspectives provides for €62 billion in commitment appropriations over the period 2007-2013, amounting to just 1.045% of EU Gross

National Income (GNI). Ireland will receive the following: €10.4 billion in direct farm payments and market supports; rural development receipts of approximately €1.9 billion; and some €800 million in Structural Funding. In addition, Ireland will benefit under other elements of the proposal, including spending on competitiveness, growth and employment (the Lisbon Agenda).

The agreement protects the national interests of each Member State, including Ireland, and allows the enlarged Union to move forward on a sound financial basis.

EU and International Programme

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

Official visit to China, January 2005.

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

The visit was designed to progress our economic, trade, agriculture, education and tourism interests through dedicated commercial and trade events, and signings with Chinese partners. Irish businesses and colleges signed contracts worth €125.8 million during the visit, while Irish companies made investments of €46.5 million in China. The importance of tourism, including cultural tourism, was also addressed as Irish musicians and dancers accompanied the delegation, and their performances were well received.

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

Launch of Phase 2 of the Asia Strategy

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

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

- An increase in the number of students Asian studying in Irish third-level colleges, from the current 5,500 to 17,000 by 2009
- An increase in number of tourists, from 95,000 to 150,000
- A trebling of exports in the food and drink sector, from €130 million to €390 million
- An increase in the number of Irish companies with a permanent presence in the region, from 93 in 2003 to 215 in 2009.

A High Level Group has been established to oversee the progress of the Asia Strategy. It is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, in cooperation with the Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Department of the Taoiseach is represented on the group at Assistant Secretary level.

New York and the UN Summit

The Taoiseach attended the 60th High Level Plenary meeting of the United Nations on 14 September, which was convened to consider proposals for UN reform. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D. also attended in his capacity as special UN Envoy.

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

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

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

While in New York, the Taoiseach met Mr Peter Piot, the Director of UNAIDS, the UN agency responsible for coordinating the international fight against HIV/AIDS, and Mr Paul

Wolfowitz, the new President of the World Bank. Issues discussed at these meetings included UN reform, the G8 initiative on debt cancellation, HIV/AIDS, and ODA.

The Taoiseach also attended the launch of the Clinton Global Initiative, which is focused on poverty, conflict and reconciliation, climate change, and governance; and business events, hosted by Enterprise Ireland, to highlight the strong trading relationship between Ireland and the US. On 15 September, the Taoiseach attended a ceremony with the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, to re-dedicate a plaque at the birthplace of Eamon De Valera, located on Lexington Avenue and 51st Street.

Oireachtas Scrutiny Arrangements

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

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

Meetings and Engagements in 2005

Full details of the Taoiseach's EU and international engagements, which the Department facilitated in 2005, are set out in the following table.

January	
17-22 January	Official Visit to China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Minister of Commerce, Minister Bo Xilai • Meeting with Premier Wen Jiabao • Courtesy Call on President Hu Jintao • Courtesy Call on Chairman of the National People's Congress, Mr. Wu Bangguo • Meeting with President and Senior Academics of Fudan University • Meeting with Mayor of Shanghai • Address by Taoiseach to Key Business Contacts • Meeting with Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

February	
3 February	Courtesy Call by Lithuanian Foreign Minister Anton Valionis
11 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to Bulgaria • Meeting Prime Minister Saxe-Coburg-Gotha • Meeting with President Parvanov & Presentation of Stara Planina Award to the Taoiseach
12 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to Poland • Lunch with Irish Business Leaders in Poland • Meeting with Prime Minister Marek Belka • Gala of Polish Business Leaders organised by the Business Centre Club of Poland & Presentation of Special Award of Golden Statuette of BCC to Taoiseach
16 February	Meeting with Bethuel Pakalitha Mosislli, Prime Minister of Lesotho
21 February	Meeting with President Mádl of Hungary
22 February	EU Heads of State or Government Meeting with President Bush

March	
10 March	Meeting with Commissioner Margot Wallstrom
15-17 March	St. Patrick's Day visit to the US
22/23 March	European Council, Brussels

April	
18 April	Meeting with Mr. Dominique Strauss Kahn
28 April	Meeting with Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero, Madrid, Spain

May	
7 May	Courtesy Call on Emperor of Japan at Farmleigh

3 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with PM of Slovenia, Anton Rop. (Instead of 20 May Tour of Capitals)
9 May	Ceremony to mark the 60 th anniversary of the end of WW2, Moscow, Russia
17 May	Third Council of Europe Summit, Warsaw, Poland

June	
2 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Prime Minister Juncker, Luxembourg Speech at Humboldt University, Berlin Meeting with Chancellor Schroeder, Berlin
16/17 June	European Council, Brussels
20 June	Meeting with President Svetozar Marovic of Serbia and Montenegro
30 June	Meeting with Mr. José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Dublin

July	
4 July	Meeting with Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada
7 July	Meeting with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Rome

September	
12 September	Meeting with Ms. Catherine Collona, French Minister for European Affairs
14/15 September	UN High Level Meeting, New York <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bilateral with Dr Piot Executive Director of UNAIDS Bilateral with Dr Paul Wolfowitz President of World Bank Taoiseach's Address to Enterprise Ireland Event Unveiling of plaque commemorating Eamonn De Valera's birthplace Speech by Taoiseach at post-bell reception, New York Stock Exchange Address by Taoiseach at All Hallows Gala Dinner Bilateral Meeting with President Clinton
16 September	Visit to Newfoundland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Premier Danny Williams Meeting with Mr. John Efford, Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Address by Taoiseach at Gala Reception hosted by Premier Williams

October	
27/28 October	Informal Meeting of Heads of State or Government, Hampton Court, UK

November	
25 November	Meeting with Prime Minister Gyurcsany, Budapest, Hungary
27/28 November	Euromed Summit, Barcelona <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gala Dinner Hosted by King Juan Carlos • Bilateral with Prime Minister Blair
28/29 November	Visit to Croatia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Prime Minister Ivo Sanader • Meeting with President of Parliament of Croatia Mr. Vladimir Seks • Meeting with President Stjepan Mesic
December	
9 December	Bilateral Meeting with Prime Minister Blair, London
12 December	Meeting with President Georgi Parvanov of Bulgaria
15/16 December	European Council, Brussels

Chapter 6

Strategic Priority C - Economic and Social Policy

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

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

Whole of Government Policy Development

In addition to its role in providing information and briefing to the Taoiseach, the Department continued to contribute to the formulation of economic and social policy. It also participated in a range of cross-Departmental discussions in key policy areas. These included transport, housing, infrastructure, social inclusion, energy, climate change, spatial strategy, science and technology, financial services, equality, disability, social partnership, and budgetary and tax strategy.

Ireland's economy continued to perform very well in 2005, particularly in the context of difficult international conditions. Developments of particular note in the key economic indicators, as set out in the Department's Strategy Statement, are:

- Economic growth in 2005, at around 4.7%, continued to be well in excess of the European average
- Continued strong employment growth at 4.7% in 2005, as compared to 3% in 2004
- Unemployment remained static, at 4.4% in 2005
- The outturn for the 2005 General Government Balance is estimated to be a surplus of 0.4% of GDP
- The average annual rate of inflation for the year was 2.5%, compared with 2.2% in 2004.

Infrastructure

The Department provides the Secretariat and Chair for the Cross-Departmental Team on Housing, Infrastructure and PPPs. The Team supports a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach, which meets on a monthly basis.

In 2005, there was a particular focus on an "all-island" infrastructure agenda. The Department chaired a Cross Departmental Team on North-South /All-Island cooperation which produced a report for the Cabinet Committee. The Department also contributed to and participated in a range of North-South events and structures. The all-island agenda is now emerging as an important element in policy formulation.

The Department also participated in the Inter-Departmental Committee, and the Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology; and in progressing the **Strategic Implementation Plan**. The Department continued to contribute to a range of bodies/structures, e.g. the OECD review, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Tax Strategy Group, and PPP forums.

Significant progress has been made on key areas of infrastructural development. In November 2005, Government launched Transport 21, which will provide €34.4 billion for transport infrastructure development over the next ten years. Agreement was reached to sell part of Aer Lingus and to develop the second terminal at Dublin Airport.

In addition, a number of measures were agreed and are being implemented to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing units. These include the establishment of the Affordable Homes Partnership, which initiated a Call for Lands to identify lands with potential for affordable housing. Other measures included identification of sites; and a land swap option, which proposes that high value land in State ownership be exchanged with builders/developers. In return, they would ensure the early delivery of a higher unit output of affordable housing on a site or combination of sites which they owned.

A Government Decision of July 2005 clearly linked infrastructural investment with the National Spatial Strategy, under the second **National Development Plan (2007-2013)**, (under development in 2005). It was agreed to progress the Strategic Infrastructure Bill, and to develop a Centre of Expertise within the National Development Finance Agency, which would support the procurement of key infrastructure projects by PPP in the central Government area, with an initial focus on projects in the areas of Education, Health and Justice. In addition, progress was made in the areas of energy market reform, climate change, energy efficiency, alternative energy sources, waste management and ports policy.

Supporting the Financial Services Industry

The Clearing House Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department, and deals with the continued development and success of the international financial services industry in Ireland. It continued to meet on a regular basis in 2005, as did the three Working Groups and two Task Forces reporting to it (Working Groups on Insurance, Banking and Treasury, and Funds; and the Task Forces on Asset Management, and pan-European Pensions).

Progress in 2005 included:

- Working with Government Departments and agencies to ensure the implementation of the Pensions Directive (IORPS) into Irish law, which was achieved on time
- The Investment Funds, Companies and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2005, was enacted in June. This provides, among other things, a legal framework for a Common Contractual Fund (CCF). The CCF facilitates the pooling of assets of other funds – e.g. pension funds
- The Insurance Group worked closely with the Department of Finance and the Financial Regulator on the arrangements for the transposition of the Re-Insurance Directive
- Co-operating with the follow-up to the Deloitte Report on the international financial services industry

- Preparatory work in relation to the formulation of a new strategy for the international financial services industry
- Commissioning of a report by the Higher Education Authority/Foras Áiseanna Saothair (HEA/FÁS) on education and skills needs in the industry.

Monitoring and Responding to EU and International Developments

The Department finalised the **National Reform Programme** (NRP) under the re-launched Lisbon agenda. The NRP sets out the key national priorities and policies, and was prepared following consultation with the social partners. There was also close engagement with other member states, including agreement with the UK to include a common contribution on North-South co-operation. The Programme was submitted to the European Commission, and was the subject of statements in the Oireachtas, at the end of October 2005.

Social Policy

Social inclusion issues are by their nature complex and interdependent. They cross the functions and responsibilities of a number of Departments and agencies, with whom this Department works closely to advance a range of social inclusion objectives.

Chief among these is the Office of Social Inclusion, which has specific responsibility for implementation of the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Other examples of co-operation include the mechanisms in relation to the National Drugs Strategy, the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, the Working Group Long Term Care of Older People, and the National Disability Strategy.

The National Economic and Social Council's report, *The Developmental Welfare State*, was particularly relevant. The report provides a revised account of the evolution of the Irish welfare state. It identifies the social deficits that remain despite Ireland's remarkable economic progress, and recasts the social debate in a way that can build consensus on how to improve social protection in Ireland.

The Department also provides the Secretariat for three Cabinet Committees: on Social Inclusion; on Children; and on Health. A Senior Officials Group supports each Committee.

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion:

The Committee met six times during 2005 and considered a wide range of social policy issues. Its focus is on Social Inclusion issues which cross Government Departments and which require co-operation and collaboration.

Lone Parents

As part of the **Ending Child Poverty Special Initiative** under *Sustaining Progress*, the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion was asked by Government to examine the obstacles to employment faced by lone parents. A subgroup was established and chaired by this Department, and included officials from the Department of Finance, and the Office for Social Inclusion.

The subgroup's report, *An Analysis of Obstacles to Lone Parents*, was submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. The Committee also considered a report on the *Reform of Income Support Arrangements for Lone Parents and Parents on Low Income* (a parallel exercise undertaken by the Department of Social and Family Affairs). Both documents were subsequently sent to Government, and have been published in the first quarter of 2006 to form the basis of a public consultation process.

National Disability Strategy

The Department, along with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, was centrally involved in the development of the *National Disability Strategy*. The Strategy has a number of elements: the Disability Act; the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill 2004; six Outline Sectoral Plans; and a Multi-Annual Investment Programme (2006-2009) of €900m for high priority disability support services.

The Senior Officials Group on Disability, chaired by this Department, was reconstituted in 2005 to monitor progress on implementation of the Disability Act; the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill; and the outline Sectoral Plans published by six Departments under part 3 of the Act.

Cabinet Committee on Children:

The Cabinet Committee on Children met three times in 2005. It oversees and drives the implementation of the National Children's Strategy.

Childcare

During 2005, the Department worked closely with the National Children's Office and other key Departments and agencies to develop proposals for a Childcare Strategy aimed at improving the affordability and availability of quality childcare in Ireland. Indecon consultants were engaged by the National Children's Office to carry out an economic analysis of childcare policy options. Based on this report, the High Level Group on Early Childhood Care and Education in its own report to the Cabinet Committee on Children, outlined a range of policy options for consideration by Government.

This work formed the basis for the measures announced by the Minister for Finance in Budget 2006, which included a five-year National Childcare Investment Programme; an Early Childcare Supplement of €1,000 per year for each child under 6 years of age; enhanced maternity and paternity leave entitlements; and the establishment of a new institutional structure, the Office for the Minister for Children.

The new Office will carry out the following functions:

- The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
- The programmes and activities of the National Children's Office
- Policy work on Child Protection

The Youth Justice Service of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and the Early Years Education functions of the Department of Education and Science, will also be co-located at the new Office.

Cabinet Committee on Health:

The Cabinet Committee on Health met seven times in 2005, and considered a range of issues in relation to the Health Service.

Long Term Care Working Group

The *Health Strategy 2001* and *Sustaining Progress* each proposed that policy be developed on the care of older people and associated funding issues. Subsequently, two reports were published on this issue: the *Mercer Report on the Future Financing of Long Term Care in Ireland* (2002), and the *O'Shea Report on the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme* (2003). Following public consultation on these reports, the Tánaiste, and the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, established the Working Group on Long Term Care in January 2005.

The Group's aim is to identify the policy options for a financially sustainable system of long term care, and to rationalise the range of benefits, services and grants currently in place, taking account of the Mercer and O'Shea Reports. The Group was chaired by this Department, and comprised senior officials from the Departments of Finance; Health and Children; and Social and Family Affairs. Its report was submitted to Government in early 2006.

Social Partnership Agreement – *Sustaining Progress* 2003-2005

Chapter 5 of *Sustaining Progress* contains agreed objectives and actions in relation to poverty and social inclusion, health and addressing health inequalities, equality, access to quality public services and the challenge of delivering a fair and inclusive society.

In addition, Chapter 2 of the Agreement sets out ten *Special Initiatives*. These were agreed by the Government and social partners as areas of national policy, which they believed should be the subject of a sustained effort from all parties, and should yield a significant return to the community. Eight of these contained a strong social inclusion element: Housing and Accommodation; Migration and Interculturalism; Long-term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant; Tackling Educational Disadvantage - Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leaving; Care –

Children, People with Disabilities and Older People; Alcohol/Drug Misuse; Including Everyone in the Information Society; and Ending Child Poverty.

These initiatives cut across the responsibility of a number of Departments, and this Department worked with social partners and other Departments to progress them. A *Report on the Special Initiatives* was presented to the Social Partner Plenary meeting in July 2004, and the emphasis for the remaining time of the Agreement (to end 2005) was on implementation of the Initiatives.

In July 2005, in the context of the **Special Initiative on Alcohol and Drug Misuse**, this Department worked with the Department of Health and Children to establish a Working Group on Alcohol Misuse. It consisted of social partners and relevant Government Departments and agencies, and submitted a report to the Steering Group under *Sustaining Progress* in December 2005. It set out a programme of actions to deliver targeted results on underage drinking, binge drinking and drink driving.

In September 2005, with *Sustaining Progress* nearing its end, this Department commissioned research on the Special Initiatives process. The aim of the research was to:

- Provide an overview of the process by which the Special Initiatives were arrived at as part of the social partnership agreement framework
- Document the progression of the Special Initiatives
- Identify lessons learned along the way, including suggestions on how to manage such issues and challenges for the future.

The report has been made available to the social partners (see also Chapter 7).

Statistics for Improved Policy-Making

Further good progress was made during 2005 in implementing the National Statistic Board's (NSB) *Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008*, which aims to support the development of Ireland's statistical system. Each Department developed an individual data strategy, which will be included in their Statement of Strategy and reported on in their Annual Reports.

The NSB completed its report on *Policy Needs for Statistical Data on Enterprises*, which establishes the priorities for collection of statistical data on enterprises, and identifies key cross-cutting issues to be addressed. It also published a document on the *Statistical and Policy Value of Postcodes*; and a second set of National Progress Indicators as an input into the social partnership process.

Chapter 7

Strategic Priority D - Social Partnership

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

Sustaining Progress

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

As part of the *Sustaining Progress* agreement, Government and the Social Partners identified ten areas as Special Initiatives: Housing and Accommodation; Cost and Availability of Insurance; Migration and Interculturalism; Long-term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant; Tackling Educational Disadvantage - Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leavers; Waste Management; Care - Children, People with Disabilities and Older People; Alcohol/Drug Misuse; Including Everyone in the Information Society; Ending Child Poverty. The *Final Report on the Special Initiatives*, published in July 2005, concluded that the aims set out in the key actions for the Initiatives had been largely achieved. Where there had been issues around delivery, the Steering Group on *Sustaining Progress* had identified the best way forward.

Mr Des Geraghty, the Chairman of the Affordable Housing Partnership, published his third report on the implementation of the Affordable Housing Initiative in July 2005. This concluded that very significant progress had been made on the Affordable Housing Initiative during 2005.

The Department also began work on key economic policy issues, and on the structures and institutional arrangements under any new agreement, in preparation for negotiations on a successor to *Sustaining Progress*.

Steering Group and Special Initiatives

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

In September 2005, with *Sustaining Progress* nearing its end, the Department commissioned research on the Special Initiatives process. The aim of the research was to:

- Provide an overview of the process by which the Special Initiatives were arrived at as part of the social partnership agreement framework
- Document the progression of the Special Initiatives
- Identify lessons learned along the way, including suggestions on how to manage such issues and challenges for the future.

The report has been made available to the Social Partners.

National Implementation Body

Negotiations on a successor to *Sustaining Progress* were due to have started in Autumn 2005 but were overtaken by the need to address major industrial disputes at An Post and Irish Ferries. The National Implementation Body (NIB), chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and representing IBEC/CIF and ICTU, was centrally involved in resolving these disputes. Arising from this, the NIB agreed that the issue of employment standards, which had been raised by the Irish Ferries dispute, should be addressed in negotiations on

a new social partnership agreement; and recommended that these be commenced at an early date. The negotiations were launched at the beginning of February, 2006, following a period of reflection and deliberation by the social partners.

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

National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO)

Government policy provides for the establishment on a statutory basis of the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO). This office would facilitate closer collaboration between the National Economic and Social Council, the National Economic and Social Forum, and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. By end 2005 the National Economic and Social Development Office Bill had completed committee stage in the Dáil. The Department continued to support the work of NESDO and its constituent bodies during the year.

National Economic and Social Council (NESC)

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

National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)

NESF's Work Programme until 2006 identifies the following priority areas: Early Childhood Care and Education; Care for Older People; and Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market. The report on Early Childhood Care and Education was considered by Government, and published in September 2005. The reports on Care for Older People, and on Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market were completed, for consideration by Government in early 2006.

NESF held the second National Anti-Poverty Strategy Social Inclusion Forum in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham on 26 January 2005. The Social Inclusion Forum gives those who are not directly involved in the social partnership process a chance to express their views, and their experience of implementing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. A report of the proceedings was published in April 2005.

Finally, the NESF hosted, in conjunction with University College, Dublin (UCD), a conference on evidence-based policy making on 10 February, 2005. The conference examined the supply and gathering of the evidence; and applying this in the policy-

making process, and in the design of practical policy solutions. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of policy outcomes was an important focus of the conference.

National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPPI)

The NCPPI continues to promote the pivotal role of partnership in realising improved productivity and performance through innovation in the workplace.

The final report of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future, “Working to our Advantage: A National Workplace Strategy”, was published in March, 2005. The report establishes a clear guiding vision for Ireland’s workplaces of the future, supporting the development of dynamic, outward-looking, customer-focused and agile organizations. It also sets out a comprehensive agenda of change to make this vision a reality, demanding a new emphasis on internal systems and processes which are knowledge intensive, employee responsive, highly productive, learning oriented and pro-actively diverse.

A High Level Implementation Group (HLIG) was established in June, 2005, to oversee implementation of the National Workplace Strategy. The NCPPI provides the Secretariat to this Group, which is chaired by the Minister for Labour Affairs and includes appropriate social partner representation.

Other key NCPPI activities included the publication in June of the findings of new research on the role of progressive human resource management practices in High Performance Work Systems. This report was published in conjunction with the University of Limerick. The NCPPI also published a report in November on Workplace Innovation in Local Authorities which highlights partnership’s capacity to improve organisational performance and deliver mutual gains for management, employees, unions and customers.

Chapter 8

Strategic Priority E - Public Service Modernisation

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

Implementation Group of Secretaries General

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

Implementation of *Sustaining Progress*

PSM Division has worked to promote implementation of the public service modernisation agenda set out in *Sustaining Progress*. It has done this in cooperation with the Department of Finance and other Departments, particularly through the Implementation Group of Secretaries General, the Human Resources Management Sub-Group, and the Change Management Network. Significant progress recorded during 2005 included:

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

Progress on implementing this agenda, both centrally and at organisational level, was verified by the Performance Verification Groups (PVG), before the two increases for 2005, provided for in the agreement, were paid.

Successor Agreement to *Sustaining Progress*

During 2005 the Division supported and co-ordinated the management side's preparations for a further modernisation agenda, to be included in any future social partnership agreement. These preparations included organising a seminar to launch a study by the Committee for Public Management Research (CPMR) on the PVG process. The key recommendations/conclusions of the study helped to inform preparations for the pay talks in relation to performance verification.

Change Management Network

The Change Management Network helps and supports those implementing the modernisation process in Departments/Offices. Regular meetings of the Network were held during 2005; these provided a forum for discussion and sharing of good practice. The Network also provided a forum to co-ordinate management approaches and to brief Departments/Offices on developments at central level.

Performance Management

In 2005 an integrated PMDS model was agreed, thus achieving a key commitment under *Sustaining Progress*. This model provides for the integration of PMDS with wider HR

policies and processes, including assessment for increments, promotion and higher scale posts. It will streamline and strengthen the existing structures and procedures for managing performance in the Civil Service, and will lead to substantial benefits for individual jobholders and the Civil Service in general.

Two major seminars to support PMDS in the Civil Service were held in 2005, dealing with Upward Feedback and the integrated PMDS model, respectively. A large number of delegates attended both events, with very positive feedback.

Representation on Inter-Departmental Committees

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

Quality Customer Service (QCS)

The QCS Working Group oversees and implements the QCS Initiative; it includes representatives from Government Departments and Offices, civil service unions, and business, consumer, and equality interests.

In 2005 the main focus was the implementation and monitoring of customer charters. All outstanding charters were completed in 2005, following training provided by the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD) and support from PSM Division. This process was driven by the QCS Officers' Network, which met six times in 2005. A review to gauge the level and quality of reporting on customer service in Annual Reports began in 2005, and a comprehensive external evaluation of the customer charter process will begin in 2006. A QCS event was held in April, with the participation of the Working Group, to mark the completion of the charters and the beginning of the next phase of the charter process.

Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey

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

Redress

A High-Level Group on Redress in the Irish Civil Service was set up to look at the issue of redress in Departments and Offices. This Group will report to the Implementation Group in 2006.

Public Service Excellence Awards

A Management Group was established in 2005 to oversee preparations for the 2006 Public Service Excellence Awards. These awards are designed to reward projects or initiatives throughout the public service that have improved customer service and administration. Following extensive publicity, 153 submissions were received and an independent selection committee was established to decide on the Award recipients.

Communications

LINK magazine is one of the main ways of communicating the public service modernisation message, and six editions were produced in 2005. LINK is distributed to all Civil Servants, and is published in both English and Irish versions. It is available electronically on www.bettergov.ie in PDF and HTML format, and in Braille on request.

The websites www.bettergov.ie and www.betterregulation.ie provide information on and a contact point for the modernisation programme. The former includes background on the Strategic Management Initiative, information on progress in each area of activity, and key publications. It also acts as a link to information on Departmental / Office websites and to other sites dealing with the modernisation agenda. Significant traffic was received on both websites during the year.

White Paper – “Regulating Better”

The Government’s 2004 White Paper, ‘Regulating Better’, sets out six core principles of good regulation: Necessity, Effectiveness, Proportionality, Transparency, Accountability and Consistency. These principles inform the development of new regulations and the evaluation of existing regulations. In 2005, the Department continued to implement the commitments set out in the White Paper

Better Regulation Group

The Better Regulation Group was established during 2004 to monitor and advise on the implementation of the White Paper’s Action Plan. It also established three sub groups to look at particular aspects of the action plan. They were:

- A sub-group on Appeals and Penalties, which first met in May 2005. It examines the way in which decisions by regulatory authorities can be challenged or appealed, as well as the penalties and fines imposed for non-compliance with regulations. The sub-group aims initially to review and report on current appeal mechanisms, and to recommend improvements. It is currently working on a consultation document on regulatory appeals, which will be a basis for a public consultation.
- At the request of the Implementation Group of Secretaries General, a Working Group was set up in July 2005 to examine the production of Statutory Instruments

in a standard electronic format, to facilitate faster and more accurate provision of SIs on the Statute Book website and in print.

- A Steering Group was convened in June 2005 to oversee an audit of the regulatory framework in Ireland, and to map the bodies with regulatory functions and their reporting arrangements. This project is being carried out by the Institute of Public Administration, and will result in a database of all regulatory bodies.

Regulatory Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) is a systematic, rigorous assessment of proposed regulations before they are enacted. The piloting of Regulatory Impact Analysis in five Government Departments/Offices began in 2004 and was completed in 2005. A report, “The Introduction of Regulatory Impact Analysis”, was drawn up on completion, and highlights the significant benefits of RIA. It made recommendations on how the pilot model and approach should be improved.

Based on this Report, the Government decided on 21 June 2005 that RIA should be introduced across all Government Departments and Offices, and applied to proposals for:

- primary legislation involving changes to the regulatory framework
- significant Statutory Instruments
- EU Directives and significant EU Regulations.

Awareness raising and training

The Better Regulation Unit has been engaged in an extensive programme of awareness raising, training and development in relation to RIA. Presentations were delivered in fourteen Government Departments/Offices in 2005, with further presentations scheduled for 2006.

The Better Regulation Unit developed and ran a two-day dedicated RIA Training Course in October 2005, attended by officials from the key regulatory Departments. Based on feedback from participants, the Course was updated and will be delivered regularly in 2006 in conjunction with the Civil Service Training and Development Centre (CSTDC). It is open to officials from all Government Departments/Offices, and includes presentations from guest speakers. Officials from the Unit also delivered modules on RIA as part of the existing Policy Analysis and Legislative Processes run regularly by CSTDC in 2005.

An RIA Guidance Manual was prepared and publicly launched in October 2005. Approximately 1,200 copies of the manual had been distributed by the end of the year.

Public Consultation

In line with the principle of Transparency as outlined in the White Paper, the Taoiseach launched “Reaching Out – Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies” in July. These Guidelines were prepared by a sub-group of the Better Regulation Group, and are intended to promote better quality consultation across the Public Service. They are aimed at public servants running consultation processes, or interested in participating in them. They stress the importance of consultation, and offer guidance on designing consultation documents and events. They have been widely circulated to public servants, Social Partners and other interested parties.

Statute Law Revision

The Taoiseach and the Attorney General jointly launched an initiative in April 2004 to repeal legislation which pre-dates the foundation of the State and is no longer required. The first step in this process was the enactment of the Statute Law Revision (Pre-1922) Bill 2004, which passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas in the course of 2005. It was signed into law by the President on 18 December. The Statute Law Revision (Pre-1922) Act 2005 (No. 32 of 2005) provides for the repeal of 206 Acts which were enacted before the 6th of December 1922, and which are spent, obsolete or no longer of any practical utility. The next phase will begin in early 2006, with the introduction of a new Bill to retain those Acts, enacted before 1800, that are to remain in force. All other pre-1800 Acts will then be repealed.

Better Regulation at European Level

The Department continued to represent Ireland at the Directors of Better Regulation, a network of senior officials from the EU and the Member States. It also chaired a sub-group on a shared approach to training on Impact Assessment, and presented the sub-group’s findings at a meeting in Vienna.

The Department was also represented on the Group of high-level national regulatory experts, established by the European Commission in November 2005 to advise on and to facilitate the development of better regulation measures, at both national and EU levels.

Business Regulation Forum

In July, the Taoiseach announced the establishment of a new Business Regulation Forum to examine the regulatory and administrative burdens faced by Irish business. This Forum comprises senior business people and public officials, including a representative of this Department. The Department also works closely with the Secretariat to support the activities of the Forum. The first meeting of the Business Regulation Forum took place on 8th December.

International Liaison

During 2005 staff from PSM Division met visiting EU and other national delegations to discuss public sector modernisation issues. Staff also attended and participated at international meetings, seminars and conferences, including EU and OECD meetings.

Involvement at Conferences and Events

The Division provided speakers, facilitators and briefing material for a number of national and local conferences, seminars and training events throughout the year.

Chapter 9

Strategic Priority F - The Information Society and e-Government

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

Co-ordinating Mechanisms

The Department chairs and supports the eStrategy Group of Secretaries General, and the Implementation Group of Assistant Secretaries. These groups continued to address national Information Society and eStrategy issues in 2005.

New Connections

New Connections – A strategy to realise the potential of the Information Society was launched in March 2002 and set out the policy agenda for the development of the Information Society in Ireland up to the end of 2005. The Action Plan sets out objectives in seven policy strands:

- Telecommunications Infrastructure
- Legal and Regulatory
- eGovernment

- eBusiness
- Research and Development
- Lifelong Learning
- eInclusion

The appropriate Government Departments and Agencies are working on these strands. During 2005, this Department monitored progress and began to prepare a follow-up Action Plan.

eInclusion Fund 2005

The eInclusion Fund helps late adopters of technology to take part in an inclusive Information Society. The Government allocated €1.025m for eInclusion initiatives in 2005, which targeted older people, and people with disabilities, in particular. These groups have been identified by CSO statistics as two of the most vulnerable sectors in society.

A total of 117 applications were received following a national call for proposals under the eInclusion Fund. 48 projects were subsequently funded.

eAccessibility Group

An interdepartmental eAccessibility Group was set up in 2005 to promote ICT accessibility for people with disabilities in Ireland. This group is co-chaired by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and this Department's Information Society Policy Unit (ISPU).

The Group examined a number of issues including:

- redevelopment of the NDA IT Accessibility Guidelines, to include practical guidance for web developers, web designers, and content creators for the web
- new guidelines for emerging technology
- a toolkit for procurement officers which sets out accurate and measurable accessibility criteria for inclusion in ICT tenders, and guidance for the evaluation of such tenders
- development of an online forum on web accessibility for web developers and designers
- dissemination of relevant information from the EU and presentation of Ireland's position to the EU on these issues.

The Group also provides a forum to promote interaction between the NDA and Departments.

eCabinet

The ISPU provided Project Management for eCabinet, the award winning innovative system. eCabinet electronically supports the preparation and conduct of Government business - from the initial draft of a Memorandum for Government to the conduct of the meeting itself. eCabinet provides for authoring of Memoranda in XML, and for instant, secure transmission of Memoranda within and between Government Departments. It has been in operation in Government Departments since June 2004, was deployed to the Cabinet Table in November 2004, and has been successfully in use at Cabinet meetings since that time.

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

Knowledge Society Foresight (KSF)

The social partnership agreement, *Sustaining Progress*, contains a commitment to progress a KSF exercise under the Information Society Commission (ISC), with appropriate participation by the social partners. The Commission worked with the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), Forfás and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), and this process led to:

- Broad-based agreement around the need to deepen shared understanding of Ireland's innovation challenge
- A high level of enthusiasm for the role of the Knowledge Society Foresight initiative in meeting this challenge
- Clear recognition of the synergies that can be developed between this initiative and the strengths of the social partnership process.

In March 2005 the ISC published its final report to Government. The report, "*Learning to Innovate: Reperceiving the global information society*", contains two key conclusions: the need for renewal and reorientation of e-strategy priorities, and the need to develop an approach to taking forward the Knowledge Society Foresight exercise initiated under *Sustaining Progress*.

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

Information Society Fund 2005

The Information Society Fund's remit was extended by Government from 2003 to 2005. The Fund was operated by this Department and the Department of Finance, with an Evaluation Board drawn from both Departments, and its administration provided by the Department of Finance (CMOD). The Fund's aim was to support "fast track" Information Society initiatives which progress the objectives set out in the Government's Information Society Action Plan, "*New Connections*". In 2005, the total fund amounted

to €43.984 million. Of this, €m was maintained in the Central Fund, and allocations totalling €34.984m were devolved to eleven other Departmental Votes. These supported initiatives such as eCabinet, Revenue Online Services, Motor Tax Online, eRecruitment, the Public Service Broker, and the BASIS Project.

Expenditure from the Central Fund in 2005, which exceeded €8.8 million, supported initiatives such as the eConveyancing Project in the Law Reform Commission; the Irish Spatial Data Infrastructure (ISDI) Project in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and the Virtual Private Network Telecommunications Project managed by the Department of Finance.

i2010 and eGovernment

The European Commission adopted the initiative “i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment” in June 2005. This Department participated in EU fora on i2010, and contributed to the development of a Ministerial Declaration which was adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Manchester in November 2005.

Department officials also participated in a number of international eGovernment fora including the OECD country review of eGovernment in Holland, and the Arab Country Forum on eGovernment.

Progress is continuing on electronic public service delivery. In the context of the eEurope Action Plan, the most recent statistics (for 2004) show that current online sophistication of public service delivery in the EU has now reached 65%. Ireland, at 84%, is well above the EU average.

Chapter 10

Strategic Priority G – Corporate Support Services

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

Key Objectives:

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

Indicators

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

Human Resource Strategy

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

- Maintaining levels of staff engagement and autonomy: 84% engagement by staff, as measured through the 2005 Employee Opinion Survey, reflecting their commitment to the Department and alignment with its goals
- Exceeding the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities
- Continuing progress towards meeting Government gender equality targets:
 - One third of Assistant Principal (AP) posts to be filled by women by 2005. In 2005, 53% of APs in the Department were female
 - The proportion of female representatives in the Principal Officer grade to rise from 27% to 40% by 2010. In 2005, 31% of POs were female

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

- Exceeding our own target of providing 3 training days per person. In 2005, staff availed of 4 days' training per person, while 3.6% of payroll was spent on training
- 39% of staff are now involved in Partnership processes (as compared to 25% in 2003)
- External accreditation/validation of our approach, e.g. Performance Verification Group, employee opinion surveys, customer surveys etc.

Progress on implementing the individual actions is reported at **Appendix 2**, while metrics measuring the impact of the strategy are at **Appendix 3**.

In 2005, work commenced on the preparation of a new HR Strategy, to cover the period 2006 – 2008. An Employee Opinion Survey was independently commissioned in December, which continued to show high satisfaction levels amongst staff across a range of themes. The survey also allowed us to identify areas for improvement and the views expressed by staff in the survey will inform the preparation of our new HR Strategy.

Agreement was concluded with staff unions on a new internal promotions framework, which will move the Department towards the target in *Sustaining Progress* of 100% competitive process. The preparation of this framework afforded the Department an opportunity to ensure that our selection processes mirror best practice in the public service generally and were informed by the Commission on Public Appointments Code of Practice.

Decentralisation

While this Department itself is not due to decentralise, it is expected that decentralisation will result in a turnover of around 25% of our staff over the next few years, as individuals opt to move with other Departments. Requests for transfer of staff have commenced, and the Department is co-operating fully in the early release of staff. The Divisions most affected are making appropriate arrangements (e.g. the preparation of job manuals, etc.). Personnel Division are examining succession planning by, among other things, setting up a database to hold individual job descriptions. IT Unit has begun to prepare a decentralisation strategy, which will explore the potential for e-working (e.g. teleconferencing), and using technology to support flexible working, teleworking and decentralisation.

Training and Development

During 2005 the key focus of the Training Unit has been the evaluation of initiatives, practices and policies of previous years with a view to developing newer, fresher approaches to training.

Key developments in 2005 included:

- Expenditure on training and development was 3.6% of payroll, just under the target of 4%. Each member of staff received an average of 4 days' training, exceeding our target of 3 days' training per annum
- Continued progress on our Training and Development Strategy through formal training courses, coaching initiatives, on-the-job training, Refund of Fees Scheme, e-learning initiatives, and short courses. There was also continued development of skills relevant to the Department, with staff taking part in the IPA's Masters course in Policy Analysis, the MSc Innovation Management in the Public Service with Letterkenny Institute of Technology and the University of Ulster, and other CMOD and IPA Policy Analysis programmes
- Phase II of the Career Development Programme, rolled-out during 2004, was evaluated and judged successful. In 2005 further research was carried out on other career development models. Senior Management Development continued with a conference in December
- Training plans were developed on the basis of PMDS forms and training priorities reviewed. Training in Upward Feedback (as part of PMDS) was provided. New staff received induction training in the areas of PMDS, equality training, quality customer care, and the Official Languages Act. Refresher training in these areas was also made available to existing members of staff, both within this Department and from bodies under our aegis. Training to assist staff as both interviewers and interviewees was provided, to meet staff requirements resulting from the new internal promotions framework and, the incorporation of PMDS into promotion assessment procedures

- E-learning solutions were promoted to develop computer literacy, and new e-learning materials were made available to staff. The on-line staff information resource, DOT Knowhow, was further developed and advertised to staff members. Various relevant in-house briefings, courses and information sessions were offered on topics such as Financial Planning and Personal Effectiveness
- During 2005 a number of training measures were put in place to meet our commitments under the Official Languages Act. For example, an evaluation of Irish language proficiency among staff was carried out, and in-house training was commissioned to meet specific needs
- Under the refund of fees scheme staff were eligible, on a pilot basis, to apply for refunds of 100% of the cost of their academic fees on starting each year of their studies. An evaluation showed that up to one fifth of staff across the grades were benefiting from the scheme

Financial Management

In our work we aim for the best allocation of resources and value for money, and the least wasted effort and expense. These must be achieved without compromising on the quality of service we provide. Our financial management arrangements are the means by which we achieve these aims.

Payments totalling €29.415 million were processed during 2005 (*see Appendix 4*).

Accountability

The 2004 Appropriation Account was completed by the deadline of 31 March 2005, signed by the Accounting Officer and presented to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for audit. There were no adverse findings in respect of the 2004 Accounts. As required by law, the Finance Officer's Prompt Payments Report for 2005 is included as *Appendix 5* to this report. (Statement of Compliance from Finance Officer is also included as *Appendix 6*)

Improvements in Financial Management

The Department has been among the leaders in implementing the new Management Information Framework (MIF) for Government Departments. Throughout 2005, work continued on improving procedures in line with new requirements for services, and for statutory, management and other reports. Processes and procedures have been revised to improve service delivery using these new financial systems by, for example, making electronic payment options available to staff and suppliers. Work during the year included continued staff training; and the development of enhanced reporting capabilities and improved management information.

Staff from the Finance Unit also played an active role in a number of cross-Departmental groups, which oversee the implementation of the Management Information Framework.

Internal Audit

The eCabinet Audit and a Payroll Audit were completed in 2005, and an audit on Procurement was begun. Follow-up Audit Reports on the Millennium Celebrations (winding up) and eCabinet were completed and forwarded to the Accounting Officer for his information. The Internal Audit Committee met in April and October 2005. The Internal Audit Unit Annual Report 2005 and work programme 2006 were placed on the Department's intranet.

New ICT Strategy

A new ICT strategy, covering the period 2006-2008, was developed in 2005. This strategy includes a work programme aimed at supporting the Department's strategic objectives by using efficient, appropriate and innovative technologies. Implementation of the strategy has commenced.

Website Accessibility

An "accessibility and usability" review of the Department's three websites was completed in 2005. It aimed to ensure that the Department has a dynamic web presence, which can support Departmental strategic objectives and meet all users' needs and expectations. The findings and recommendations of this review are currently being addressed.

Quality Customer Service

The Department's Quality Customer Service (QCS) Group – a sub-group of the Partnership Committee – met throughout the year to further the development of QCS in the Department. The Department's Customer Charter, published in 2004 (*see Appendix 7*), remains the benchmark against which we measure our success in meeting customer expectations.

In 2005 we surveyed 369 external customers. A "mystery shopping" exercise was also commissioned, involving 50 telephone call and 20 e-mail evaluations, and covering all sections of the Department. We also surveyed participants in the tours of Government Buildings.

Overall, the results show consistently high scores in relation to quality of our services. The most positive and welcome finding is that over 98% of customers find our staff to be courteous, efficient and friendly. Sample surveys of the response rate to telephone calls to the Department main switchboard showed that 100% of calls were answered in less than 15 seconds (ahead of the 90% target set in the Charter). 89% of customers agreed that the Department provides a quality service (compared to an 81% rating in a previous

survey, carried out when preparing the Charter); 83% agreed that the Department actively listens to its customers (compared to 65% in the previous survey); and 80% agreed that the Department provides its services fairly and equitably. 84% of suppliers were happy that clear tendering procedures were in place, while 80% were happy that payments were made in time.

The QCS Committee periodically reviews the implementation of the Customer Charter and considers further approaches to improving the services for the internal customer. The Employee Opinion Survey, carried out in December, will provide a benchmark of staff opinions and satisfaction, particularly with internal corporate services.

Customer service training continues to be a central element of training for all staff, including induction/refresher training, and we are promoting awareness of our customer complaints procedure which was identified as a deficiency in our last survey

The Department remains committed to ensuring a quality service delivery to the groups covered by the equality legislation, as well as those socially excluded due to socio-economic and geographic factors.

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

Modernisation Programme

The objectives of the Programme are to:

- Enable the Department to meet changes in the external environment
- Provide an excellent service to our customers
- Maintain a strategic focus on the Department's role and functions, to ensure that we provide leadership and co-ordination across key areas of Government policy
- Work in partnership with the staff of the Department to bring about required changes.

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

The Group recognised, in particular, that good progress was made in relation to the competitive promotion processes and the high level of customer satisfaction indicated by survey results. The Group also acknowledged the value added by the eCabinet system and noted the high level of participation in Partnership processes.

During 2005, the Department received funding from the central Change Management Fund in support of key change initiatives undertaken within the Department. Funding was also provided for a number of Public Service modernisation cross-Departmental initiatives.

The Department's Strategy Statement 2005-2007 was published, setting a clear direction for the Department's activities over the next few years.

Partnership

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

During 2005 the Committee:

- Considered an implementation plan for meeting priority training needs in 2005 and noted progress made in implementing its 2004 training target
- Considered the Department's Fourth and Fifth Progress Reports to the Performance Verification Group on progress achieved in respect of the Modernisation Action Plan
- Considered the new Civil Service Policy on a Positive Working Environment, which deals with bullying, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace
- Considered recommendations made to the Secretary General by the Employee Recognition Award Sub-Group, as a result of which eleven individuals and seven groups received Recognition Awards
- Other issues considered by the Committee included:
 - Employee Opinion Survey 2005
 - Department facilities
 - Specialised Irish language training for staff in light of the introduction of the Official Languages Scheme
 - Structured Interviews – training for staff on completing application forms and interview techniques
 - Revised training and support materials for staff to assist in the introduction of integrated PMDS/HR processes.

Partnership Committee Sub-Groups

The sub-Groups of the Committee - Quality Customer Service, Change Management, Health and Safety, and Social and Recreation - continued to report on progress on a quarterly basis to the Partnership Committee.

Some of their key achievements in 2005 include:

- The Change Management Working Group oversaw the implementation of the DOT Knowhow tool; and also considered the General Council agreement on the integration of PMDS and other HR processes, and its implementation in the Department
- The Quality Customer Service Group reported on the Customer Charter evaluation and developments in the implementation of the Official Languages Scheme in the Department. A comprehensive accountability and usability review of our three websites was also undertaken and the recommendations of this review are currently being implemented
- The Health and Safety Group reported on the review of the Department's Safety Statement and the implementation of safety policies

Official Languages

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

The primary objective of the Official Languages Act 2003 is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of service to the public in Irish. Because the primary focus of the Department's work is on dealings with Government and with other Departments and Agencies, we do not experience a significant level of demand from the public for service in Irish. Nevertheless, we have made a commitment under the Scheme to improving the service we provide in Irish, and to developing a positive culture that encourages the use of Irish.

In 2005 we put in place a number of measures to implement this commitment, including:

- We carried out an evaluation of Irish language proficiency among staff, and commissioned in-house training to meet their specific needs
- A glossary of technical terms relating to the work of the Department was prepared, to assist staff in writing official documents and to ensure consistency of language use
- A module on customer service in Irish and the implications of the Official Languages Act was included in our induction training for new staff; and Language Awareness Training was provided
- We provided advice to all staff members on the implications of the Act and on the provisions of our Scheme
- We set up an Irish Language Network of officers interested in Irish, to share information and to advise on, and participate in, implementation of the Scheme
- Arrangements were made to provide the Saturday Tours of Government Buildings in Irish on request

- We provided ongoing training and development opportunities to improve the Department's Irish language capability.

Recycling

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

Energy Usage

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

Health and Safety

The Department continues to ensure compliance with national Health and Safety standards by monitoring, developing and communicating procedures to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for staff, visitors and contractors. The Department's Safety Statement is updated on a regular basis. Annual safety audits also take place. Health and Safety training includes training for fire officers, and training for those involved in manual handling. Visual Display Unit assessments and ergonomic training are provided for all existing and new staff. First Aid Officers are trained and CPR training has also been arranged for staff. The Department's Health and Safety Committee (a sub-Committee of Partnership) continues to meet regularly, to monitor health and safety policy and practice. Regular Fire evacuation drills take place.

Better Regulation

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

Meeting our Legal and Regulatory Responsibilities

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

Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act, 1997*, and the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act*, assert the rights of members of the public to obtain access to official information to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the public interest, and the right to privacy of Individuals. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are co-ordinated by the FOI Officer, Ms. Patricia Williams. (e-mail: foi@taoiseach.gov.ie; telephone 01 619 4154).

A manual which provides a guide to the structures of the Department to help access information under the FOI Acts, is available at www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/

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

FOI requests were dealt with as follows:

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

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

Appendix 1:

Gender breakdown of Staff Serving in the Department

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

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

Appendix 2:

Summary of progress on Actions under the HR Strategy 2003-2005

A number of new initiatives in relation to human resource management and development have been undertaken recently. In addition, a number of new actions have been committed to in the HR Strategy. The main new initiatives are outlined below, with timeframes for delivery and a comment on progress made during 2005.

Getting the right people	Actions under HR Strategy 2003-2005	Progress in 2005
Human Resource Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on employee skills, qualifications and training being improved with the introduction of the new HR computer system Models of the flow of staff through grades to predict future staffing and training needs of the organisation 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for further use of temporary staff to cover vacancies created by term-time working to be explored Linkages with third-level institutions and other internship programmes to be developed and a brochure for the Department developed Opportunities provided by proposed changes to civil service recruitment rules to be explored, in consultation with the unions 	<p>Procedures in place to cover Term Time</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Induction of New Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process improvements including improved information for new staff and their managers, overlap periods, training needs analysis, etc. 	A new staff handbook was introduced in February 2005. A copy was given to all existing staff and a copy is given to all new staff.
Staff Development, Reward & Recognition	Action	Progress in 2005
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation improvements including trends in rankings 	Being implemented as part of changes introduced under the new PMDS integrated model.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants for internal promotion competitions to submit role profile forms with their application • Managing people recognised in internal competitions • Upward Feedback to be implemented 	<p>Being implemented as part of changes introduced under the new PMDS integrated model</p> <p>Implemented as part of the new internal promotions framework.</p> <p>Implemented.</p>
Dealing with Under Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive review of supports in place in light of new legislation • Structured engagement with staff 	Awaiting central developments.
Training and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on senior management development, career development, IT, Learning Resource Centre and improved training administration and evaluation 	<p>Progress 2005:</p> <p>Continued focus on policy making and core competency development has resulted in 3 AOs and 2 APs participating in MSc Policy Analysis Programme. Other staff participating in CMOD Policy Analysis skills, as well as IPA Higher Diploma in Policy Analysis.</p> <p>Senior Management Development continued and a Conference took place in December 2005, with both internal and external expert speakers.</p> <p>Proposal in relation to next Career Development Programme was furthered. Having identified areas for improvement on the previous Programme, other models were researched and their suitability/transferability to DoT was assessed. Proposals being finalised and will be submitted to MAC shortly</p> <p>Training plans developed on the basis of PMDS forms and training priorities reviewed.</p> <p>Other training initiatives enhancing staff development introduced during 2005 included competition/interview preparatory sessions (run in-house) to up-skill and familiarise staff applying for newly structured competitions and interviews.</p>

		<p>Irish language training requirements assessed in the context of the Official Languages Act. Irish courses sourced. Irish training provided in-house by external trainer in Autumn 2005. Irish training CD Roms made available to staff.</p> <p>New e-learning materials available to staff with the introduction of new Learning Resource Centre materials including ECDL launched early 2005 and courses reviewed in Autumn 2005.</p> <p>e-learning solutions were promoted to develop computer literacy. The introduction of e-learning initiatives were reviewed i.e. ECDL used as a case study to assess non-conventional forms of learning.</p> <p>In house courses / briefings and information sessions held in 2005 covering speechwriting, personal effectiveness, financial planning, osteoporosis,</p> <p>Refund of Fees scheme benefited up to one-fifth of staff across the grades. On a pilot basis from January 2005 staff were eligible to apply for reimbursement of 100% of the total cost of the relevant year's academic fees upon the commencement of their relevant studies. This change in policy reflects our desire to provide as much support as possible for relevant staff education and development.</p> <p>Formal evaluations of training completed included the evaluation of refund of fees scheme.</p> <p>Active involvement by the Training Officer in Civil Service DTO (Departmental Training Officers) Network.</p>
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot study on the use of structured interviewing for internal competitions will be undertaken • Review and develop a comprehensive programme of 	<p>Structured interviewing introduced for all internal competitions</p> <p>A comprehensive programme of interview skills introduced.</p>

	<p>interviewer skills training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review interview guidelines and procedures • Agreement to be concluded with the unions on merit-based promotions • Rules will be agreed with unions regarding the promotion rights of staff who leave the Department on secondment or who are given temporary allowances • A pilot programme of one-to-one interview coaching in relation to inter-departmental competitions will be progressed 	<p>Completed and changes incorporated into new internal promotions framework.</p> <p>Agreement concluded in 2005.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
A Good Place to Work	Action	Progress in 2005
Mobility and Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New mobility policy to be implemented, including provision for temporary moves to other organisations • AO “year out” scheme: consideration to be given to skills and experience of benefit to the Department as well as to the individual and expanding the range of placement locations 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
Recognition and Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and fair merit pay scheme to be agreed and implemented • A new set of performance indicators to be developed and submitted to the independent verification body 	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>Implemented.</p>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internal launch of the annual report will be held • Personnel will notify the Department of staff changes or other developments that affect staff promptly • Information and Knowledge Management requirements of Department are being examined • Organisation chart with staff photographs to be made 	<p>Annual Report for 2004 launched in 2005</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Work on this has commenced.</p> <p>Done.</p>

	<p>available on intranet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MAC will review the business plans of each division on a regular basis 	<p>Implemented. Heads of Divisions present their business plan to MAC each year and review their progress at year end.</p>
A Good Place to Work	Action	Progress in 2005
Employee Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR decisions will be based on objective and transparent policies, rules and processes, reflecting this strategy Appropriate partnership training will be offered from time to time 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
Equality and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All aspects of this HR strategy equality-proofed to ensure against disadvantage in terms of training, access to different work experiences and promotion etc. Continued implementation of Gender Equality Policy and Review in 2004 Department to review regularly practices and procedures HRMS to further develop management information Appropriate response to be developed following publication of Official Languages Act 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing. Upgrade of HRMS to take place in 2005.</p> <p>Scheme under the Official Languages Act 2005-2008 approved by Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>
Dignity at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department to review regularly practices and procedures in relation to harassment, bullying and threats to staff Documentation in relation to procedures will be made available electronically Dignity at Work Charter to be placed in a prominent position in the Department Training of bullying investigators to be completed 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The Department disseminated information on “A Positive Working Environment”; and further information will be provided to staff throughout the year.</p> <p>Training of contact persons has been provided.</p>

Health, Safety and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New health promotion initiatives to be progressed, including Healthy Heart scheme and additional training 	<p>Annual safety audit.</p> <p>Health and Safety training, including training for fire officers, and those involved in manual handling.</p> <p>VDU assessments, ergonomic training, First Aid and CPR training provided.</p> <p>Regular meetings of Health & Safety Committee.</p>
Implementation and Measuring Impact	Action	Progress in 2005
Re-orientation of the HR Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further training to develop HR skills among Personnel staff 	Ongoing.
Implementation of a Modern HR Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the new HRMS is used effectively and to its full modern HR Management System capability 	Upgrade to take place in May 2006.
Devolution of HR Responsibilities to Line Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel will develop short guides to key HR issues and procedures for line managers • Advance devolution in an agreed manner that benefits all concerned 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>To be considered following upgrade of HRMS in 2006.</p>
Measuring the Impact of this Strategy	Action	Progress in 2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report on state of the Department's HR environment to be prepared, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders • Employee opinion survey to be held every two years 	<p>Progress reported in Annual Report 2005.</p> <p>Employee Opinion Survey held in December 2005.</p>

Appendix 3:

Measuring the impact of our HR Strategy 2003 - 2005

Getting the Right People

Issue	Measurement Approach	2005
Recruitment Process	Average time to fill a position	4-6 weeks
	Contract offer/acceptance ratio	100% acceptance rate
	New recruits who left post within 1 year	1 person
Induction	% of new recruits who receive induction training within 3	eLearning Guide to Department available on all desktops from day one. 100% of new recruits offered induction course on arrival.
Retention	Staff turnover (no of resignations/ average headcount *100)	5 resignations = 3.94%
	Feedback from exit interviews	Received in all cases

Development, Performance and Reward

Issue	Measurement Approach	2005
Intellectual Capital	Average number of years' service in the Civil Service	13 years
Absenteeism	Absenteeism rate (i.e. number of days lost through sickness/number of days worked *100)	Average *4.92 days per person *This figure excludes ten staff members on long-term sick leave
PMDS	% of reviews completed within 2 weeks of target	Exact figure unavailable due to shift in timetable to facilitate introduction of new integrated PMDS model. In future, returns will be made on-line, which will facilitate data capture.

Performance Problems	% of new recruits not offered established posts after 1 year	0%
	% of employees not approved for probation	0%
	% of employees not approved for increments	0%
Training and Development	Number of days training per employee (target : 3 per employee per annum)	4 days* training per staff member on average in 2005.
	Training expenditure (target : 4% of payroll)	Total €427,652 (3.6% of payroll) *This figure does not include staff being supported to undertake 3rd level courses outside of core work hours
Mobility	Number of employees in post for more than 3 years (target: Nil)	70
	Number of employees in grades other than AO availing of lateral mobility	Nil

A Good Place to Work

Issue	Measurement Approach	2005
Employee Satisfaction	Employee Opinion Survey 2005	82% proud to work in the Department
Management Credibility	Employee Opinion Survey 2005	73% favourable of management Style
Communications	Employee Opinion Survey 2005	53% favourable
Partnership	Percentage of overall staff involved in Partnership Committee and sub-Groups	39%
Industrial Relations	Number of issues in dispute between management and unions	Nil
	Days lost to IR disputes (target: Nil)	Nil
Work-life balance	Availability of work-life balance options (e.g. work-sharing, term time, flexitime)	9 females granted work-sharing in 2005. Approximately 16% of staff availing of work sharing

		5 staff availed of Term Time in 2005 (3 females and 2 males)
	Number of employees granted/refused work-life balance options (in Department; by Division; by gender)	Nil
Dignity at Work	Incidence of formal and informal complaints	Nil
Equality	Indicators as set out in our Gender Equality Policy and monitored six-monthly via reports to the MAC and the Departmental Annual Report	See Appendix 1. Refresher training made available to new and existing staff members during 2005
Employee Stress	Stress audit conducted in accordance with Health and Safety Authority Guidelines	Independent analysis on stress measurement carried out.
Health and Safety	Number of accidents in the workplace	No accidents reported to the Health and Safety Authority

Implementation

Issue	Measurement Approach	2005
HR Costs	Overall Cost of HR activities	€403,603
	HR cost per employee	€1,345 per annum
	Number of employees per HR staff member	30* *For this exercise work-sharing employees and HR staff are counted as one person. These figures relate to all staff services by Personnel e.g. Ireland Newfoundland Partnership, seconded staff etc.
Introduction of Modern Technology	Implementation of new HRMS (Human Resource Management System)	HRMS upgrade scheduled for 2006
Re-orientation of	Degree of shift away from administrative	Assessment last undertaken in

HR Function	towards policy/strategic issues	2002 (published in HR Strategy) and will be undertaken again in review of HR Strategy in 2006.
	Number of staff in HR Function with HR qualification	1 staff member in the Personnel Unit undertaking a HR course, with another member successfully completing a HR course in 2004
Devolution of HR Activities	Number of items devolved to line managers	One (flexitime)
	Views of line managers on success of Devolution	Devolution principles included in HR Strategy
Progress on New Initiatives	See Appendix 2	

Appendix 4 :

Expenditure for the year 2005

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

Less Appropriations-in-Aid

-127

Net Total

29,415

Appendix 5:

Report on Payment Practices for 2005

Details of Late Payments

	2005
Total Interest Paid in the Period	5041.01
Late Payments in Excess of €17:	
Total Number	416
Total Value	1,048,611.06
Total Amount of Interest	4,675.02
Average Length of Delay	19 days
All Late Payments:	
Total Number	853
As a Proportion of Total Payments:	
Total Value of Late Payments/Total Value of All Payments x 100	1,102,832.79/11,539,700x100 =9.6%

Appendix 6

Statement of Compliance

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

Aileen Healy
Finance Officer
1 February 2006

Appendix 7:

Department of the Taoiseach Customer Charter

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

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

Our Commitments to our customers

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

Policy Development and Implementation

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

Contacting the Department

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

Responding to You

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

Meetings

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

Visitors to the Department

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

Media Services

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

The Irish Language

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

Websites and publications

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

Tours of Government Buildings

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

Diversity and Equality

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

Suppliers

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

Evaluation and reporting

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

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this Charter, or on any of the services we provide. We also have a procedure for responding to any complaints you may have. In return, we expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.

Appendix 8:

Associated Bodies

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

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

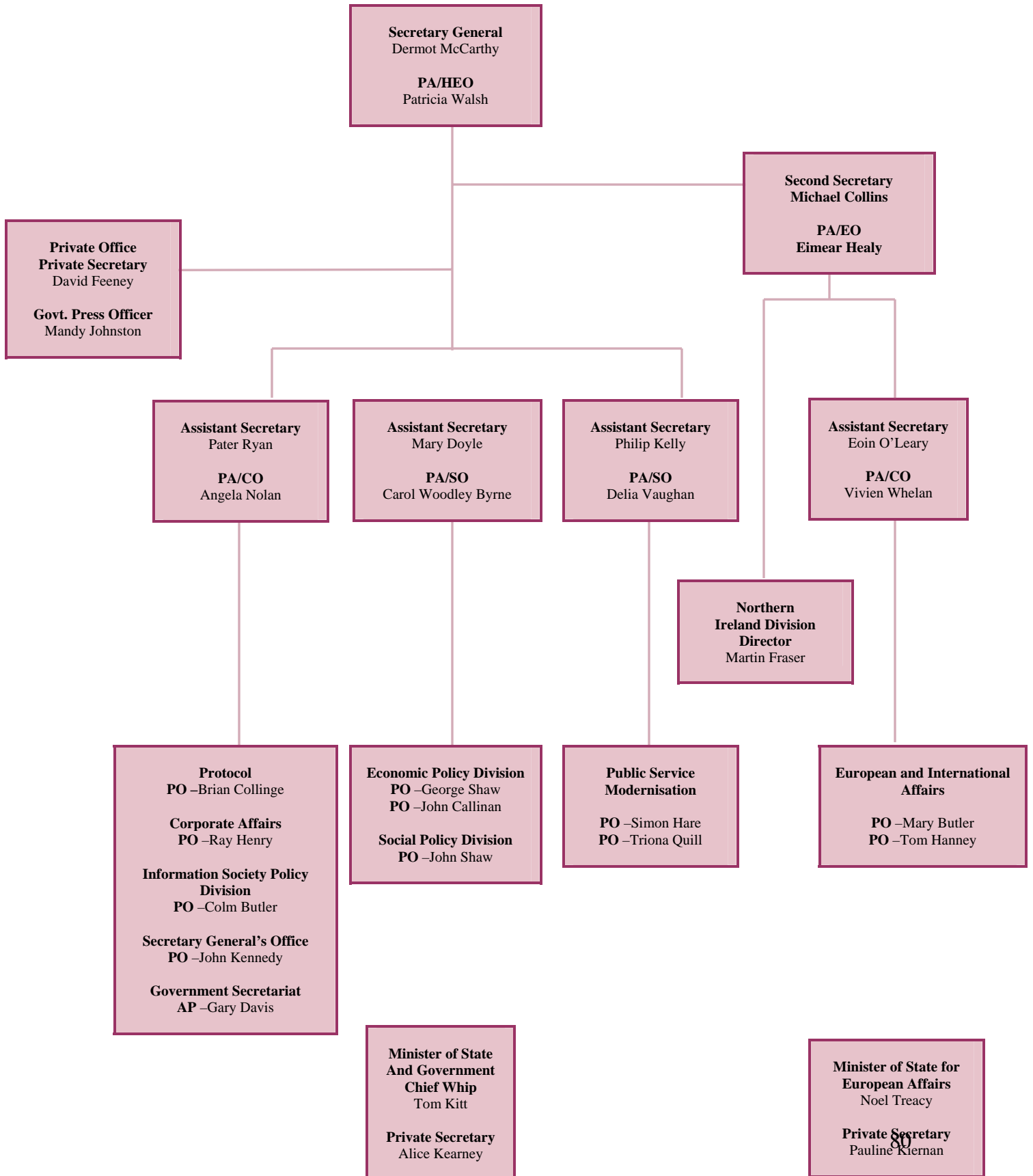
The following offices operate independently but are funded from the Department's Vote:

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

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

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

Appendix 9: Department of the Taoiseach Organisation Chart



Appendix 10:

Glossary of abbreviations used in this document

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

NCP	National Centre for Partnership and Performance
NDA	National Disability Authority
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESDO	National Economic and Social Development Office
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NIB	National Implementation Body
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSB	National Statistics Board
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPW	Office of Public Works
PA	Personal Assistant
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
PO	Principal Officer
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
PSM	Public Service Modernisation
PVG	Performance Verification Group
QCS	Quality Customer Service
RIA	Regulatory Impact Analysis
SI	Statutory Instrument
SMEs	Small to Medium Size Enterprises
SO	Staff Officer
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States