

Implementation of the Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003

Progress Report for 2001

Department of the Taoiseach
Roinn an Taoisigh

Implementation of the Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003

Progress Report for 2001

Government Buildings, Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 662 4888
LoCall: 1890 227 227
Fax: (01) 678 7971
www.taoiseach.gov.ie

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A Message from the Taoiseach

I am very pleased to introduce my Department's Annual Report for 2001.

This report outlines the response of the Department of the Taoiseach to the changes and challenges presented in 2001, the actions taken, the policies developed and progressed and the outcomes of these activities.

The outcomes presented would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the staff of the Department, at all levels, and I wish to thank them for their endeavours.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bertie Ahern". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Bertie Ahern, T.D.
Taoiseach

Introduction by the Secretary General

This report sets out the main achievements of the Department of the Taoiseach during 2001 and the progress made against the key priorities outlined in our Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003. This is the first report to be made in relation to the implementation of our second Strategy Statement prepared under the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

Some of the issues progressed in 2001 included:

- *Publication by the Irish and British Governments of their proposals for moving forward on the outstanding issues in relation to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, towards a peaceful future for all the people of Ireland, and of these islands*
- *Establishment of a National Forum on Europe, in response to the Nice Treaty referendum, to act as a forum for an inclusive and broadly based debate on Europe, and Ireland's role therein*
- *Continued implementation of a wide ranging set of commitments contained in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the establishment of the new National Centre for Partnership and Performance*
- *Completion of the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, in consultation with the social partners, building an inclusive society*
- *An independent evaluation of the Strategic Management Initiative, assisting in the revitalisation of the modernisation programme in the Civil Service*
- *Implementation of a broad range of modernisation initiatives in the Department.*

In addition, the Department continued its core work in providing the Secretariat to the Government and support to the Taoiseach.



I am satisfied that this annual report is a fair representation of the milestones and accomplishments of the Department in 2001. There were many outcomes during the year which reflect the diversity of the work undertaken by the Department, outcomes which would not have been possible without the commitment and professionalism of the staff of the Department. I would like to thank them for their efforts in this regard.

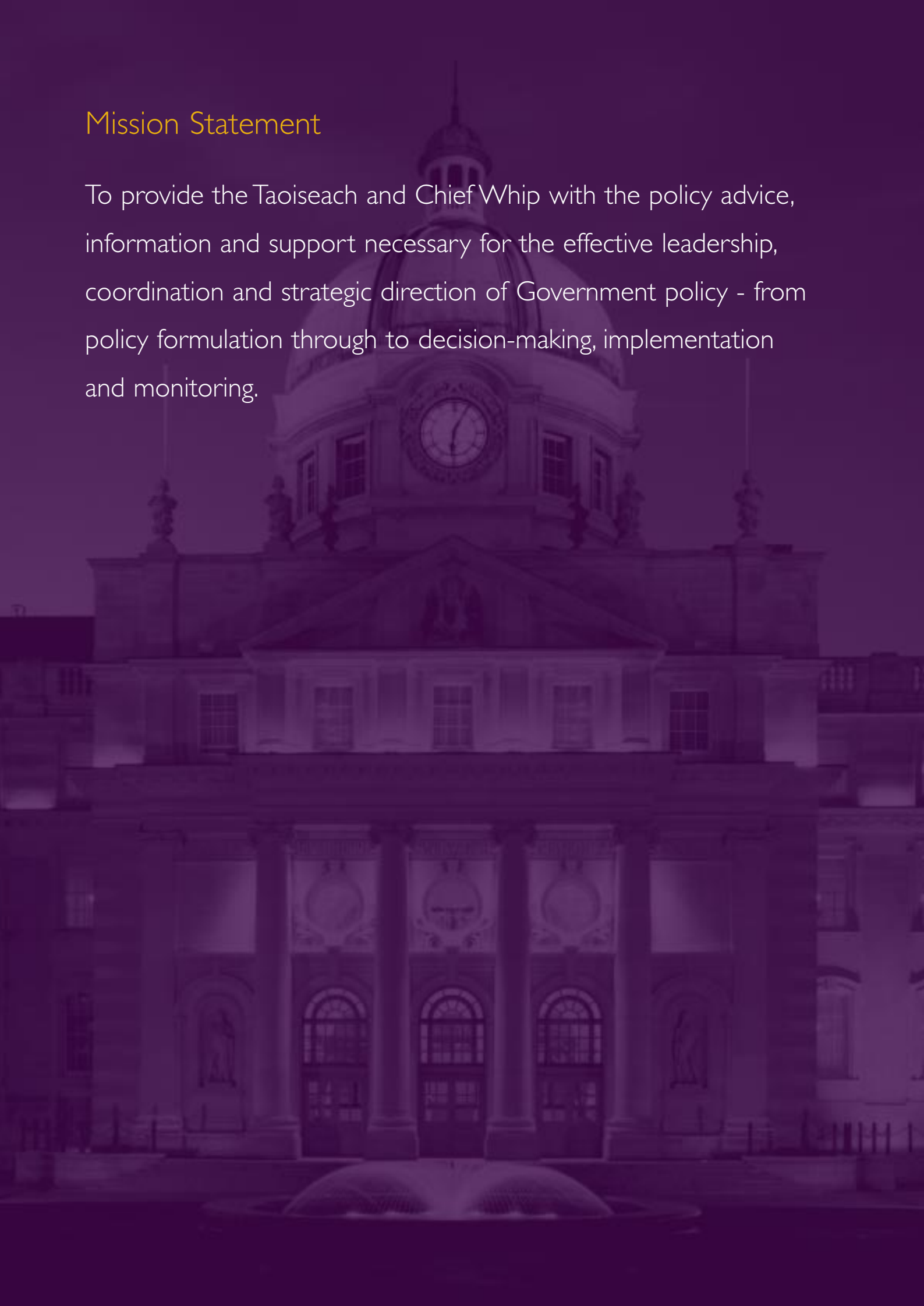
We would welcome any comments on how we might improve future reports, or indeed any aspect of the service we provide to the public, which we continuously aim to improve and develop.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dermot McCarthy', written over a horizontal line.

Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General
May 2002

Mission Statement

To provide the Taoiseach and Chief Whip with the policy advice, information and support necessary for the effective leadership, coordination and strategic direction of Government policy - from policy formulation through to decision-making, implementation and monitoring.



Chapter I: The Role of the Department of the Taoiseach

The Role of the Taoiseach and the Government Chief Whip

The Department of the Taoiseach operates at the heart of Government, deriving its mandate from the roles of the Taoiseach, as Head of Government, and of the Government Chief Whip. 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, for example Northern Ireland, economic and social issues, the Information Society, and European and wider international policy. This role requires that the Taoiseach takes a strategic view of the future, to ensure that Government policy as a whole is geared to meet the economic, social, and infrastructural needs of Ireland in the 21st century. The Department promotes a comprehensive and coherent policy agenda in support of the Taoiseach's leadership role in this regard.

The Taoiseach is assisted in the performance of his role by the Minister of State and Government Chief Whip, who organises Government business in the Dáil. The Government Chief Whip also has specific responsibilities for the Government's Legislative Programme, Oireachtas Reform and the Central Statistics Office.

The Role of the Department

The core tasks of the Department include the provision of a Secretariat to the Government, liaison with the President and the Houses of the Oireachtas, provision of Government Press and Information Services, and of Private Office, Corporate Support and Protocol Services for the Taoiseach.

In addition, the Department is involved in the key policy priorities of the Government of the day. As the Taoiseach's role has evolved and developed over time, in response to new national priorities and changing circumstances, this has been reflected in the policy development priorities of the Department of the Taoiseach.

Major Strategic Objectives and Priorities

The Department has identified its strategic objectives and priorities in the *Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003*.

The Department's key overall strategic objectives remain constant:

- 1) *Supporting the Taoiseach*
- 2) *Supporting the Government.*

Overall Strategic Objective 1 - Supporting the Taoiseach

Key Objectives:

- *Effectively address the policy priorities of the Taoiseach of the day*
- *Support the process of bilateral consultation between the Taoiseach and Ministers*
- *Provide a service of the highest quality to the Taoiseach and Minister of State/Chief Whip*
- *Provide an efficient, cost-effective and high quality protocol service for the Taoiseach in his representational and ceremonial duties.*

Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Government

Key Objectives:

- *Provide a comprehensive and effective service to the Government to ensure the optimum preparation for, effectiveness of, and follow-up to, Cabinet meetings*
- *Provide effective support and service to the Cabinet Committees*
- *Develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach across the Government system, with a high level of cooperation with other Government Departments and Agencies*
- *Support an effective working relationship between the President and the Government/Taoiseach*

- Assist the implementation of the Government's Legislative Programme and Programme on Oireachtas Reform
- Liaise and cooperate with the Office of the Attorney General, Chief State Solicitor's Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission
- Facilitate ongoing review of the Constitution
- 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
- Promote a coordinated approach to media matters across Government Departments.

These strategic objectives will be primarily reflected in our work on the following key national strategic priorities:

- Northern Ireland
- European Union and International Affairs
- Economic and Social Policy
- Social Partnership
- Public Service Modernisation
- The Information Society and eGovernment.

Our work in these areas is supported by a further strategic priority, i.e. Corporate Support Services.

The strategic priorities under each theme will evolve as circumstances change.

Achieving the Goals

The goals of the Department will be progressed by a number of means, in particular through planning, people, and partnership.

Planning

The Department's activities are guided by its overall *Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003* (available in English and Irish at www.gov.ie/taoiseach). Each Division of the Department has an annual business plan, which is designed to deliver on the objectives set out in the *Strategy Statement*. Individual and team performance is aligned with the goals of the Department through the Performance Management and Development System, which helps to establish a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved.

People

The Department aims to achieve its objectives through the creation of a working environment based on partnership, with each member of staff being encouraged to participate in the setting of objectives, in shaping the means by which they are to be achieved and being supported by training and development to realise his/her potential. To fulfill its role, the Department has identified a number of core competencies, including a "Whole of Government" perspective, teamworking, decision-making/judgement and managing and developing people. All staff are encouraged and expected to strive for the highest standards of performance and the contribution of each member of staff to delivering on the Department's goals is essential.

Partnership

The Department aims to reflect the growing interdependencies between different policy areas in close cooperation between Divisions in the Department, and fostering coordination and coherence between the main players and policies in the broader environment. Working together with our partners and stakeholders is essential for the effective discharge of the Department's functions. The Department will continue to develop these relationships, to ensure that the contribution we make is professional, to add value and to respect the responsibilities and expertise of others.

Performance

The Department employs a range of mechanisms and indicators in order to measure performance and progress against objectives, as set out in the latest *Strategy Statement*. The following chapters set out progress in achieving the Department's objectives during 2001. The experience of the last year will inform the Department's work in going forward and in particular in responding flexibly and quickly to the wishes of the Taoiseach elected by the 29th Dáil in 2002.

Chapter 2: Overall Strategic Objective I - Supporting the Taoiseach

Overall Strategic Objective I - Supporting the Taoiseach

Key Objectives:

Effectively progress the policy priorities of the Taoiseach of the day

Support the process of bilateral consultation between the Taoiseach and Ministers

- Provide a service of the highest quality to the Taoiseach and Chief Whip
- Provide an efficient, cost-effective and high quality protocol service for the Taoiseach in his representational and ceremonial duties.

Supporting the Taoiseach

Key Objective:

- *Effectively address the policy priorities of the Taoiseach of the day.*

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the Department is involved in the key policy priorities of the Government of the day, in developing a long term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach to policy across the Government system.

The Department's role in supporting key aspects of policy is set out in the following chapters including our role in:

- *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 challenges and opportunities offered by the Information Society.*

There are also certain key tasks which are central to the role of the Department, such as providing a Secretariat to the Government, liaising with the President and the Houses of the Oireachtas, provision

of Government press and information services and of protocol, corporate support and private office services.

Private Offices of the Taoiseach and the Government Chief Whip

Key Objectives:

- *Support the process of bilateral consultation between the Taoiseach and Ministers*
- *Provide a service of the highest quality to the Taoiseach and Chief Whip.*

The Private Office of the Taoiseach

Throughout 2001 the staff of the Taoiseach's Private Office continued to provide the Taoiseach with a service of the highest quality by supporting him in his role as Head of Government and in his Parliamentary role. Key tasks included managing the Taoiseach's day to day diary commitments, processing the large volume of correspondence received by post, email and telephone and ensuring that at all times the Taoiseach received briefing material, speeches and Parliamentary Question replies in a timely manner to enable him to fulfill his various public and parliamentary engagements.

The Office also organised regular bilateral meetings between the Taoiseach and all Ministers and Ministers of State to review on an ongoing basis the implementation of the *Government's Action Programme for the Millennium* and other priority issues and acted as the point of contact between the Taoiseach and all Divisions of his Department. As in previous years, the Office processed a significant volume of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997.

Further progress was made during the year on developing an integrated database to link the Taoiseach's diary, diary correspondence, speeches and protocol arrangements and a database, which has proven to be a valuable asset to the Private Office and the Department generally, has been developed.

The Office continued throughout 2001 to achieve the targets set out for it in the Department's *Customer Action Plan*. The significant volume of correspondence received in the office was dealt with in line with our Quality Customer Service (QCS) commitments to acknowledge all correspondence within five working days of receipt and to reply substantively to 70% of correspondence within 15 working days. Systems for dealing with the ever increasing volume of email correspondence in a customer friendly manner were also put in place.

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

The Government Chief Whip's Office aims to provide a high quality service and support for the effective discharge of the Chief Whip's responsibilities as Minister of State to the Taoiseach and Government Chief Whip.

In 2001 the Office:

- Assisted with the organisation and agreement of Dáil business
- Prepared the quarterly legislative programme, weekly Dáil schedule and Dáil sessions calendar
- Coordinated 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 Office will seek to maintain and improve upon the service it provides to the Minister of State.

Protocol Service for the Taoiseach in his Representational and Ceremonial Duties

Key Objective:

- Provide an efficient, cost-effective and high quality protocol service for the Taoiseach in his representational and ceremonial duties.

The Department contributed to the detailed planning and organisation of State entertainment and a number of visits by incoming dignitaries in 2001, such as:



Reinterment of the 10 Volunteers of the War of Independence

- President Adamkus of the Republic of Lithuania
- Premier Zhu Rongji of the People's Republic of China
- President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi
- President of the European Parliament, Madame Nicole Fontaine
- President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat.

The Protocol team organised three official Receptions hosted by the Taoiseach for:

- The Irish Language and its devotees - Celebration of "Oíche na Gaeilge" was held on 22 February 2001 in the State Apartments, Dublin Castle
- The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association - Reception in their honour was held on 26 April 2001 in the State Apartments, Dublin Castle
- His Eminence Desmond Cardinal Connell - Reception in his honour was held on 14 May 2001 in the State Apartments, Dublin Castle.

In addition, the Taoiseach's programme of domestic engagements totalled approximately 450, which were planned and managed by the Protocol Division of the Department. A Protocol Officer was on duty on each occasion.

A major annual event organised by the Department is the *National Day of Commemoration*. The ceremony is held annually in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, on the Sunday closest to 11 July, the date on which in 1921 the Anglo-Irish Truce was signed. This year the Ceremony took place on 8 July, 2001.

The Department organised and managed the Reinterment of the 10 Volunteers of the War of Independence in Dublin on 14 October and in Limerick on 20 October, 2001. From an organisational point of view, the State Funerals were the largest ever undertaken in the State, requiring the dedicated and professional commitment by many State Agencies including the Defence Forces and the Garda Síochána.

Chapter 3: Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Government

Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Government

Key Objectives:

- Provide a comprehensive and effective service to the Government to ensure the optimum preparation for, effectiveness of, and follow-up to, Cabinet meetings
 - Provide effective support and service to the Cabinet Committees
 - Develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach across the Government system, with a high level of cooperation with other Government Departments and Agencies
- Support an effective working relationship between the President and the Government/Taoiseach
- Assist the implementation of the Government's Legislative Programme and *Programme on Oireachtas Reform*
- Liaise and cooperate with the Office of the Attorney General, Chief State Solicitor's Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission
- Facilitate ongoing review of the Constitution
- 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
 - Promote a coordinated approach to media matters across Government Departments.

The Government Secretariat

Key Objectives:

- *Provide a comprehensive and effective service to the Government to ensure the optimum preparation for, effectiveness of and, follow-up to, Cabinet meetings*
- *Provide effective support and service to the Cabinet Committees*
- *Develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach across the Government system, with a high level of cooperation with other Government Departments and Agencies.*



The Government at Farmleigh, July 2001

Meetings of the Government

The Department of the Taoiseach provides the Secretariat to the Government and acts as a link between the President, Taoiseach and other Government Departments. As an indication of what this involves, there was a total of 49 meetings of the Government held during 2001. Over 900 memoranda were submitted to Government. 840 formal decisions and 124 informal decisions were recorded.

The Secretariat was also involved in the detailed preparations for Government meetings held in the regions, i.e. in Ballymascanlon, Co. Louth and in Killarney, Co. Kerry. This built on the success of previous Government meetings held outside Dublin in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, Cork and Waterford in 2000.

The Secretariat also serviced a number of Cabinet Committees which met throughout the course of the year and which made a significant contribution to Government policy making. These include the Cabinet Committee on Asylum Seekers, the Cabinet Committee on Abortion and the Cabinet Committee on Sellafeld (MOX).

The Cabinet Committee system is particularly useful in developing long term partnership and a coordinated

approach, for example the Secretariat played a prominent part in the national response to the Foot and Mouth crisis and the September 11 attacks on the US. It serviced the Government Task Force to coordinate and manage the national response to the threat posed by Foot and Mouth Disease. The fact that Ireland remained substantially free of the disease is due to the unswerving support of all sections of the community for the preventive measures which were put in place and coordinated through the Task Force. A High Level Contact Group, chaired by the Secretariat, monitored developments in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September. The Group provided early support to Departments and Agencies involved in emergency planning and assistance in identifying additional threats arising from the changed international security environment. With the establishment of the Office of Emergency Planning, the Group has now been subsumed into the Task Force on Emergency Planning chaired by the Minister for Defence.

eCabinet

eCabinet is an initiative which will bring the benefits of modern communications technologies to the Cabinet process – including to the Cabinet table itself.

The project focuses on the Cabinet process, in particular:

- *Electronic distribution and management of Cabinet papers*
- *Use of technologies in direct support of Cabinet meetings*
- *Use of technologies to improve presentation of complex issues at Cabinet*
- *Creation of new information resources.*

The project is driven by the Government's desire to lead by example in progressing the Information Society in Ireland and forms part of a wider agenda to better harness technologies to e-enable government processes. Phase I of this Project - the Feasibility Study - was completed in 2001 and the Government have given the go-ahead to proceed with the implementation phase. Work has already commenced on this with a view to having a pilot prototype in place in 2003.

Relations with the President

Key Objective:

- *Support an effective working relationship between the President and Government/Taoiseach.*

The Department, prepared and coordinated briefing for the Taoiseach's regular meetings with the President, contributed to the organisation of State and official visits abroad, provided speech material and advice/information for the President during 2001.

Government Legislative Programme

Key Objective:

- *Assist the implementation of the Government's Legislative Programme and Programme on Oireachtas Reform.*

The Government Legislative Committee is chaired by the Government Chief Whip, Mr. Seamus Brennan, T.D. This involves liaison with Government Departments on legislative proposals (including implementation of EU Directives) to ensure that their priority status and deadlines for the publication of Bills are observed. During 2001, the Committee met nineteen times, fifty Bills were published and fifty-five enacted. In addition to the Chief Whip's role on the Government Legislative Committee, the Department supports the Chief Whip in his role on the Committee on Procedures and Privileges, the Sub-Committee on Compellability and the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform.

Dáil Reform

The Department assists the Government Chief Whip in his role in advancing major Dáil reform proposals for enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the Dáil. During 2001, nine meetings of the Standing Sub-



Seamus Brennan, TD, Minister of State and Government Chief Whip launches electronic voting in the Dáil

Committee on Dáil Reform were held and a comprehensive and historic package of reforms of the workings of the Dáil parliamentary system were agreed upon. These changes, for example, electronic voting in the Dáil Chamber, amount to some of the most far-reaching reforms of the Dáil since the foundation of the State.

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

Key Objective:

- *Liaise and cooperate with the Office of the Attorney General, Chief State Solicitor's Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission.*

The year saw continued liaison and cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Chief State Solicitor, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission towards achieving their objectives, including the provision of legal advice and support to the Government.

An Bhratach Náisiúnta - The National Flag

Key Objective:

- *Facilitate ongoing review of the Constitution.*

In keeping with its constitutional review role, the Department distributed a copy of the revised publication of the booklet, *An Bhratach Náisiúnta - The National Flag*, to each national and post-primary school in the country in 2001. The booklet can now be accessed via the Government Website (www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/) and copies are available for purchase at the Government Publications Office.

Feedback from schools has been very positive. It is hoped that the new edition of the booklet will create a better awareness of the history of the flag and will ensure that it will be given the appropriate respect when it is being flown.

The Government Press Service/Government Information Service

Key Objectives:

- *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*

- *Promote a coordinated approach to media matters across Government Departments.*

The Government Press Service (GPS) and Government Information Service (GIS) continue 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.

Improving the Service

Following the recruitment of four new press officers, Government policy and initiatives are now communicated in a more effective and timely way to the media. The GPS/GIS liaise on a daily basis with Departmental Press Offices to ensure a more coordinated approach to the dissemination of Government information.

Through operating a round-the-clock rota system, the service provided by the GPS has significantly improved and the media has access to a Government spokesperson on a 24-hour basis.

The GPS/GIS continue to be in a position to be both reactive and proactive, and provide a quality service to their clients.

The GIS now liaises closely with the National Development Plan/Community Support Framework Information Office, to heighten public awareness and understanding of the National Development Plan. It promotes public awareness of the Government's social inclusion initiatives by editing and producing a newsletter on social inclusion.

Website Developments

One of the key priorities of the GPS/GIS is the development of a user-friendly Government Website that is informative and easily accessible. The site is updated on a daily basis with major Government announcements and significant policy elements of speeches and press releases. The dissemination of information to the domestic and international media on the web via email is now operational. Research on new developments in relation to internet technology and software has been completed and will take effect with the introduction of the new website in 2002.

Chapter 4: Strategic Priority A - Northern Ireland

Strategic Priority A - Northern Ireland

Key Objectives:

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*

Support the Taoiseach in the conduct of relations with the UK, the US and Canada in this regard.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- Progress on implementation of the *Good Friday Agreement*.

Key Objective:

- *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.*

Implementation of the *Good Friday Agreement*

The year 2001 began with a resumption of intensive discussions between the Governments and the pro-Agreement parties to secure the full implementation of the Agreement. The difficulties which remained to be resolved, and which threatened the whole process, centred on demilitarisation, decommissioning, policing and the operation of the North South Ministerial Council. Discussions continued, at official and political levels, through the following months, culminating with the publication on 1 August by the two Governments of their proposals for moving forward on all of the outstanding issues. This followed intensive discussions between the Governments and the pro-Agreement parties in Weston Park during July. The report of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning of 23 October, that the IRA had put a quantity of arms beyond use, was a milestone in the peace process and led to the restoration of the institutions.

The British Irish Council held its second summit

meeting in Dublin Castle on 30 November. The main focus of the meeting was the misuse of drugs, and how cooperation on this issue could be developed within the Council. The Council agreed elements for a framework for future cooperation and established a group of senior officials to advance work in agreed areas. Summit level meetings will be hosted in 2002 by Jersey, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland will host a summit in early 2003.

The third Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council was held on the afternoon of Friday 30 November. The Council received a report on the work done by the Working Group on the establishment of an Independent North South Consultative Forum (the Department was represented on the Working Group) and agreed that further discussion take place at the Institutional Format meeting, with a further progress report to be made at the next Plenary.

The Council also received a report on the *Study on Obstacles to Cross Border Mobility on the Island of Ireland*. The report is to be published to allow for the presentation of views on the recommendations in the report (the Department supplied the southern co-chair of the Working Group).

In 2001, the Department was involved in supporting and briefing the Taoiseach and in interaction with other Departments and other parties concerned in regard to

follow-up on numerous other aspects of implementation of the *Good Friday Agreement*, including:

- *Support for victims of violence in both the North and South*
- *Funding for reconciliation activities and for local development in both parts of Ireland*
- *The review of the Offences Against the State Acts*
- *The planning for the development of the Battle of the Boyne site as a National Park*
- *Security issues relating to Northern Ireland.*

Key Objective:

- *Support the Taoiseach in the conduct of relations with the UK, the US and Canada in this regard.*

The Department was also responsible for the planning and organisation of the programme for the visits to the US by the Taoiseach in March and November and his visits to Scotland and Wales during the year.

Chapter 5: Strategic Priority B - European and International Affairs

Strategic Priority B - European and International Affairs

Key Objectives:

- Support the Taoiseach in his role as member of the European Council, and as Head of Government, in dealing with other governments and with international organisations
- Develop Ireland's overall strategy on EU issues and promote a coherent and coordinated approach
- Maintain coherence across all elements of Ireland's external policies and between external and domestic policies.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- Effectiveness of Cabinet Committee on European Affairs and Senior Officials' Group in ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach to our EU policies
- Outcomes of European Council meetings
- Outcomes of Irish participation in other international fora, notably the UN Security Council in 2001-2002
- Effective policy and practical preparation for Ireland's Presidency of the EU
- Well planned and well organised programme of bilateral visits and exchanges by the Taoiseach.

Key Objectives:

- *Support the Taoiseach in his role as member of the European Council, and as Head of Government, in dealing with other governments and with international organisations*
- *Develop Ireland's overall strategy on EU issues and promote a coherent and coordinated approach*
- *Maintain coherence across all elements of Ireland's external policies and between external and domestic policies.*

The European and International Affairs Division of the Department supports the Taoiseach as a member of the European Council and as Head of Government dealing with Ireland's role in European and in International Affairs. It aims, in close collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and with other Government Departments, to promote Ireland's interests in EU and in international policy formulation.

The Ongoing European Agenda

The Department provides the secretariat for the Cabinet Committee and Senior Officials' Group on European Affairs. The Committee and Group met regularly throughout the year to discuss the issues arising on the EU agenda and provide general policy orientation on the approach to be taken by Ireland.

EU Enlargement – The Nice Treaty

The Swedish Presidency (January-June) focused on ensuring further progress of the economic and social agenda of the European Union and on promoting a strategy for sustainable development, including environmental issues. EU enlargement was, however, the major theme of the Presidency and of the EU Council meeting in Gothenburg on 14/15 June. On 7 June, the Irish people voted no in a referendum to ratify the Nice Treaty. While the vast majority of the Irish people remained strongly committed to the European Union and to enlargement, it was clear that there were genuine anxieties and concerns about the future of the Union. These included concerns about continuing democratic accountability in each Member



Senator Maurice Hayes at the launch of the National Forum on Europe, October 2001

State, which went well beyond the terms of the Treaty itself.

In a statement to the Council meeting in Gothenburg on the outcome of the Irish referendum, the Taoiseach made it absolutely clear that the No vote should not be interpreted as a vote against enlargement. He reiterated that Ireland remained fully committed to the enlargement process. The European Council confirmed that enlargement was irreversible and that the Nice Treaty as a prerequisite for enlargement could not be re-negotiated. The Council agreed that it should be possible by the end of 2002 to complete negotiations with those candidate countries most advanced in the process. The objective was that they should participate in the European Parliament elections of 2004 as members. This objective was confirmed by the European Council meeting in Laeken in December, where 10 countries were identified as being on course to successfully concluding their accession negotiations by the end of 2002.

As part of the Government's response to the Nice Treaty referendum, it decided to establish a National Forum on Europe. The National Forum, which had its inaugural meeting on 18 October, acts as the forum for an inclusive and broadly-based debate on Ireland's participation in the European Union, and on the overall functioning and future development of the Union.

The Forum is a two-phase process with the first phase focusing on the implications of enlargement and the organisation of the future of Europe debate. In the second phase, the Forum will examine Ireland's overall

relationship with the European Union.

As part of a continuing series of meetings with our future partners in the European Union, the Taoiseach visited Cyprus and Malta in January. He met the Prime Minister of Poland Mr. Buzek in June and later that month, the Speaker of the Czech Senate Mr. Pithart. He also met the President of Lithuania, Mr. Adamkus, in September.

Future of Europe Debate

The key item discussed at the Laeken European Council in December was the Future of Europe debate. The European Council agreed the text of a Declaration setting out the terms of reference of the debate and established the arrangements for a Convention to carry the process forward in advance of the next Inter-Governmental Conference in 2004. The Council further considered issues arising from the events of 11 September and sought to advance the Justice and Home Affairs agenda.

International and European Response to 11 September 2001

The events of 11 September prompted an immediate response at EU and UN level. On 21 September, the Taoiseach attended an Extraordinary Meeting of the EU Council (under the Belgian Presidency), convened to assess the implications of the terrorist attacks of 11 September on the United States. The EU agreed to fully cooperate with the United States in bringing to justice and punishing the perpetrators of the attacks. The European Council agreed that top priority would be given to the introduction of a European arrest warrant, the adoption of a common definition of terrorism, and the implementation of the full package of Justice and Home Affairs measures agreed at the European Council at Tampere, in 1999.

In expression of our solidarity with the President, the Congress and the people of the United States, the Taoiseach declared Friday 13 September as a National Day of Mourning. This formed part of an EU wide marking of the event.

The Informal European Council was held in Ghent in October. Three Presidency Declarations were approved by the Council relating to: the follow-up to the September 11 attacks and the fight against terrorism; a review of the economic situation post 11 September; and the preparations for the introduction of the euro.

The Council reaffirmed its determination to combat terrorism, in every form, throughout the world. It also recognised the need for a humanitarian effort to assist the Afghan population, including refugees, and the need to avoid civilian casualties.

International Programme

The Taoiseach continued his programme of meetings with international partners as part of Ireland's strategic approach to further developing our bilateral political, economic and cultural relations with Third Countries. These meetings also serve to maintain Ireland's position at the forefront of international affairs.

During his visit to Cyprus in January, the Taoiseach informed President Clerides that Ireland strongly supported the current efforts of the UN Secretary General to promote negotiations to achieve a resolution of their difficulties with the Turkish Cypriot side. The Taoiseach also visited Irish Defence Forces and Garda personnel serving with the UN mission on the island. The Taoiseach also visited Morocco in January.

The Taoiseach paid an official visit to Iceland in June and received an Icelandic Parliamentary delegation in his office in September. The discussions reflected issues of mutual interest including environmental issues, trade development and fish stocks.

In July, the Taoiseach undertook an official visit to Brazil and Argentina. The visit afforded an opportunity to extend Ireland's bilateral political and economic relations with the Latin American countries, particularly in the information technology and agricultural sectors. In Brasilia, the Taoiseach informed President Cardoso of the Irish Government's decision to open a resident embassy in Brasilia and a consulate in Sao Paulo with a view to further strengthening Ireland's presence in the region.

In early September, the Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji paid an official visit to Ireland. The Premier's visit built on previous exchanges during the Taoiseach's visit to China in 1998 and at ASEM III in Seoul in 1999. This important high level visit afforded a valuable opportunity to review the rapidly expanding relationship between Ireland and China. The Premier's programme included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Relations. We are currently

reviewing the *Asia Strategy* adopted by the Government in an effort to focus the attention of the Irish business community on the Asia-Pacific region and on the huge potential of the Chinese market in particular.

Key priorities for the Irish Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (SECCO) in October were the follow-up to SECCO Resolution 1373 on terrorism and the situation in Afghanistan. Ireland continued to ensure that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remained to the forefront of the SECCO agenda. In October, the Irish Government announced a €3.6 million emergency aid package for Afghanistan, thus bringing our assistance to a total of €5million during 2001, the largest non-programme expenditure of the year.

On 15 October, the Taoiseach received a visit from Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority. Discussions focused on the worsening security situation in the Middle East. The Taoiseach affirmed his belief that the achievement of a negotiated, just settlement of the Palestinian question was a vital step in the struggle for international peace and security. He acknowledged the efforts of President Arafat in seeking to create a climate of stability in very adverse circumstances.

As part of Ireland's ongoing participation in international organisations, the Taoiseach attended the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS on 26 June. He announced that Ireland would contribute €33 million per year to initiatives specifically targeted at the treatment and prevention of the disease. This contribution forms part of Ireland's rapidly expanding Overseas Development Aid (ODA). The programme is in line with commitments to reach the target of 0.7% of Gross National Product on ODA by 2007.

The Department was also responsible for the planning and organisation of the programme for the visits to the US by the Taoiseach in March and November and his visits to Scotland and Wales during the year.

The Department will continue to support the Taoiseach in dealing with other Governments and international agencies and in maintaining a coherent and coordinated approach to international policy matters as we move forward.

Chapter 6: Strategic Priority C - Economic and Social Policy

Strategic Priority C - Economic and Social Policy

Key Objectives:

- Develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach across the Government system, with a high level of cooperation with other Government Departments and Agencies, for the delivery of a future-oriented strategy within which policies on economic, social and physical infrastructure can be framed

Support the provision of effective policy advice through the establishment of a National Economic and Social Development Office which will facilitate close collaboration between the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP)

Achieve substantial progress in tackling social exclusion through the work of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and the implementation of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*.

Support in 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.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- Progress Reports for Cabinet Committees on Infrastructure, Housing and Social Inclusion. Key Economic Indicators (economic growth, inflation, employment, balance of trade, public finances) 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.

Longer-term Planning and Policy Making Perspective

Key Objective:

- *Develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely coordinated approach across the Government system, with a high level of cooperation with other Government Departments and Agencies, for the delivery of a future-oriented strategy within which policies on economic, social and physical infrastructure can be framed.*

Results in 2001 included:

- Ongoing implementation of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, and the *National Development Plan*
- Participation in a wide range of economic and social policy fora including NESC, NESF, NCP and the National Competitiveness Council (NCC).

Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure and Public Private Partnership

Investment in infrastructure and the implementation of the *National Development Plan* are top priorities in building a sustainable platform for the country's future success. The Department accords particular importance to its role in supporting the development of key aspects of economic and social policy. The Department continued to lead the Cross-Departmental Team and to provide a secretariat to the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships. During 2001, the Team continued to promote effective coordination in the implementation of the infrastructure priorities in the National Development Plan. It published a progress report in April 2001 (www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/).

The Team facilitated continued progress in the delivery

of infrastructure priorities and addressing key policy issues, including transport arrangements for Dublin, the national roads programme, energy infrastructure, enhanced programme and project management, planning issues, integrated land use and construction capacity.

The Cabinet Committee met regularly to consider these issues, involving presentations from the main infrastructure delivery agencies and following which individual issues were considered by Government and policy directions given. A comprehensive National Development Plan Communications Strategy is in place, and a detailed project tracking mechanism has been put in place (www.ndp.ie for further information in this regard).

Economic Policy

Key Objective:

- Support the provision of effective policy advice through the establishment of an Office for National Economic and Social Development which will facilitate close collaboration between the National Economic and Social Council, the National Economic and Social Forum and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance.

Results in 2001 included:

- Preparatory work for the establishment of the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), including staffing and financial arrangements
- Approval by Government of legislation to establish the Office, with its constituent bodies, NESD, NESF, and the NCPP
- Provision of the secretariat to the International Financial Services Centre Clearing House Group, working groups and various sub-groups.

Tackling Social Exclusion

Key Objective:

- Achieve substantial progress in tackling social exclusion through the work of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

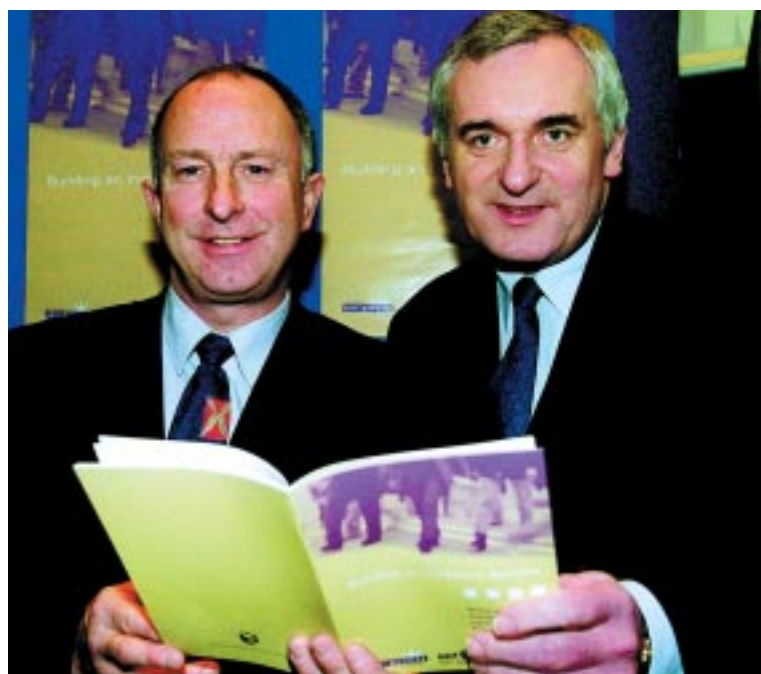
Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion

The Department chairs the Senior Officials' Group which supports the Cabinet Committee on Social

Inclusion and acts as the secretariat to the Cabinet Committees on Social Inclusion and Children. The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion provides the strategic focus for tackling the problems of social exclusion, alienation and disadvantage. Major issues advanced through this process during the year included the *National Drugs Strategy 2002 - 2008*, homelessness strategies, the review of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, the RAPID and CLÁR programmes. The Cabinet Committee and Senior Officials' Group meet monthly. The Cabinet Committee on Children meets quarterly. The Department is also represented on the Advisory Committee for the National Children's Office.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

The review of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, in consultation with the social partners, was completed during 2001. The review was carried out on foot of the commitment in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF) to review the existing targets and revise, where appropriate, and to consider possible new targets under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, health, older people and housing/accommodation. The Department was represented on all the thematic working groups and co-chaired the Steering Group which finalised the process. The revised *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* was launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs on 27 February, 2002.



The Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD and the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs Mr. Dermot Ahern, TD at the launch of the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy

RAPID and CLÁR Programmes

In accordance with the commitment in the PPF to bring forward an investment programme for areas which would benefit from targeted investment over the period of the *National Development Plan*, the RAPID programme was launched in February, 2001. The first strand of the programme designated 25 urban areas. Work continued to select the provincial towns to be included and these were announced on 1 February, 2002. The CLÁR programme for rural areas was launched in October 2001. The Department worked closely with the Departments of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Environment and Local Government and Area Development Management Limited on all aspects of the development of these programmes. The Department works closely with other Departments to advance a range of social inclusion objectives. Examples include the mechanisms to implement the *National Drugs Strategy* and the Springboard Initiative, to support volunteering and voluntary and community activity, and the consultative process for the *National Plan for Women*.

Basic Income

The *Report of the Working Group on Basic Income*, established in accordance with a commitment in *Partnership 2000*, was made available to the social partners in 2001. An initial draft of the *Green Paper on Basic Income* has been completed.

Statistics in Policy Development

Key objective:

- *To support in 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.*

In 2001, the Department participated in the work of the National Statistics Board and was involved in the ongoing interpretation of statistics in the context of national policy development.

Chapter 7: Strategic Priority D - Social Partnership

Strategic Priority D - Social Partnership

Key Objectives:

- Provide advice to the Taoiseach and Minister of State on Social Partnership and policy issues arising from the implementation of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)*
- Implement and maintain the PPF, and the ongoing work to make sure that our economic and social progress is maintained
- Support partnership in the public and private sectors
- Successfully negotiate a new Social Partnership Agreement.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- PPF quarterly Reviews with social partners
- Key economic indicators relating to components of the PPF.



Key Objectives:

- *Provide advice to the Taoiseach and Minister of State on Social Partnership and policy issues arising from the implementation of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)*
- *Implement and maintain the PPF, and the ongoing work to make sure that our economic and social progress is maintained*
- *Support partnership in the public and private sectors*
- *Successfully negotiate a new Social Partnership Agreement.*

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

The Department continued to oversee the progressive implementation of the wide-ranging set of commitments contained in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)* in 2001, the most recent in the series of social partnership agreements negotiated between the Government and the social partners since 1987.

A series of plenary meetings, involving Government Departments and the social partners, were held during the year to review progress, on a thematic basis, in implementing the PPF. Among the areas covered were competitiveness, waste management, infrastructural development, housing, social inclusion and equality. The meetings also reviewed the economic outlook over the year, including in the light of Foot and Mouth disease and the downturn in the global economy. The Taoiseach chaired the plenary meeting in July, in accordance with normal practice.

Good progress was made in implementing the PPF over the period, as indicated in the Quarterly Progress Reports which are available online at www.gov.ie/taoiseach. The extranet between Departments and social partners, which was launched in 2000 for purposes of reporting on progress in implementing the PPF, was further enhanced through the addition of a database of links to relevant publications, as well as a contacts database.

National Implementation Body

The Department chairs the National Implementation Body, which was established to help ensure delivery of the industrial relations stability and peace provisions of the PPF. The Body, representing Government,

IBEC/CIF and ICTU, intervened in a number of major disputes in seeking to encourage the parties concerned to use the industrial relations machinery of the State to resolve the matters at issue. It also provided a forum for informal discussion of emerging problem areas with a bearing on the industrial relations climate and the effectiveness of social partnership.

National Centre for Partnership and Performance

The PPF provided for an enhanced role for the National Centre for Partnership and for its redesignation as the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP). The Centre's role is to provide a strategic focus to the deepening of partnership and improvement of performance in the workplace, in both the private and public sectors. Mr. Peter Cassells was appointed during the year as Executive Chairperson of the Centre and Ms. Lucy Fallon-Byrne as its Director. The Centre's Council held its inaugural meeting in October, 2001. The main focus of the Centre's activities was on the preparation, following extensive consultation with relevant interests, of a strategic and operational plan, as well as on preparations for moving, along with the NESC and NESF, to new premises, where the three bodies will operate under the aegis of the new National Economic and Social Development Office.

FIT Action Plan

The Department continued to facilitate the *Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) Action Plan*, which the Taoiseach launched in March, 1999 and which has the objective, over a three-year time-frame, of training and placing in employment in the IT sector some 3,500 people, especially long-term unemployed, in the Dublin area. An evaluation of the initiative by independent consultants was put in train, with a view to completion in early 2002, as the initiative neared the end of its pilot phase. The Department chairs the inter-Departmental steering group overseeing the evaluation.

Chapter 8: Strategic Priority E - Public Service Modernisation

Strategic Priority E - Public Service Modernisation

Key Objectives:

- Formulate and coordinate policy on the public service modernisation programme
- Work with Departments and Offices to embed the current, and emerging, frameworks for change across the Civil Service
 - Extend the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) to the wider public service
 - Contribute to the effective discharge of cross-Departmental initiatives
- Conduct a major independent evaluation of the SMI, as a first step towards developing the future direction of the modernisation process
 - Contribute to the review of the partnership process in the Civil Service
- Promote better regulation in the public service, drawing on the work carried out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, at EU and at national levels.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- SMI Implementation Group Reports
- Civil Service Quality Assurance Group Reports
- Reports of Independent Evaluations of SMI and Partnership
- Follow-up to OECD Report on Regulatory Reform.

Key Objectives:

- *Formulate and coordinate policy on the public service modernisation programme*
- *Work with Departments and Offices to embed the current, and emerging, frameworks for change across the Civil Service*
- *Extend the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) to the wider public service*
- *Contribute to the effective discharge of cross-Departmental initiatives*
- *Conduct a major independent evaluation of the SMI, as a first step towards developing the future direction of the modernisation process*
- *Contribute to the review of the partnership process in the Civil Service*
- *Promote better regulation in the public service, drawing on the work carried out by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), at EU and at national levels.*

During 2001, the Department continued to coordinate the development of policies for the successful implementation of the public service change programme. This was primarily achieved through the Implementation Group of Secretaries General and associated sub-groups, who have primary responsibility for designing and driving the modernisation agenda.

The PPF required the establishment of performance indicators in relation to the modernisation programme for each sector, including the Civil Service. The SMI Implementation Group approved a template for sectoral performance indicators and Departments/ Offices have now developed specific performance indicators for their own areas based on this template. The robustness of these indicators has been assessed by the independent Quality Assurance Group, which includes external business/customer representation. The Group will assess the achievement of the stated objectives as measured by the performance indicators

after April 2002 and payment of the final phase of 4% under the PPF in October 2002 will be conditional on these targets having been achieved.

The Department has contributed to the development of the public service employers' approach to the work of the Public Service Benchmarking Body.

In conjunction with a working group which was representative of a number of Departments, revised Strategy Statement guidelines were produced to assist Departments and Offices in the preparation of the current iteration of Strategy Statements under the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

Human Resource Management Sub-group

The Implementation Group agreed to the establishment of a Human Resource Management (HRM) sub-group to complete the development of a more strategic and integrated approach to HRM, as envisaged under *Delivering Better Government*, and as a key to the modernisation of the public service. The sub-group has reviewed remaining policy papers that have been developed by the original Human Resource Management Working Group, and prioritised and clustered recommendations for action in the area of under-performance and tenure. The sub-group are advising the Implementation Group on the required human resource changes, and the requisite organisation and legislative framework to principally implement the approach to HRM, as envisaged under *Delivering Better Government*.

Arising from this process, the Government have now approved the general thrust of a new Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill. Work is ongoing on more wide-ranging legislative proposals to underpin the modernisation effort in the Civil Service.

Performance Management and Development System

2001 has seen further progress in the roll out and implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

In particular, progress has been made on the introduction of a system of upward feedback into the PMDS. Following discussions with unions, an approach to the introduction of upward feedback into the PMDS on a phased basis was agreed in January 2002.

Consultants have now been engaged to assist in the development of a framework for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the PMDS.

Gender Equality

A new *Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service* was agreed with the unions at the end of May. The new policy is a significant step forward in the modernisation of the Civil Service. The policy commits the Civil Service to the adoption of strategic objectives, including equality goals, at the level of individual Departments and Offices for increasing women's participation, particularly at the higher management levels. The Taoiseach formally launched the policy for the Civil Service in September 2001, which is available at www.gov.ie/finance/publications/.

Independent Evaluation of the Strategic Management Initiative

Consultants were commissioned to commence work on an evaluation of progress of the modernisation programme in the Civil Service. The consultants carried out fieldwork involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis in 23 Departments and Offices. A steering group of Assistant Secretaries is overseeing the evaluation assignment.

Work began on this project in August 2001 and the process included discussions with the Taoiseach and ten



Launch of the Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service, September 2001

Ministers, 23 Secretaries General or Heads of Office, 130 Assistant Secretaries, 60 Heads of Function (IT, Finance, and HRM), 150 Principal Officers, and 22 Partnership Committees.

To complement the interview process, a questionnaire was also distributed to all Civil Servants in November 2001, allowing them an opportunity to give their views on the modernisation programme. The outcome of the evaluation will assist in revitalising the modernisation effort in the Civil Service.

Regulatory Reform

Ireland participated in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) peer review programme to obtain objective independent analysis of our regulatory regime, to benchmark best practice in other countries and to obtain expert advice on the way forward. Following a final peer review session with OECD members in Paris in March, the final OECD report, *Regulatory Reform in Ireland* was presented to the Government in April 2001.

In April, the Government agreed an Action Programme in response to the report. A key element of the Programme was the establishment of a High Level Group on Regulation to coordinate implementation of the regulatory reform agenda, to examine any institutional and policy proposals which might emerge in response to the OECD's report, and to report to the Government on a regular basis regarding measures in place, progress being achieved and any difficulties being encountered.

The composition of the Group is intended to ensure that it reflects the evolving nature of Ireland's regulatory framework and includes senior officials of Government Departments, Offices and Agencies that have particular responsibility for regulatory reform as well as independent sectoral regulators, the Director of Consumer Affairs and the Competition Authority.

The High Level Group has focused on a number of tasks including the preparation of a *National Policy Statement on Better Regulation*. A document to inform a consultation process about the possible content of a National Policy Statement was developed under the aegis of the High Level Group for publication in early 2002. Progress has also been made in the development of a model of

Regulatory Impact Analysis appropriate to the Irish public service context. The Group is also monitoring progress of regulatory reform in a number of sectoral areas in the context of the recommendations of the OECD. Publications in relation to regulatory reform can be accessed at www.gov.ie/taoiseach/betterregulation/publications.asp.

During 2001, the Department also participated at EU level in a consultative group on regulatory quality known as the *Mandlekern Group* which produced a report welcomed at the Laeken European Council in December. The Department also participated in the EU Directors of Better Regulation Group.

Quality Customer Service

Under the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Initiative, Civil Service Departments and Offices published new Customer Service Action Plans for the three-year period 2001-2004. These covered issues such as setting standards of service in relation to each of the 12 principles of QCS, consulting with customers, and evaluating progress. An independent evaluation of these plans was commissioned in December.

A number of measures were taken during the year to support Departments and Offices in implementing their Plans. These included:

- *Establishing a network of QCS officers to allow for the sharing of experience and best practice*
- *Training and information seminars for QCS officers. The first training module for QCS officers was held in the Centre for Management, Organisation and Development in the Department of Finance in November, covering the areas of influencing and facilitation. Further modules are planned to deal with communications and presentation skills, measurement, evaluation, consultation and equality/diversity strategies*
- *Production of A Support Pack on the Equality/Diversity Aspects of QCS for the Civil and Public Service, jointly with the Equality Authority. This provides a checklist to help QCS officers implement the equality/diversity aspects of QCS. A research report was commissioned on equality/diversity and QCS and was circulated to all Departments and Offices.*

Communications

Communicating the message of the change programme throughout the *Civil Service* is an essential part of our work. Four issues of *LINK* - the newsletter of the Strategic Management Initiative, which goes to all Civil Servants - were produced in 2001, and the format was altered to make it more attractive to a wider readership. *LINK* is published in English and Irish, and is available in braille on request. Copies are also available at www.bettergov.ie/.

The Department also participated in a large number of events and meetings with Departments and public sector Agencies nationally and internationally in order to raise awareness and understanding of the modernisation process and share the experiences of others. In this context, the Department undertook preparatory work for a seminar on better regulation in January 2002, to which several international speakers were invited.

In April 2001, a launch was held to mark the publication of the OECD report on *Regulatory Reform in Ireland*, while in November 2001 a major conference on *Making Change Work* was held in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. The aim of the conference was to communicate progress on the modernisation and change process to all Departments/Offices, and it was attended by over 180 delegates. In addition, during the year work was undertaken on the redevelopment of the public service modernisation website at www.bettergov.ie and work was initiated on the establishment of a new website at www.betterregulation.ie which was launched in the first quarter of 2002.

The SMI and the Garda Síochána

During 2001, the Department continued to provide secretariat support to the Garda SMI Steering Group on the Review of the Organisational Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Garda Síochána. The key progress to report in 2001 was Government approval to the report on *Civilianisation in the Garda Síochána*, in particular approval for 496 additional Garda posts. The Garda SMI Steering Group also endorsed the report on a proposed *Performance and Accountability Framework for the Garda Síochána*.

Next Steps

The next steps of the modernisation programme include:

- *Conclusion of the evaluation of SMI and acting on the report's recommendations*
- *New legislation - Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill - further proposed HRM legislative reforms for the Civil Service*
- *Continued input into the development of the management side agenda for the benchmarking process*
- *Conclusion on the Review of Partnership and acting on the report's recommendations*
- *Verification of the achievement of Departmental performance indicators and payment of the remaining 4% increase under the terms of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*
- *Development of a National Policy Statement on Regulation, following an extensive public consultation process*
- *Development of a model of Regulatory Impact Analysis*
- *High Level Group on Regulation to report to Government following its consideration of the OECD's recommendations*
- *Continued active engagement with modernisation and regulatory reform developments at international and EU level*
- *Development of a comprehensive communications strategy in support of the modernisation process.*

Chapter 9: Strategic Priority F - The Information Society and eGovernment

Strategic Priority F - The Information Society and eGovernment

Key Objectives:

- Ensure that Ireland takes advantage of the challenges and opportunities offered by the Information Society
- Promote participation and social inclusion
- Implement the Information Society provisions of PPF
- Work with public sector and other bodies in the implementation of the Government's *Information Society Action Plan*
- Work with the Information Society Commission in the development of policy.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee.

Other Relevant Indicators

- Progress reports for Cabinet Committee on Information Society
- Progress reports on implementation of Government Action Plan
- Progress report on eCabinet project.

Key Objectives:

- *Ensure that Ireland takes advantage of the challenges and opportunities offered by the Information Society*
- *Promote participation and social inclusion*
- *Implement the Information Society provisions of PPF*
- *Work with public sector and other bodies in the implementation of the Government's Information Society Action Plan*
- *Work with the Information Society Commission in the development of policy.*

The Information Society & eGovernment

The building of a modern e-enabled society is an essential part of the process of continuing to enhance Ireland's attractiveness as a location for investment. Furthermore, in that e-enabled society, electronic service delivery will provide more effective and efficient and customer focused public services. This remains a top priority for Government and a key objective for the Department. During 2001, the Information Society Policy Unit (ISPU) in the Department of the Taoiseach continued to spearhead this objective, working closely

with the Centre for Management and Organisation Development at the Department of Finance and with other Departments and Agencies.

Electronic Delivery of Public Services

Considerable progress was made in 2001 on the objective of delivering fully integrated online customer-focused public services. The BASIS (www.basis.ie) and OASIS (www.oasis.gov.ie) information repositories, for corporate and private citizens respectively, and the public procurement e-tenders site (www.etenders.gov.ie) were formally launched during the year and they continue to be developed. Work to deliver public services electronically in line with the Government's Public Services Broker Model also continued in 2001.

Government Departments and Agencies prepared extensive strategies for the electronic delivery of services. In addition, to flagship projects such as the Revenue Online Service, a number of other initiatives came on stream, these included:

- *The Department of Public Enterprise's CAIT initiative which resourced over 70 projects nationwide in promoting digital inclusion*

- *The online driver testing application system (www.drivingtest.ie) launched by the Department of the Environment and Local Government*
- *Uptake by Land Registry clients of its external access service exceeded expectations with over 160,000 online transactions in 2001*
- *A new electronic system introduced by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to supply sheep tags to clients proved very successful with approximately 8 million tags issuing*
- *The Department of Finance's eTenders public procurement opportunities portal (www.etenders.gov.ie) which went live in 2001 continues to impact positively, as its popularity with contracting bodies and tenderers continues to grow*
- *Another important flagship eGovernment project, the eCabinet initiative (see Chapter 3 of this report) proceeds to implementation phase in 2002 following the completion in 2001 of the feasibility study. Several other initiatives will come on stream in 2002.*

Information Society Fund

The Information Society Fund - administered by the Department of Finance - with an evaluation team drawn from that Department and the Department of the Taoiseach, continued to operate in 2001. The Fund is a fast track mechanism to resource public sector initiatives that progress the objectives of the Government's *Information Society Action Plan*. During 2001 a total of €61.9m was available, with almost all of this being allocated. In addition to ongoing projects which the Fund continued to support, over 50 new initiatives were approved in 2001. By supporting numerous Departments in formulating their strategies, it has provided a springboard for acceleration of the national eGovernment objectives. The Fund also enabled Ireland to accelerate developments in specific areas to optimise Ireland's score in the EU's eGovernment benchmarking exercise.

eEurope Benchmarking and eGovernment Benchmarking

A major challenge for 2001 was to ensure that the substantial progress made by Ireland in electronic public service delivery was accelerated. In the context of the *eEurope Action Plan* to promote the information society and new technologies in Member States, an important benchmarking initiative by the EU Commission was initiated in 2001. In its assessment of 17 European countries on electronic service delivery across 20 online public services, Ireland was rated the best country overall. This is a highly significant achievement and a tribute to the ability and willingness of people right across the public sector to work in bringing this about. All Departments and Agencies will be working hard to sustain Ireland's rating in future benchmarking exercises to be conducted every six months.

Second Information Society Action Plan

Preparatory work on a new Government action plan was undertaken in 2001, with a view to finalising the new Irish blueprint for publication in early 2002. The new action plan will build upon the work of the *Government Information Society Action Plan* (1999) and on further work done by Departments (2000-01) in producing electronic service delivery strategies. The action plan will take account of relevant provisions of the *eEurope 2002 Action Plan*.

Information Society Commission

Following on from the successful completion by the first Information Society Commission of its three year term at the end of 2000, the Government appointed a new Commission in 2001. The new Commission, which has an advisory role, is chaired by Dr. Danny O'Hare, and is focusing on monitoring Ireland's performance as an information society, highlighting challenges and opportunities arising, and identifying areas for cooperation with other countries. Progress reports on implementing the Information Society are available at www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/.

New Structures to Further Accelerate Progress

During 2001, the Government put in place new structures to drive the development of the Information Society at the highest levels. They include:

- *A Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach, to coordinate the Information Society agenda*
- *An eStrategy Group of Secretaries General of the relevant Government Departments to advance key aspects of the Information Society agenda*
- *An expanded Information Society Policy Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach to develop, coordinate, articulate and monitor Ireland's progress.*

The Implementation Group (of Assistant Secretaries) will continue to focus on coordinating the development through the Public Services Broker of online services across Government Departments and Agencies. For more information on progress in and since 2001 see the elreland section of the Department's website.

Projects of National Importance

In addition to progress made on the major strategic objectives and priorities outlined above, the Department of the Taoiseach has a tradition of supporting projects of major National importance, ranging from historically based projects such as the Famine and 1798 commemorations to future-oriented schemes such as Temple Bar and the International Financial Services Centre. The Department advanced a number of such projects in 2001.

Millennium Committee

The central role of the National Millennium Committee was to advise the Government on suitable projects for inclusion in its millennium programme and also on a system for supporting commemorative projects at local, community, county and regional levels. The €41,901,357 of funding has been fully committed, with almost 2,400 projects and events supported. Some of the larger capital projects have not yet drawn the funds committed to them. It is expected that most of the remaining projects will shortly be in a position to draw down from the funding.

Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Fund Act, 1988

The disbursement of funds, which became available from the winding-up of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust, continued through 2001. Approximately €180,303 was disbursed.

Commemoration Initiatives

Assistance was provided for the commemoration of a number of important historical events, including the Battle of Kinsale and the acquisition of a lithograph of Thomas Francis Meagher.

Chapter 10: Strategic Priority G - Corporate Support Services

Strategic Priority G - Corporate Support Services

Key Objectives:

- Manage the Department's human resources so as to contribute to the organisation's goals while also promoting the personal development goals of individuals
- 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
- Provide a reliable and effective information and communications technology service that meets the Department's existing and future needs
- Ensure that the Department continues to meet its corporate legal responsibilities
- Support the provision of a high level of service to the Department's customers, both internal and external
- Provide efficient and effective library, registry, archives, customer service and other support services
- Implement a modernisation programme in the Department to support the achievement of the Department's goals and meet the targets set in the PPF
- Support and develop the partnership process in the Department.

Internal Measurement Mechanism

- Divisional Reports to the Management Advisory Committee
- Periodic review by the Partnership Committee
- Results of customer surveys
- Results of employee opinion survey
- Progress Reports on implementation of new financial and HR systems..

Other Relevant Indicators

Civil Service Quality Assurance Group reports for the Department of the Taoiseach.

Human Resource Strategy

Key Objective:

- *Manage the Department's human resources so as to contribute to the organisation's goals while also recognising the personal development goals of individuals.*

The Department is committed to improving the way in which it does business and towards this end is developing an integrated Human Resource Strategy and Staff Development Plan, which will be aligned with the Department's *Strategy Statement*, Divisional Business Plans and core competencies. It will also be informed by wide-ranging consultation with staff, including through the Partnership Committee and a

customised employee opinion survey, which was undertaken in December 2001. The Human Resource Strategy is a key mechanism for ensuring that the staff of the Department have the capability and commitment to maximise organisational performance.

There were 135 transactions in 2001, including new appointments, career breaks, promotions, transfers, etc. In addition, 8 internal competitive interviews for the filling of various posts were organised during the course of the year. The Division also drew up new contracts of employment for approximately 15 staff employed in the Offices of the National Economic and Social Forum, National Economic and Social Council and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance.

Equality

The Department of the Taoiseach is committed to providing a positive working environment for all its staff and to ensuring that the principle of equality underpins its human resource policies in accordance with equality legislation, the Government's Gender Equality Policy and other Government policies e.g. official languages equality, anti-racism, diversity. Significant progress was made by the Department in 2001 in relation to the equality agenda. Of particular note was the development of a *Gender Equality Policy and Implementation Plan* for the Department. Progress in this regard will be monitored at six monthly intervals by the Management Advisory Committee.

The Department monitors gender imbalances arising in all grades and, in keeping with the concern Service-wide in relation to the imbalances which arise in relation to the number of women in senior management positions, has a number of gender targets in place i.e.: Subject to the over-riding condition of the merit principle for all promotions, the following strategic objectives are proposed, with an indicative timescale of 2010:

- *PO: to increase the proportion of female representatives in the PO grade from 27% to 40%*
- *AP: to monitor flows from the HEO/IAO grades, with the ultimate objective of maintaining overall gender balance, as is the case at present*
- *In discussion with the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission, and other relevant Agencies, to seek to provide equality at recruitment level.*

The overall gender balance in the Department at 31 December 2001 was 34% male, 66% female (64 male and 122 female core staff respectively).

The Department currently exceeds the Government gender equality target of 1/3 of AP posts to be filled by women by 2005 (currently 54% of APs in the Department are female). With regard to other equality targets in place, the 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities was met and exceeded in 2001. During 2001, actions to progress equality objectives included:

- *Expansion of range of Worksharing options made available to include 3 day week; 4 day week; mornings only; afternoons only; 1 week off in 4; 9.00am -*

3.00pm working day. Also Term-time scheme for 2002 advertised - first time it applies to work/job-sharers.

- *Flexibands extended to 8am to 7 pm*
- *First employee opinion survey issued as part of consultation process on Human Resource Strategy. 79% of the Department's staff responded to questions on a range of themes, including equality issues*
- *Equality module incorporated into staff induction programme*
- *Initiatives to ensure that the composition of the board for an internal interview based competition is not just inclusive but also representative, and to improve record keeping and data collection.*

Training and Development

The Department is committed to developing the skills and potential of all of its staff and developed a number of training responses in 2001 to meet this objective.

As part of the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), all staff in the grades from Clerical Officer to Assistant Principal attended a Career Development Programme, which was commissioned to meet the specific training



The Department is committed to the training and development of staff

needs of around 160 staff. In addition, each member of staff received in-house training in relation to PMDS in 2001, amounting to 5 days PMDS related training in all. A Career Development Programme commissioned for the services grades (Services Officers, Services Attendants and Cleaners) was completed by end-April, 2002. A programme for senior management grades has been piloted and will be further developed.

Following active communications in relation to the refunds of fees scheme, a significant proportion of staff are undertaking academic programmes, largely in the areas of public administration, economics, IT and law. A range of other, shorter courses, are also being undertaken to develop language, communication and IT skills, etc. A number of in-house courses were also offered in 2001, including courses to aid induction and the implementation of the euro.

A development of particular note in 2001 was the launch of a Learning Resource Centre. This is an in-house training facility in which a range of learning materials such as CD-ROMs and videos are made available by the Department for its staff. Trainees arrange to attend the Centre to learn at their own pace, without distractions. One of the features of the Learning Resource Centre is that the course materials are part of a "rotating library" so that staff will have access to a range of different topics over the course of a year.

Initiatives of note in 2002 will include the development of a customised elearning induction course/guide to the Department and the development of an integrated Human Resource Strategy and Staff Development Plan, in the context of the performance management and development system.

Financial Management

Key Objective:

- *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.*

The Department endeavours to demonstrate value for money in its use of resources and to operate best practice in financial management and control. During 2001, we processed:

- *Payments totalling €30.2m*

- *Significant expenditure on the continuing payment of grants to projects in respect of the Millennium celebrations.*

Accountability

The 2000 Appropriation Account was completed by the deadline of March 2001, signed by the Accounting Officer in March 2001 and presented to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for audit. There were no adverse findings in respect of the 2000 Accounts. In addition, the C&AG published a detailed report on the Multi Media Developments project. As required by law, the Finance Officer's Prompt Payments Report for 2001 is included as an Appendix to this report.

The Euro

The Department successfully completed implementation of the *Euro Changeover Plan* in December 2001. The Department was represented on the Cross-Departmental Single Currency Officers Team, which met monthly. In addition, the Department's internal changeover group met regularly. The financial management system was changed over to euro and comprehensively tested prior to go-live. A smooth transition to the euro was achieved on 1 January 2002.

Improvements in Financial Management

The Department has been among the leaders in moving ahead with the implementation of the new financial management model for Government Departments – the Management Information Framework, or MIF. Phase 2A of the project was completed in May 2001, when the Department completed a specification for a new, modern and integrated financial management system and issued a Request For Tenders to the market for the supply of the system. Phase 2B of the project was completed in December 2001 with the selection of a suitable supplier and signing of contracts for the supply and implementation of the system, following detailed evaluation of tenders received. Phase 2A and 2B were completed with the assistance of external consultants.

The implementation of the system by a joint project team consisting of the MIF project team, led by a professional accountant, and the supplier is now fully underway. The target date for completion of the project is July 2002.

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

In addition to undertaking training and work experience, the newly formed Internal Audit Unit conducted a number of audits in 2001 under the 2001 Audit Plan. These audits are currently being finalised and reports will issue in 2002.

Provision of Core Information and Communications Technology Services

Key Objective:

- *Provide a reliable and effective information and communications technology service that meets the Department's existing and future needs.*

The IT Unit contributed to the Department's goals in 2001 by continuing to provide information and communications support. The Unit is responsible for the provision of a reliable and secure computer network to the Department on a day to day basis. It also manages the Department's internal and external connectivity through email and internet facilities.

New Initiatives

A number of projects were completed in 2001. These include the rendering of all of the Department's systems euro compliant and the enhancement of links to several other Government Departments and Offices. In addition to this, a number of new databases were developed and implemented by the IT Unit such as the Precedents Details database and the Speeches Module. The Unit employed consultants to carry out a review of the Department's physical network. Following on from this review, they presented a proposal for a Network Backbone Upgrade which would allow the IT Unit to provide a robust, resilient and flexible converged voice and data network service to the Department.

The Windows 2000 roll out, which provides the Department with a strategic and flexible platform for future information communications technology developments, was completed by the end of February 2002. The Department's website has also been redesigned and will be launched shortly.

The Principal Officer Network have begun to focus on

information management requirements for the Department, and a report on this topic has been prepared internally to promote debate.

A number of projects planned for the coming year will continue to consolidate the Department's preparation for eGovernment and will concentrate on the provision of more effective IT services for the Department, including the provision of a secure and personalised desktop environment. The IT Unit have also engaged experts to review use of ICT in the Department and to prepare a report on ICT strategy principles for the Department.

Quality Customer Service

Key Objectives:

- *Support the provision of a high level of service to the Department's customers, both internal and external*
- *Provide efficient and effective library, registry, archives, customer service and other support services.*

In furthering the Department's commitment to providing the highest level of service both to our internal and external customers, a revised *Customer Action Plan 2001-2004* was published during the review period (available on the Department's website www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/). The Department's Quality Customer Service Group met on a regular basis to monitor the quality of service given to the Department's customers, and conducted a customer survey in February 2001. The results of this survey were very positive with a 94-100% rating in all categories. The results of the survey are at Appendix 3 of the *Customer Action Plan*.

In order to enhance the customer service initiative, training in quality customer care for new staff was carried out during the year.

A Customer Information/Referral Service (CI/RS) continues to be offered by the library since September 2000. This service handles general enquiries to the Government Information Service (GIS), internet and visitor book queries, calls from the public and other Government Departments. These calls average at 100 per week, depending on current affairs. The CI/RS is responsible for responding to internet and visitors' book queries, which average at forty per day.

Improvements continue to be carried out to the building of the Department to improve facilities for people with disabilities.

Library, Registry and Archives

In 2001, the Library's Management System (SIRSI) was upgraded allowing for improved services to the Department and for broadening the library's catalogue. Online access to journals has also greatly increased. The library processed over 1000 information requests. The library has initiated the establishment of the Department of Finance's library and the move to a multi-library site.

Library staff have also been active in the re-development of the Department's website and ensuring compliance with web accessibility guidelines and other Government web standards.

Approximately 22,000 files are held in the Department and tracked on the Registry File Tracking System. Files more than thirty years old are transferred to the National Archive to be made available for public inspection.

Management Services and Service Support Staff

The Management Services Unit continued to provide a range of essential services to all users of Government Buildings. This includes accommodation, telecommunications, conference facilities and office/building maintenance and refurbishment (in cooperation with the Office of Public Works). The team of Services Support Staff provide a post delivery service, as well as undertaking reception, security and other duties. They are also responsible for ensuring that Government Buildings is maintained to the standards that befits its status as a major national symbol, as well as a clean working environment. Public tours of the building continued throughout the year.

Health and Safety

During the review period, the Department continued to develop its procedures to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all staff and for visitors to Government Buildings. In this regard, a risk assessment audit of the Department's standing in relation to health and safety matters was commissioned. The report was very positive in relation to the Department's preparedness in this area and made some recommendations which have since been acted upon. The Department's safety statement has been updated accordingly. Additional

training in this area was provided according to the Department's needs. The Health and Safety Group, a sub-group of the Partnership Committee has a key role to play in fostering a safe and healthy environment in the Department.

Modernisation Programme

Key Objective:

- *Implement a modernisation programme in the Department to support the achievement of the Department's goals and meet the targets set in the PPF.*

The modernisation programme is part of the way we work. The objectives of the programme, based on the key modernisation objectives outlined in the PPF, are to position the Department to meet the ongoing changes in the external environment; to provide an excellent service to our customers; to maintain a strategic focus on the Department's role and functions to ensure that we provide leadership and coordination across key areas of Government policy and to work in partnership with the staff of the Department to bring about changes required.

In accordance with the terms of the PPF, the Department has submitted performance indicators for its modernisation programme to the independent Civil Service Quality Assurance Group. The following table identifies key indicators for 2001 and progress made.

Progress Made on the Modernisation Programme in the Department of the Taoiseach

Performance Indicator	Progress made	Comment
Publication of <i>Annual Progress Report 2000</i>	✓	Published including Irish version
Publication of <i>Strategy Statement to 31 December 2003</i>	✓	Published including Irish version
Revised Assignment of Functions to Assistant Secretaries and Principal Officers	✓	Considered by the Management Advisory Committee
Agreement/Implementation of <i>Customer Action Plan 2001-2004</i>	✓	Published including Irish version
Reinvigoration of Partnership Committee, and sub-groups	✓	13 new members - now 60 members of various sub-groups i.e. social and recreation issues, quality customer service, health and safety and change management (incl. PMDS)
Setting up dedicated Change Management Unit with expert resources	✓	Completed
Setting up dedicated Internal Audit Unit	✓	Completed
Agreement/Implementation of new <i>Gender Equality Policy</i>	✓	Completed
Implementation of Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)	✓	PMDS training delivered for interim reviews. Career Development Programme for all staff, Clerical Officer to Assistant Principal developed and progressed - programme for other grades being developed. Learning Resource Centre developed
Selection of new financial computer system	✓	Completed
Review of Department's IT facilities and redesign of Department's website	✓	Key projects progressed include the implementation of Windows 2000, MIF System, a new Human Resource Management System, upgraded intranet/website and an assessment of staff information needs
Formulation of new Human Resource Strategy including re-orientation of HR Function	✓	Progressed including first employee survey (79% response rate).

Partnership

Key Objective:

- *Support and develop the partnership process in the Department.*

The Department's Partnership Committee, and its associated sub-groups, provide a forum for discussing issues of interest to staff. It has a particular role in assisting the implementation of the Department's modernisation programme.

During 2001:

- *A formal cycle of 3 monthly meetings was put in place*
- *13* new members joined the Partnership Committee*
- *60 people are now serving on the 4 Partnership sub-groups currently underway*
- *Formal reporting arrangements for these groups have been agreed and the sub-groups met more frequently than heretofore e.g. the Change Management Working Group met on a monthly basis*

* This figure does not include replacement union representatives

- Issues discussed by the Committee included equality; rejuvenation of the Committee; sub-groups; childcare; remote access/teleworking; Human Resource Strategy
- Members have been offered training over the course of the year
- The sub-groups of the Committee (Social and Recreation, Quality Customer Service, Health and Safety and Change Management (formerly PMDS) Groups) progressed their agendas. Outputs of the respective groups included the organisation of a number of successful social events, a survey of the Department's external customers, an audit of the safety of the building and the agreement of a gender equality policy and implementation plan.

Corporate Legal Responsibilities

Key Objective:

- Ensure that the Department continues to meet its corporate legal responsibilities.

During the year the Department complied with its legal obligations. For example, the Department coordinates returns to ensure compliance on an annual basis regarding returns under the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001. In relation to the Data Protection Act, 1988, the Department ensures it meets the requirements in respect of personal data held. Having regard to the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1977, the Department monitors regularly overtime hours worked by staff. The Department ensures it meets the requirements of the Employment Equality Act, 1988, and the Equal Status Act, 2000, when carrying out its business and ensures it meets the 3% target for employment of people with disabilities. We return statistics on gender/disabilities, as required to the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In keeping with our obligations under the National Archives Act, 1986, the Department transfers files annually to the National Archives.

The Freedom of Information Act, 1997, asserts 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 coordinated by the FOI Officer, Ms. Patricia Williams (email patricia.williams@taoiseach.gov.ie; telephone 6194154).

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

A total of 279 applications were received by the Department of the Taoiseach under the Freedom of Information Act during 2001, representing an increase of almost 50% on the previous year. Applications were received from the following groups: journalists 203, Oireachtas 11, business 9, others 56.

Decision	2000	2001
Requests granted	77	68
Requests part granted	41	79
Requests refused	11	39
Requests withdrawn	10	31
Requests transferred	15	12
No records held/Records not subject to FOI	33	50
TOTAL	187	279

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

Energy Usage in the Department of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings

The Department has noted the Government Decision of 3 July 2001, requiring all Government Departments and State Bodies to report in their Annual Reports on measures to reduce energy usage in buildings occupied by them. We recognise that, as the single biggest user of energy in the State, Government Departments and State Bodies must take a lead in reducing energy consumption in line with the *Green Paper on Sustainable Energy* published in September 1999. The issue was brought to the attention of Bodies under the aegis of the Department.

Measures are being taken in the Department to raise staff awareness of the issue and to explore possibilities for further energy efficiencies. As our energy costs are shared with the Houses of the Oireachtas, discussions are taking place with them and with the Office of Public Works to identify possibilities for energy saving.

Appendix I : Expenditure for the year 2001

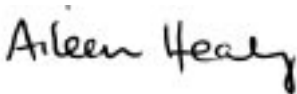
	2001 Provisional Outturn	
	€000	£000
ADMINISTRATION		
Salaries, Wages & Allowances	8,213	6,468
Travel & Subsistence	676	532
Incidental Expenses	1,127	888
Postal & Telecommunications Services	558	439
Office Machinery & Office Supplies	1,317	1,037
Office Premises Expenses	648	510
Consultancy Services	163	128
Total Administration	12,702	10,003
OTHER SERVICES		
National Economic and Social Council (<i>Grant-in-Aid</i>)	728	573
Grants under Section 2 of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Act, 1988	180	142
Forum for Peace and Reconciliation	240	189
Commemoration Initiatives	329	259
All-Party Committee on the Constitution	290	228
Information Society Commission	832	655
National Centre for Partnership and Performance	626	493
National Economic and Social Forum (<i>Grant-in-Aid</i>)	729	574
Tribunal of Inquiry (McCracken)	0	0
Tribunal of Inquiry (Moriarty)	2,239	1,763
Millennium Celebrations	10,320	8,128
Independent Commission of Inquiry	836	658
Office for National Economic and Social Development	45	35
National Forum on Europe	196	154
Gross Total	30,292	23,857
Less Appropriations-in-Aid	81	64
Net Total	30,211	23,793

Appendix 2 : Report on Payment Practices for 2001

	2001	
STATEMENT OF PAYMENT PRACTICE		
Details of Late Payments	€000	£000
Total Interest Paid in the Period	854.46	672.94
Late Payments in excess of €317 (£250)		
Total Number	26	26
Total Value	152,653.22	120,224.18
Total Amount of Interest	846.57	666.73
Average Length of Delay	29 days	29 days
All Late Payments		
Total Number	34	34
As a proportion of Total Payments		
Total Value of Late Payments / Total Value of All Payments × 100	(€) 153,237 / 8,089,501 × 100 = 1.89%	(£) 120,684 / 6,371,000 × 100 = 1.89%

Appendix 3 : 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 2001, the above procedures were fully implemented in the Department.



Aileen Healy
Finance Officer

Appendix 4: Gender breakdown of staff serving in the Department

Grade	Number of Staff	Gender		% Men in each Grade	% Women in each Grade
		Male	Female		
Secretary General	1	1	0	100%	0%
Second Secretary	1	1	0	100%	0%
Assistant Secretary	5	4	1	80%	20%
Principal Officer	11	8	3	73%	27%
Assistant Principal	24	11	13	46%	54%
Higher Executive Officer	17	7	10	42%	58%
Administrative Officer	14	6	8	43%	57%
Executive Officer	24	3	21	12%	88%
Staff Officer	13	1	12	8%	92%
Clerical Officer	53	9	44	17%	83%
Service Officer					
/Service Attendant	13	13	0	100%	0%
Cleaner	10	0	10	0%	100%
Total	186	64	122	44%	66%

** Worksharers 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 as at 31 December 2001.*

Notes

Notes