

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

**1999/2000 Annual Report
of the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee**

Key to Abbreviations used in Report

ADM	Area Development Management Ltd
CDSP	Community Development Support Programme
CES	Community Employment Scheme
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSW	Commission on Social Welfare
EAP	Employment Action Plan
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FIS	Family Income Supplement
GNP	Gross National Product
IDPC	NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISP	Integrated Services Process
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
LES	Local Employment Service
LTU	Long-Term Unemployed
LURD	Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P2000	Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
QCS	Quality Customer Services Initiative
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SWA	Supplementary Welfare Allowance
TEP	Territorial Employment Pact
UN	United Nations
YPFSF	Young People's Facilities and Services Fund

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Combat Poverty Agency

The Combat Poverty Agency (CPA), established in 1986, is a statutory agency under the aegis of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The CPA has four main functions which are to:

- advise and make recommendations to the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs on all aspects of economic and social planning in relation to poverty;
- initiate and evaluate measures aimed at overcoming poverty;
- examine the nature, causes and extent of poverty along with the promoting, commissioning and interpreting of research; and
- promote greater public understanding of the nature, causes and extent of poverty and the measures necessary to overcome it.

Commission on Social Welfare

A Commission on Social Welfare reported in 1986. The objective of the Commission was to review and report on the social welfare system and related social services, and to make recommendations for their development having regard to the needs of modern Irish society. The Commission's report has had a major influence on the development of social welfare policy in the period since.

Economic and Social Research Institute

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1960. Its aim is to bring the latest thinking in economics and the social sciences to bear on the actual and potential problems of Irish society. It is engaged in a broad programme of work covering economic forecasting and modelling, public finance, the labour market, social exclusion, education and health. ESRI research has been a vital constituent in the national debate on economic and social issues over the past 30 years.

FÁS

FÁS - the Training and Employment Authority - was established in January 1988 under the Labour Services Act, 1987, to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. Its functions as laid down in the Act are to provide:

- training and re-training;
- employment schemes;
- placement and guidance services
- assistance to community groups and workers' co-operatives towards the creation of jobs;
- assistance to people seeking employment elsewhere in the EU; and
- consultancy and human resource related services on a commercial basis outside the State.

Living in Ireland Survey

The Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) is the Irish element of the European Community Household Panel, and is carried out by the ESRI (see above). A joint committee of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Combat Poverty Agency and the ESRI manages the survey.

National and Economic Social Forum

The National and Economic Social Forum (NESF) was established by the Government in 1993 to contribute to the formation of a wider national consensus on social and economic policy initiatives, particularly in relation to unemployment. The NESF was recently reconstituted and its remit will now focus on monitoring and analysing the implementation of specific measures and programmes, especially those concerned with the achievement of equality and social exclusion. Its membership includes members of the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament), employer/business and farm bodies, the community and voluntary sector, and representatives from central and local government.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

National Partnership agreements have been in operation since 1987 and are negotiated between Government and the social partners - employers, trade unions, farmers, and the community and voluntary sector. The Partnership for Prosperity and Fairness is the current three-year national agreement, for the period 2000-2003 and covers areas such as taxation, pensions, workplace relations, infrastructure and service delivery, rural development, housing, lifelong learning, childcare and the labour market. It has a very strong focus on outcomes and on social inclusion and equality, to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared by all sections of society.

National Development Plan

The National Development Plan (2000-2006) is a strategy document, which lays the foundation for Ireland's continuing economic and social development into the next Millennium. It sets out a strategy, supported by commitments for funding, in the areas of infrastructural development, education and training, the productive sector and the promotion of social inclusion. It also contains a commitment and accompanying framework for the promotion of more balanced regional development. The Plan was framed after an extensive consultation process, including the social partners and regional interests and reflects the broad consensus in the consultation process as to the future development needs of the country.

Definition of poverty

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) definition of relative poverty recognises that poverty involves - as well as a lack of money - isolation, powerlessness and exclusion from participation in the normal activities of society. The definition of poverty contained in the NAPS states:

"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society."

Those at risk of poverty

There are certain groups in society who tend to be at a higher risk of poverty and NAPS aims to focus on these, viz:

- the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed;
- children, particularly those living in large families;
- single adult households and households headed by someone working in the home;
- lone parents;
- people with disabilities;
- older people, in particular households headed by a retired person;
- members of the Traveller community;
- the homeless; and
- ethnic minorities.

Poverty proofing guidelines circulated in April 1999 (see Appendix B) highlight the fact that “particular attention should be paid to these groups which have been identified as being either in consistent poverty or known to be at risk of poverty”.

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Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

“This Programme for Prosperity and Fairness... - will enable Ireland to: maintain our international competitiveness through policies that encourage enterprise and investment,

ensure that those in work have a fair share in our increased national prosperity,

substantially increase the resources allocated to social inclusion, and

enable us to become a learning, knowledge-based society, with the capacity to embrace with confidence the opportunities offered by technological change.

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

(extract from Taoiseach’s foreword to PPF)

Action Programme for the Millennium

“Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in Government will seek to establish an inclusive society where all citizens have the opportunity and the incentive to participate fully in the social and economic life of the country. We want everyone to have a chance to contribute to the wealth of the nation and to share the benefits of economic growth.

We will address urgently the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and poverty, and we will halt the continuing drift towards the development of a two-tier society.”

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

“Tackling poverty and social exclusion is one of the major challenges facing Irish society. It will involve ensuring that the impact of very rapid economic, social and demographic change reduces social inequalities and social polarisation. It will mean ensuring that the benefits of sound economic management and growth are distributed fairly and, in particular, are used to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion.”

Foreword by An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, T.D

Finding effective and sustainable ways to tackle poverty is not a simple challenge. The starting point has to be an appreciation of the fact that action must be taken on a number of different levels and has to be based on opening up opportunity for individuals and communities to participate in all aspects of economic and social life. Anti-poverty action has to involve more than traditional responses and must include, for example, creating a pro-employment environment, expanding access to high-quality education and training and targeting investment towards key communities.

This idea lies at the heart of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the co-ordinated actions which have stemmed from it. When launched three years ago, the Strategy set a series of ambitious ten-year targets. These have already been met and exceeded. For example, the number of households experiencing consistent poverty has fallen from 10-15% to approximately 6-8%. In practical terms, this means that the number of people unable to afford an acceptable standard of living in areas such as food and clothing has been reduced very significantly. Key to this has been the success of efforts implemented under the National Employment Action Plan to expand employment opportunities, particularly for the long-term unemployed who had previously benefited little from economic growth. Unemployment has been reduced from 12% to 4.3% and long-term unemployment has been reduced from 7% to just 1.6%.

The reduction of consistent poverty has also been enhanced by the targeted use of secondary, non-cash benefits, particularly for groups such as the elderly. This provides an important perspective as we seek to understand the practical ways of tackling consistent poverty.

The Government is working on a number of levels to drive forward the social inclusion agenda. This report from the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee shows a wide variety of initiatives touching every aspect of Government. Quite a number of highly innovative policy responses such as the Integrated Services Process are being developed which have the potential to make a major difference.

The National Development Plan and Programme for Prosperity and Fairness provide the key building blocks for an inclusive Ireland. They also provide the background for the next stage of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy process. We have entered a period of review and consultation during which the revision of existing targets and inclusion of additional ones will be considered. It is clear, for example, that the target for the elimination of early school leaving needs to be reset to include a wider range of interventions and achievement. In addition, the NAPS process provides an effective way of dealing with other issues such as child poverty.

One of the core strengths of the Strategy is that it focuses attention on long-term solutions and moves debate away from short-term and reactive responses. Over the last three years we have, as this report shows, seen significant progress. I have no doubt that, with co-operation and commitment, this progress will continue.

Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.
An Taoiseach

Foreword by Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D. Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs

This Government is strongly committed to building an inclusive society – one where everybody feels they belong. The fruits of this commitment have been very marked

- unemployment has dropped dramatically and we have, for the first time in our history, achieved a full employment society,
- consistent poverty has almost been halved since 1996, and
- we are now creating the conditions where people can achieve economic independence with the numbers of working age people dependent on welfare falling from one-in-four of the population in 1997 to one-in-five today.

Although much has been achieved in recent years, we are not complacent about the challenging tasks ahead. Given the dramatic change in our economy and society we need to move to new approaches to building an inclusive society.

This year marks a new phase in the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

- The Strategy will be strengthened and updated in consultation with the social partners
- We will develop new approaches to social inclusion
- Existing targets will be reviewed and revised
- New targets will be considered in the areas of children's poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing/ accommodation
- Emerging causes of poverty will be examined, particularly racism.

In addition, as part of our policy of local government reform, poverty proofing will be extended on a phased basis to a local level through local authorities and health boards and social inclusion units will be piloted in five local authorities.

I strongly believe that we can only build an inclusive society if all the social partners play a full role. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported the process to date. One of the key challenges in the next phase will be to establish mechanisms to further strengthen the involvement of the social partners in the Strategy.

Our people made the economic boom. We must ensure that we use the fruits of that boom to make this a good country for them all. We are at a vital stage in the development of the NAPS. This report shows what can be achieved. I look forward to

working with all the social partners to ensure that we make this a country where everybody feels they belong.

Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D.
Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Introduction and Context

- 1.1.1 The United Nations World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, was a landmark step in the development of social policy across the globe. At the Summit, the Irish Government, together with other Governments, endorsed a Programme of Action aimed at reducing overall poverty and inequality throughout the world. Arising from this commitment, the Irish Government approved the development of a ten-year National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) which would set out the extent of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland as well as identifying the strategic policy direction needed to tackle the issue. Developed by an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee, comprising high level officials from relevant Government Departments and agencies including the Combat Poverty Agency, and following wide-ranging consultation and participation with the voluntary and community sector, the strategy was launched in April 1997. Membership of the Committee is set out in Appendix A.
- 1.1.2. A follow-up summit to the World Summit for Social Development was held in Geneva in June 2000. This summit provided an opportunity to identify progress made since 1995 in implementing the Copenhagen commitments and to reaffirm and strengthen efforts towards full and effective implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen Summit.

NAPS Targets

- 1.1.3 One of the most important features of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is that it sets specific targets for poverty reduction. The original global target of the NAPS was as follows:

“Over the period 1997-2007, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are “consistently poor”¹ from 9% - 15% of the population to less than 5% - 10%, as measured by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)”.²

¹ “Consistent” poverty is defined as being below 50% - 60% of average household disposable income **and** experiencing enforced basic deprivation. Basic deprivation refers to a set of eight indicators, which were regarded as necessities and possessed by a majority of those in the ESRI’s Living in Ireland Survey. Examples include having 2 pairs of strong shoes, having a warm waterproof overcoat and having a roast meal (or its equivalent) at least once a week.

² Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 1997, **Sharing in Progress**; National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Dublin, Stationery Office

- 1.1.4 Data published in the 1999 ESRI report “*Monitoring Trends in Poverty for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*”, showed that by 1997, the numbers of ‘consistently poor’ had shown a sharp fall to 7% to 10%. In the light of the substantial achievement of this target and in view of the rapid economic and social progress achieved over the previous two years, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs announced a new global target at the launch of the 1998/1999 IDPC Report:

Consistent poverty to be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

NAPS Themes

- 1.1.5 While the National Anti-Poverty Strategy considers poverty in a global context, it currently examines specific poverty issues within five key themes, each with its own subsidiary targets and timeframes. These themes are *unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage* and *rural poverty*. Further detail on the goals and targets in each of these areas is set out in chapter 2.

NAPS Principles

1.1.6 The Strategy is underpinned by a number of principles. These are:

- ensuring equal access and encouraging participation for all;
- guaranteeing the rights of minorities, especially through anti-discrimination measures,
- the reduction of inequalities and in particular, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty,
- the development of the partnership approach building on national and local partnership processes,
- actively involving the community and voluntary sector,
- encouraging self reliance through respecting individual dignity and promoting empowerment and
- engaging in appropriate consultative processes, especially with users of services.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

- 1.1.7. In the period since 1997, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy has been a central focus of the national partnership agreements. Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness (P2000) identified the need to reduce social disparities and exclusion as one of the essential challenges facing society. The current national agreement, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) recognises that, for many people, poverty and social exclusion are still a stark reality and aims to address this challenge in a number of ways, including substantially increasing the resources allocated to social inclusion. The

Programme is underpinned by a commitment of £1.5 billion over the next three years for social inclusion measures. A key objective within the fiscal framework underpinning the Programme is the pursuit of policies which reduce poverty and social exclusion, build an inclusive society, reduce marginalisation and strengthen recognition of citizenship obligations in those contexts. In relation to the NAPS, it provides for a review of the NAPS to be undertaken over the next 18 months, whereby existing targets and the underlying methodology will be reviewed and revised where appropriate and possible new targets considered in consultation with the social partners under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing/ accommodation. The NAPS analysis will be expanded to include emerging causes of poverty such as racism and attention will also be given to data collection systems for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, including systems of measuring poverty among groups not currently included (e.g. Travellers, homeless people).

Evaluation of the NAPS

- 1.1.8 The Combat Poverty Agency, in addition to its role as advisor to the Minister of Social, Community and Family Affairs on the development of anti-poverty strategies generally supports and evaluates the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. This includes consideration of the views and experiences of the voluntary and community sector. The first such report, *Planning For a More Inclusive Society: An Initial Assessment of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, was published in May 2000. The assessment states that the NAPS “*is an important and innovative approach to putting poverty and social exclusion at the centre of public policy*”³ and suggests a number of areas in which it can be strengthened and enhanced. It noted a number of key strengths of the NAPS to date, including the strengthening of political and societal consensus that there is a need to reduce levels of poverty in Ireland, the establishment of institutional structures to underpin the NAPS process, the adoption of specific poverty reduction targets, the introduction of poverty proofing, increased awareness of poverty and improved cohesion, co-ordination and consultation around poverty issues. However, the report also recognised that the NAPS had some weaknesses, such as a difficulty in translating objectives into operational measures, which can work towards the achievement of NAPS targets. The need to strengthen the involvement of the community and voluntary sector in the implementation of the NAPS was also highlighted.
- 1.1.9 The *NESF Opinion on the National Anti-Poverty Strategy*⁴, published in August 2000 is the first of a series of annual opinions focusing on Departmental plans under the NAPS, as well as poverty proofing assessments. Recommendations made by the NESF included the need to review and extend the targets, and to

³ Combat Poverty Agency, 2000, **Planning for a More Inclusive Society: An Initial Assessment of the NAPS**, page 24

⁴ The National Economic and Social Forum, August 2000, **The National Anti-Poverty Strategy: Forum Opinion No. 8**, Government Publications Sales Office

increase transparency in relation to poverty proofing. The NESF also made a number of suggestions in relation to the extension of the Strategy to local level.

Involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector

- 1.1.10 The involvement of all the social partners in developing the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is gratefully acknowledged. In developing a coherent strategy, the experience and perspectives of the community and voluntary sector proved invaluable and ways of enhancing the involvement of the sector as the Strategy progresses are being explored. The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector aims to set out a cohesive framework of support and to address issues relevant to the future development of the relationship. It will form an important context for the strengthening of consultative mechanisms generally.
- 1.1.11 Furthermore, the Combat Poverty Agency, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, and the National Anti-Poverty Networks, are partners in an EU-funded transnational study to develop ways to involve excluded persons in the development, implementation and evaluation of national anti-poverty strategies. Representatives from Portugal, Finland, the Netherlands and from the North and South of Ireland share their experiences in this regard in order to develop practical guidelines for involvement, so as to inform future policy development in this area.

Institutional Mechanisms	
1.1.12	It was recognised from the outset that the National Anti-Poverty Strategy would need strong institutional supporting mechanisms to facilitate its implementation. Co-ordination of cross-Departmental activity on a constant basis, with consultative mechanisms where appropriate with state agencies, social partners, and NGOs, is an important element of a strategy which seeks to focus anti-poverty policy on those most in need as efficiently, and effectively, as possible.
1.1.13	In line with the principles of the Civil Service Strategic Management Initiative, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy recognises the multi-faceted nature of the problem of social exclusion and, as such, the focus at all times is on a cross-Departmental and integrated approach to tackling disadvantage. While each Department retains the lead role in progressing policies under its own areas, Departments work together to pursue a co-ordinated approach, where possible. The establishment, in 1998, of 2 cross-Departmental groups – one dealing with homelessness and another dealing with literacy among the unemployed, is an example of such co-operation between Departments to provide strategic responses to specific issues.

1.1.14 The cross-Departmental approach is also reflected in the mechanisms put in place to oversee the Strategy, which are as follows:

Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion:

The Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and including Ministers from eight relevant Departments meets on a monthly basis. It provides an integrated basis for the Government's activities in the social exclusion area in general, ensuring that the strategic priorities are being pursued and that effective co-ordination takes place. As such, it provides the essential political leadership necessary to advance the goals of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Senior Officials Social Inclusion Group:

This group, comprising high level civil servants from relevant Departments, meets on a monthly basis to prepare the agenda and recommendations for the Cabinet Committee. It maintains a broad overview of social inclusion issues and ensures that emerging topics are brought to the attention of the Cabinet Committee. It is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach.

Inter-Departmental Policy Committee (IDPC):

This Committee, originally established to develop the Strategy, continues to meet regularly and provides the principal strategic focus for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. It comprises senior civil servants as well as representatives of FÁS, Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) and the Combat Poverty Agency. It considers the ongoing progress on implementation of the Strategy as well as progress towards achieving the NAPS targets. This Committee remains the key agent for addressing central NAPS issues and agreeing future plans and programmes of activity. The Committee is co-chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The current membership is set out in Appendix A.

NAPS Liaison Officers:

Each relevant Department has appointed a National Anti-Poverty Strategy Liaison Officer who fulfils an important communication and co-ordination role within Departments. They act as a first point of contact in relation to NAPS issues within Departments and are supported by each Department's IDPC representative as well as the Senior Officials Group representative, where applicable.

NAPS Unit:

A dedicated National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit has been established in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-Departmental action in support of social inclusion initiatives. The Unit also acts as a secretariat to the IDPC and liaises with all Government Departments, other agencies, both national and international, and the social partners in promoting and progressing the Strategy.

Combat Poverty Agency:

The Agency are assigned a specific role in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in monitoring and evaluating the Strategy as well as providing ongoing support and advice to the NAPS Unit and Departments in anti-poverty policies, programmes and research. NAPS is accorded a high priority in the Agency's Strategic Plan 1999 - 2001. The Combat Poverty Agency also play a role in the extension of the NAPS to local level, as discussed further in Chapter 3 of the Report.

CHAPTER 2: PROGRESS IN 1999-2000

Setting Parameters

2.1.1 1999-2000 has seen much progress across all areas in terms of actual development of programmes and initiatives to promote social inclusion, including:

- the publication of the first annual report of the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee in June 1999. This report provided an overview of NAPS developments across all Government Departments. In tandem with the publication of the report, new poverty and unemployment targets were announced. The targets for unemployment were subsequently replaced by targets announced in the Employment Action Plan (EAP). The current NAPS targets in these areas aim to reduce
 - consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004,
 - unemployment to below 5% by end 2000, (now achieved)
 - long-term unemployment to below 2% by end 2000 (now achieved),
- presentation of a comprehensive national report to the United Nations on progress in relation to poverty, unemployment and social integration since the Copenhagen Summit,
- participation in a joint EU funded proposal led by the Combat Poverty Agency/ NAPS Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs / National Anti-Poverty Networks to develop ways to involve groups representing excluded persons in the development, implementation and evaluation of national anti-poverty strategies,
- preparation by relevant Government Departments of workplans setting out progress in 1999 in relation to programme development and expansion as well as workplans for policies and actions to be undertaken during 2000 to reduce poverty and social exclusion,
- conclusion of negotiations in relation to the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the National Development Plan by relevant Departments, with significant expenditure proposals in relation to social inclusion measures. The Programme aims to ensure that the economy remains competitive, to support further economic prosperity, to improve the quality of life for all members of Irish society and to bring about a fairer and more inclusive society. It provides, among other things, for an updating of the NAPS with existing targets reviewed and revised where appropriate and possible new targets to be considered, in consultation with the social partners, under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing/ accommodation. Additional commitments contained with the Programme are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 of this report,
- the bringing to fruition of two cross-Departmental groups, one dealing with homelessness and another with literacy among the unemployed. The Report of the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness was published in May

2000, while that of the Group on Literacy among the Unemployed was presented to the Taoiseach in October 1999,

- commencement, in Autumn 1999, of proposals for a review of the poverty proofing process, in line with a commitment to review the process after one year of implementation,
- the establishment of NAPS Review Working Groups to examine the issues of educational disadvantage, unemployment, rural poverty, disadvantaged urban areas, child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing/accommodation, arising from commitments outlined in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness,
- publication of two assessments of the NAPS, which highlight key issues for consideration in the further implementation of the NAPS. The Combat Poverty Agency published its initial assessment of the NAPS in May 2000, while the National Economic and Social Forum published an opinion on the NAPS in August 2000 (see also paragraphs 1.1.8 and 1.1.9).

2.1.2 The main achievements and progress for 1999-2000 in the field of social inclusion are set out thematically in the sections 2.3 to 2.7, which focus on the five key themes identified in the NAPS, i.e. educational disadvantage, unemployment, income adequacy, disadvantaged urban areas and rural poverty. A more detailed listing of the individual programmes and initiatives progressed by each relevant Department is available on request from the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Poverty Proofing

- 2.2.1 Following agreement among the social partners in July 1998 on a pilot poverty proofing system, the Government adopted this process in official Cabinet procedures. As a result, memoranda for Government and key policy initiatives (e.g. the National Development Plan) upon which significant policy decisions have to be made must now indicate clearly the impact of the proposal on groups in poverty, or at risk of falling into poverty.
- 2.2.2 Poverty Proofing ensures that Departments are kept aware of the possible implications of policy on those most in need and is defined in the context of the NAPS as *“the process by which Government Departments, Local Authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction.”*
- 2.2.3 The Poverty Proofing Framework lists several areas where the proofing process should be applied. These are:
- in the preparation of SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans,
 - in designing policies and preparing Memoranda to Government on significant policy proposals,

- in the preparation of the Estimates and Annual Budget proposals (including expenditure reviews and programme evaluations),
- in the preparation of the National Development Plan and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes,
- in the preparation of legislation.

To assist in the implementation of the poverty proofing process, the NAPS Unit distributed a set of guidelines and worked examples on poverty proofing to all Government Departments in April 1999 (see Appendix B).

- 2.2.4 Following a commitment to review the process after one year of implementation, the NESC, in consultation with the social partners, are reviewing the pilot poverty proofing arrangements. This review will take account of officials' experience in implementing the process and its effectiveness in its first year of operation. A report on the review is due from the NESC by the end of 2000. It is hoped that the outcome will enhance the current process and help address any difficulties that may constrain its effective implementation.
- 2.2.5 Following the review, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will pursue the possibilities for incorporating appropriate training modules into general civil service training courses. The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness also envisages the extension of poverty proofing on a phased basis to a local level through the Local Authorities and Health Boards, once the review is completed. A piloting of social inclusion units will be undertaken by five Local Authorities areas during the lifetime of the Programme.

Equality proofing

- 2.2.6 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform commissioned a report on equality proofing, to assist with the implementation of a Partnership 2000 commitment to strengthen the administrative procedures for equality proofing in the context of the NAPS. A Working Group comprising representatives of the social partners, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Equality Authority and the Combat Poverty Agency advised on the report, which was presented to Partnership 2000 on 21 January, 2000. Recommendations in the report take account both of the fact that other proofing systems are already in operation and of the complexity of equality proofing. Equality proofing adds another dimension to both poverty and gender proofing and involves assessing the impact of policy on the nine categories identified in equality legislation i.e. gender, race, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, religion, disability and membership of the Travelling community. The report envisages an integrated proofing process covering gender, poverty and equality as a long term objective, which would be preceded by a 'learning phase' during the period 2000-2003, where experience on equality proofing covering the nine categories identified in equality legislation would be developed in a number of specific policy areas. The learning from this

experience would inform any subsequent decision on wider implementation of equality proofing.

Unemployment

NAPS Unemployment Targets

- 2.3.1 Overall Objective: *“Paid employment should be available to all men and women currently in poverty who are seeking employment. This should be capable of providing adequate income, either on its own or when combined with other forms of support, sufficient to lift them out of poverty and should be available without barriers of discrimination.”*

Overall Target: (Employment Action Plan) *“To reduce the rate of unemployment, as measured on an internationally standardised basis (ILO) by the Labour Force Survey, from 11.9% in April, 1996 to below 5% by end 2000; and to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment from 7% to below 2% by end 2000.”*

- 2.3.2 Developments in 1999-2000 indicate that very strong economic growth has been translated into substantial employment growth with the result that unemployment, and in particular, the structural component of unemployment, as measured by long-term unemployment, was reduced substantially.
- 2.3.3 The latest figures from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in respect of the period March 2000 to May 2000 indicate that the unemployment rate had fallen to 4.3%, with the long-term unemployment rate at 1.6%. This reflects a continued increase in the numbers in employment, rising from over 1.3 million in April 1996 to over 1.67 million by March 2000 to May 2000. The number of people unemployed fell from 179,000 to 74,900 and the numbers of long-term unemployed fell from 103,000 to 27,400 in the same period.
- 2.3.4 These figures show that the revised targets in the Employment Action Plan i.e. to reduce unemployment to below 5% and long-term unemployment to below 2% by end-year 2000 have been fully achieved.

Active Labour Market Programmes

- 2.3.5 The implementation of the ***Employment Action Plan (EAP)***, with its focus on preventing the drift into long-term unemployment as well as re-integrating the persons who are already long-term unemployed into the labour market, has played an important role in this dramatic reduction in unemployment. The preventative strategy element of the EAP came into effect from 1 September 1998. This targeted 18 to 25 year olds approaching 6 months on the Live Register with a view to reintegrating them into the labour market, or to provide training and education to improve their skills and enhance their employment prospects. This systematic activation approach has been extended to 18 - 25 year olds approaching 18 months on the Live Register with effect from March 1999, and to 25 - 34 year olds approaching 12 months on the Live Register with effect from May 1999. The scheme will be extended further in Autumn 2000 (see chapter 3).

- 2.3.6 Early results have been encouraging. Some 73% (19,082 persons) of the total number of 25,996 unemployed persons referred under the Employment Action Plan had left the Live Register by end December 1999. Of those 19,082 who had left, 60% (11,449 persons) went into employment, FÁS programmes or educational courses.
- 2.3.7 The *Local Employment Service*, (LES) which aims to provide an integrated and tailor-made response to targeted groups of unemployed people is now operating in 25 areas of particular disadvantage. In March 1999, the Government decided to assimilate the LES into FÁS (the national employment service) in order to maximise the coherence and complementarity of the services. The arrangements to give effect to this decision are currently being put in place. The LES remains a valuable tool in maintaining the necessary focus on the long-term unemployed, particularly those that may not yet have the necessary skills to take advantage of the current buoyant jobs market. 21 Job Clubs in LES areas (in addition to 28 in the FÁS Network) have proved very successful in handling 2,300 clients per annum, with an average placement rate of 88% for these attending.
- 2.3.8 Given the dynamism of the labour market at present, it is essential that all training and employment support schemes be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that they remain effective and are targeted appropriately. A restructuring of the *Community Employment Scheme* (CES) was approved by Government in July 1999, in the context of falling unemployment levels, the need for places to be more focussed on older, long-term unemployed persons and the need to facilitate greater access for lone parents to training. This change in policy took place in tandem with provision in 1999 for 11,000 new places on active labour market initiatives. These initiatives cover a range of issues from specific skills training, through an enhanced Jobs Clubs provision, to an additional 800 flexible training places for lone parents. Under the restructuring, CES eligibility was also extended to additional categories of disadvantaged persons including qualified adults and widows and widowers who wish to return to paid work.
- 2.3.9 The Government, in July 1999, approved the introduction, on a phased basis, of a dedicated *Social Economy Programme*, together with the establishment of a National Monitoring Committee representative of the social partners, to oversee the development and implementation of the programme. A 'Framework Document' for the operation of the Programme has been agreed by the Monitoring Committee. It is intended that the Programme will have a strong emphasis on the economic and social development and regeneration of disadvantaged communities by supporting imaginative, locally based initiatives. The Programme will be run under the aegis of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, assisted by FÁS, who will manage the programme at national and local level.

- 2.3.10 The continued development of the 4 Irish *Territorial Employment Pacts* (TEPs), based in Dublin, Limerick, Dundalk/Drogheda and Co. Westmeath provides an opportunity to mobilise social partner support to help unemployed people to access existing local jobs or create new employment. Set up as part of a European Commission initiative and co-ordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, the TEPs can help enhance the employment potential in these areas by addressing gaps in service provision, supporting co-ordination of local activities and facilitating exchange of best practice. In September 1999, the Pacts hosted a two-day conference for their UK counterparts, which provided the opportunity to share the lessons and good practice emerging from policies and projects in both jurisdictions.
- 2.3.11 In 1999, funding of 2 million euro (£1.6 million approx.) was provided from Structural Funds and Exchequer co-financing for a number of projects ranging from the regeneration of the Krups plant in Limerick to Early School Leaving Programmes in Dublin and a social economy programme in Westmeath. It is estimated that the Pact projects have facilitated the creation of over 150 new jobs to date, in partnership with other organisations.
- 2.3.12 Taken together with continued implementation of the *FÁS Action Programme on Training for the Long-Term Unemployed*, it is expected that such policies will further reduce long-term unemployment. An additional £25 per week training bonus for long-term unemployed people was introduced in 1999 with the objective of increasing the incentives for long term unemployed people (LTU) to participate in training options available under the FÁS Action Plan. Significant progress has been made - the most recent information available shows that up to November 1999, the LTU represented over 22% of all new starters on mainline FÁS training programmes, thus exceeding the commitment for 1999 of 20%.
- 2.3.13 Further information on the nature and causes of unemployment is required in order to inform future labour market policy-making. To this end, the ESRI has been commissioned by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to conduct an *Employability Study*, a report on which is due later this year.

Equality Initiatives

- 2.3.14 The IDPC welcomes the introduction of the *Employment Equality Act*, which came into force on 18 October 1999. The introduction of the Act will help ensure that barriers which arise for certain groups in accessing employment are removed, in keeping with the aims of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The Act prohibits discrimination in relation to employment on nine grounds, namely; gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. The recent *Equal Status Act, 2000*, which gives protection against discrimination on non-workplace areas on the same nine grounds as the Employment Equality Act, will, in conjunction with the establishment of the *Equality Authority*, help to ensure that barriers of

discrimination will be lowered and the risk of social exclusion reduced for those groups which are particularly subject to discrimination.

Enhancing Women's Participation in the Labour Market

2.3.15 *FÁS's Action Programme for Women*, which promotes the participation of women in Specific Skills Training Programmes, aims to ensure that its services reach key groups of women such as the long term unemployed, women returnees, those with disabilities, Travellers and early school leavers. In 1999, women accounted for a total of 48% (50,278 persons) of all new starters on FÁS training and employment programmes and for 57% of all new starters on Community Employment. Furthermore, £2 million of the additional £23 million budget provision for new training initiatives targeted at younger unemployed people was specifically targeted to meet the needs of lone parents. In April 2000, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs launched the Report of the Working Group on Access by Women to Labour Market Opportunities. The report recommends that wider access routes be provided without delay for women to participate in education, training and employment programmes. The issue of most concern to the Working Group was the use of the Live Register as a gateway for access to education, training and employment programmes and the problems and anomalies which this had given rise to over the years. The Group concluded that the best approach lay in considering alternative routes by which women who were available for and genuinely seeking work could access employment, training and education programmes.

Improving Access for People with Disabilities

2.3.16 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is responsible for monitoring the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service⁵. A survey is currently underway to ascertain the number of people with disabilities employed in the Public Service as at December 1999⁶. In addition, a Monitoring Committee, chaired by that Department and consisting of representatives of the social partners and Government Departments, has been put in place and meets on a regular basis in order to monitor progress towards achievement of the target. This, together with the commitment demonstrated by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government in issuing to all local and regional authorities, in July 1999, a *Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Local Authority Service*, should ensure that the State is in a position to take a lead role in ensuring that the particular employment problems faced by the disabled are ameliorated.

⁵ Arising from a commitment in Partnership 2000 that the 3% target will be met in the broader Public Service during the period of the Partnership and re-iterated in the PPF in relation to agencies under the aegis of Government Departments

⁶ Latest figures available relate to end 1998

- 2.3.17 In 1999, some 3,000 people registered with the National Rehabilitation Board participated in Community Employment Schemes. Responsibility for delivering vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities will transfer from the National Rehabilitation Board to FÁS in 2000. In advance of the formal transfer of responsibility, FÁS ran a Horizon-funded pilot project, *Action for Disability*, in three of its regions in 1999, to provide training, placement, guidance and advice to people with disabilities seeking to enter the labour market. An evaluation of this pilot project showed that it was very successful, with over 500 people participating during the course of the project.
- 2.3.18 A new £4 million initiative was launched by Mary Harney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in July 2000 with the aim of improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The package of measures involves a national *Supported Employment Programme* for people with disabilities, Disability Awareness Training grants for companies and grants to companies to re-train workers who become disabled while in employment. The Supported Employment Programme will be administered by FÁS on behalf of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
- 2.3.19 It is clear that much progress has been made in achieving the unemployment targets and in reducing unemployment and long-term unemployment. It is recognised however, that there is a need to continue to focus on reducing long-term unemployment, which is a known cause of poverty. The nature of policies to address the unemployment problem may have to change in a low unemployment economy, with a focus on quality rather than quantity of job opportunities. These issues are dealt with further in chapter 5 of the Report.

Income Adequacy

NAPS Income Adequacy Targets

- 2.4.1 Overall Objective: *“Policies in relation to income support, whether these policies relate to employment, tax, social welfare, occupational pensions or otherwise should aim to provide sufficient income for all those concerned to move out of poverty and to live in a manner compatible with human dignity.”*

Overall Target (revised in June 1999): *“Policy actions in relation to income adequacy will be targeted at contributing to the overall reduction in the percentage of the population whom the ESRI have identified as being “consistently poor” from 9% to 15% to below 5% by 2004.*

All social welfare payments will be increased to the minimum of the lower range recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare, in line with the commitment set out in Partnership 2000.”

- 2.4.2 The ESRI report, *“Monitoring Poverty Trends: Results from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey - A Report for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy’s Interdepartmental Policy Committee”*, showed that by 1998, the numbers of ‘consistently poor’, defined by reference to 60% threshold of average household disposable income combined with the presence of basic deprivation, had shown a decrease to approximately 6% to 8% (down from 9-15% of sample households in 1994). These figures demonstrate that real progress is being made towards achieving the NAPS target of reducing consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004⁷.
- 2.4.3 However, it is worth noting that while consistent poverty has continued to decrease, the percentage of persons below the 50% relative income poverty line was generally higher than in 1997 with about one in five persons falling below the 50% poverty line. The numbers below the 40% line also rose, whereas at the 60% line, a decline was seen. The rate of income poverty remains a challenge and will be discussed further in chapter 5 of the report.

Recent Social Welfare and Taxation Changes

- 2.4.4 The **1999 Budget** (announced in December 1998) provided for social welfare rate increases of 4.3% for the majority of social welfare recipients, with increases for pensioners ranging between 7.2% and 8.3%. These increases were significant real increases in the context of an annual average inflation rate in 1999 of 1.6%. Personal taxation reforms introduced in April 1999 resulted in the first £100 per week for a single person being tax-free and approximately 80,000 people being removed from the tax net. The cost of all social welfare improvements in 1999

⁷ This study is available as an ESRI Working Paper, from which these results have been quoted by permission of the authors.

was £316 million. This investment, together with the introduction of reforms in personal taxation which focused on the lower paid, helped to ensure that there was a greater incentive for the unemployed to enter the labour market.

- 2.4.5 A specific target of both the NAPS and Partnership 2000 was that the minimum rates of payment recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare (CSW) would be achieved before the end of 1999. The increases announced in the 1999 Budget mean that this key target was met, with rates of payment ranging from 101% to 124% of the minimum rate recommended by the CSW.
- 2.4.6 The 1999 Budget provided for further increases for pensioners, which brought the Old Age Contributory Pension to £89 per week in 1999. The rates of payment of *child benefit* were also increased significantly, with the total spend on child benefit estimated to be almost £450 million in 1999.
- 2.4.7 The social welfare package contained in the *2000 Budget* (announced in December 1999) is by far the largest ever, involving a core budget package of £403 million, increased since Budget day to £428 million to include improvements aimed at pensioners, people with disabilities and the low paid. Social welfare increases announced in Budget 2000 took effect in the first week in May, four weeks earlier than usual, with a commitment to bring payments forward to early April in 2001 and to early January from 2002, to coincide with the start of the income tax year.
- 2.4.8 The *personal rates of social welfare payments* other than those for older people and Invalidity Pensioners were increased by £4 per week, representing an increase of about 5.5% for most payments – the same level as the wage increase agreed in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. Continuing the progress made in 1998 and 1999, the 2000 Budget provided for an increase for pensioners of £7 per week, bringing Old Age (Contributory) and Retirement Pensions to £96 per week and on target to reach the commitment, outlined in ‘An Action Programme for the Millennium’ to a rate of £100 per week for all social welfare old age pensioners by 2002. The rate of payment to Widow(er)’s (Contributory) pensioners for those aged 66 or over increased to £89.10 with the Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension increasing to £85.50. These figures represent real increases for pensioners well ahead of the expected rise in average earnings.
- 2.4.9 *Child Benefit* rates were increased by £8 per month in respect of the first 2 children and by £10 per month in respect of the third and subsequent children, bringing the payments up to £42.50 and £56 per month respectively from September 2000. This will result in a full year increase of £106 million in the cost of the scheme, bringing the total provision in 2000 to a record £504.6 million.
- 2.4.10 Increases of £13 in the weekly threshold for *Family Income Supplement*, along with improvements in the rate at which Qualified Adult Allowances are

withdrawn (from £60-£105 to £70-£135) will benefit, in particular, part-time workers. These measures are aimed at improving the incentive to work and alleviating certain unemployment traps.

- 2.4.11 Other innovations of note in the 2000 Budget included an increase in the Respite Care Grant, the introduction of a new social insurance Carer's Benefit Scheme and the extension of Free Electricity and TV Licence to people receiving Carer's Allowance or caring for people getting Constant Attendance or Prescribed Relative Allowance. In total, expenditure on Carers Allowance and Carer's Benefit will have more than doubled from £36.5 million in 1997 to £79.55 million in 2000.
- 2.4.12 The *Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance* was increased significantly in August 2000, in recognition of the additional pressures which parents have to face when their children return to school. The new rates (from 1 June, 2000) are £63 where the child is 2-11 years and £78 where the child is 12 years or older. The allowance is designed to help towards the cost of uniforms and footwear for children attending school. The scheme is administered by the Health Boards, in parallel with the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme.
- 2.4.13 *Personal taxation measures* announced in Budget 2000 will remove almost 70,000 from the tax net and mean that no single taxpayer earning under £110 per week will pay tax. They will also remove 125,000 taxpayers from the top rate of tax, with the result that all taxpayers at average industrial earnings and below will pay tax at the standard rate.

Introduction of the National Minimum Wage

- 2.4.14 The *National Minimum Wage* was introduced on 1 April 2000 at a rate of £4.40, in line with commitments in the PPF. The introduction of the minimum wage is expected to benefit an estimated 163,000 low paid people, mainly women and young people. It is anticipated that the introduction of this measure will increase the participation rate by women in the labour market by 3%.
- 2.4.15 These changes have ensured that there is a greater incentive for the unemployed to take up employment and should impact positively on further reducing unemployment and, consequently, poverty. In tandem with this, a more targeted focus on training and education for the long-term unemployed (see 2.3 above) and improvements in the *Back to Work Allowance* and *Family Income Supplement Schemes* should help to ensure continued reductions in the long-term unemployment rate.

Child Poverty

2.4.16 *Child Poverty in Ireland*⁸, researched by Brian Nolan of the ESRI was launched during the ‘Open your eyes to child poverty ‘ initiative, a three-week national and local radio advertising promotion supported by the Combat Poverty Agency, Barnardos, the Children’s Rights Alliance, Focus Ireland, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Pavee Point, People with Disabilities in Ireland and the St Vincent De Paul Society. Key findings of the study include the decrease in consistent child poverty in recent times (consistent child poverty has fallen from 25% in 1987 to 17% in 1997) and the decrease in poverty at the 50% and 60% relative income poverty lines, while the numbers at the 40% line have increased. The report also found that children are twice as likely as adults to experience consistent poverty. Children in out-of –work families were found to be at greatest risk of poverty, while those in very large families and lone parent families were also at risk of poverty. The report makes a number of recommendations to address child poverty, including the need to set child poverty targets, a reform of child income support measures and the setting up of a system to monitor child well-being. The findings of the report will be considered by the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit in their examination of child poverty and data issues and by the Working Group on benchmarking and indexation, which will be involved in developing a benchmark for the adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments.

One Parent Family Payment

2.4.17 In addition, a major *Review of the One-Parent Family Payment* was published in September. Some of the key findings of the review in relation to poverty are that 30% of lone parent families are living below the 50% relative income poverty line (1997 data) and that 47% of lone parents have no formal education or primary level only (1997 data). Some of the main conclusions and proposals arising from the report are:

- current One Parent Family Payment arrangements are justified,
- other responses (e.g. in the training and educational areas) would need to be tailored to meet the needs of lone parents with due regard being paid to the diverse nature of this group,
- the One Parent Family Payment should not facilitate or encourage long – term social welfare dependency for a group of people of working age and ability,
- a balance has to be struck in examining One Parent Family Payment arrangements between economic and social considerations and personal choice,
- the increasing cost of the scheme will place more focus on the arrangements for maintenance provisions. In this regard, proposals are made to improve the recipient’s incentive to seek maintenance,

⁸ Published by Oaktree Press for the Combat Poverty Agency

- on balance, making receipt of One Parent Family Payment conditional on seeking employment is not proposed at this stage. However, the review acknowledges that factors such as the increasing cost of the scheme, changing attitudes towards parents in the home and international experience in this area makes it almost inevitable that some conditionality on claiming may be introduced at some stage in the future,
- ‘solutions’ to the issues of cohabitation, custody of children and the formation of new relationships were not considered possible given the current contingency nature of the Scheme, which is a payment to support people parenting alone,
- overall a more pro-active approach to this group, especially in the information, training and employment, areas, needs to be taken.

A decision has also been made to bring the administration of the One Parent Family Payment Scheme to a local level in order to bring lone parents into closer contact with the various support services which exist in the local offices of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Proposals in this regard are being considered at present.

Review of Tax and Social Welfare Systems

- 2.4.18 *A Working Group to examine the Treatment of Married, Co-habiting and One-Parent Families under the Tax and Social Welfare Codes*, was established in May 1997. At that time, the Minister for Social Welfare stated that while *the ‘ad hoc development of the social welfare system over the past 50 years reflected a desire for flexibility and responsiveness to changing social needs, it has often resulted in new anomalies being created. The challenge for the Household Group is to remove such anomalies, while still preserving that flexibility and responsiveness’*. The final report of the group was published in August 1999. While the Group did not make recommendations on the direction future policy should take, it carried out research and examined a number of options and issues, including;
- increasing the Qualified Adult Allowance to 70% of the personal rate (the Government is now committed to implementing this recommendation over the next 3 years),
 - the tax treatment of cohabiting couples both in relation to income tax and capital taxes,
 - the disincentives in the system for lone parents to marry or form other long-term relationships, and
 - the restrictions in transferability of tax allowance and bands, using savings to **fund a general increase in Child Benefit.**
- 2.4.19 The Report is seen as a useful contribution to the debate in this whole area and builds on other work including the Expert Group on the Integration of the Tax and Social Welfare Systems (1996) and the Report of the Commission on the Family ‘Strengthening Families for Life’ (1998).

2.4.20 The question of *individualising social welfare payments* was also examined by this Group because it has the potential to diminish and eradicate differences in the treatment of different types of household. The Group considered that individualisation of the system could best be achieved through the expansion of social insurance to enable individuals to establish their own direct rights and social welfare entitlements. Much has already been achieved in this area over the last 12 years with coverage being extended to the self employed (1988), part-time workers (1991) and new civil and public servants (1995). The Group also proposed that the Qualified Adult Allowance (QAA) should be increased to 70% of the personal rate⁹. This will be achieved over a period of three budgets and the process was started in Budget 2000 with increases of 8% to 17% being provided.

2.4.21 The Working Group also considered administrative individualisation which, for example, would allow for the payment of the Qualified Adult Allowance directly to the person concerned. There was general agreement towards extending the administrative arrangements in the area of separate payments. The question of making such separate payments in all cases involves some complex social issues, which need to be considered carefully. One of the objectives of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness is to develop proposals to progress the individualisation of social welfare payments in the context of the continuation of joint assessment of means. In this regard, working groups will be established under the Programme to

- produce proposals to progress the implementation of administrative individualisation within the social welfare system, and
- produce proposals for the development of a fully inclusive social insurance model which would facilitate combining work and family responsibilities in the context of changing work and social patterns.

Pension Provision for the Future

2.4.22 Progress in advancing the main recommendations contained in the *Report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Policy Initiative, "Securing Retirement Income"*, continued in 1999, with for example, a Government commitment to link increases in social welfare pension rates with increases in average industrial earnings, over the lifetime of the Government and the allocation of specific funds to partially offset the prospective significant increase in pensions that is projected to occur in the early half of this century. Following an analysis of issues arising from the report, work commenced in late 1999 on the drafting of a Pensions Bill, which is due for publication later this year.

⁹ In principle the QAA rate is set at less than 100% of the personal rate on the basis that there are economies of scale where two people live together in the same household, and that account should be taken of these economies where the second person does not have a direct entitlement to the payment in his/her own right.

Educational Disadvantage

NAPS Education Targets

- 2.5.1 Overall Objective: *“To ensure that children, men and women living in poverty are able to gain access, participate in and benefit from education of sufficient quality to allow them to move out of poverty, and to prevent others from becoming poor.”*

Overall Target: *“To eliminate the problem of early school leaving before the Junior Certificate, and reduce early school leaving such that the percentage of those completing the senior cycle will increase to at least 90% by the year 2000 and 98% by the year 2007, and having regard to the assessment of their intrinsic abilities, there are no students with serious literacy or numeracy problems in early primary education within the next five years.”*

- 2.5.2 The latest figures available are taken from the 1998 Annual School Leavers' Survey, carried out by the ESRI on behalf of the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science, and relate to students who left second-level education in the year ending August 1997. The main findings of the survey indicate that a total of 81% of students left second-level school having completed the Leaving Certificate. This represents a significant increase over the 60% retention rate at this level in 1980 but is unchanged from the 1996 and 1997 surveys and represents a levelling out over the previous 3 to 4 years. A significant number of students, some 15.5% of students in 1997, left school having completed the Junior Certificate only, while 3.5% (2,500 students) left without acquiring formal qualifications.
- 2.5.3 In terms of trends over time, there has been a continued fall over recent years in the percentage of school leavers who are unemployed. The percentage unemployed dropped, for example, from 12.7% in 1996 to 11.5% in 1997, to 8% in 1998, reflecting the strong economic growth and significant job creation of recent years.
- 2.5.4 In relation to the link between educational qualifications and employment prospects, the ESRI survey shows that mean gross hourly earnings for all leavers in aggregate ranged from a low of £3.27 for those who left second level without formal qualifications, to over £5.00 for those who left having completed a Leaving Certificate with Vocational Preparation and Training. This demonstrates clearly the correlation between the level of education and the chances of securing employment as well as the wage level attained by the school leaver.
- 2.5.5 It is important to bear in mind however, that the NAPS education target is representative of school leavers to completion of senior cycle only and does not take account of those leavers who entered alternative education and training

programmes such as apprenticeships, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centre programmes or other further education opportunities on leaving the second level system. In order to reflect adequately the role and legitimacy of interventions outside the mainstream school setting, the Department of Education and Science is currently working on achieving a more complete picture in this area by enhancing data collection from programmes such as apprenticeships.

Legislative Changes

- 2.5.6 Educational attainment has long been recognised as the most important route into work and out of poverty and social exclusion. The Department of Education and Science recently initiated a number of legislative measures to address educational disadvantage. The *Education Act (1998)*, enacted in December 1998, among other things, makes provision for the establishment of an Educational Disadvantage Committee to advise the Minister on policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage.
- 2.5.7 The *Education (Welfare) Act*, enacted in July 2000, deals with issues of non-school attendance, issues relating to educational welfare of children experiencing difficulties in school attendance and early interventions to address the problem. This new legislation will
- raise the minimum school leaving age to 16 years or on completion of three years of the Junior Cycle, whichever is the later,
 - establish a comprehensive legislative and administrative system for dealing in a proactive and preventative manner with school attendance problems and issues relating to the educational welfare of children generally,
 - encourage and assist 16 and 17 year olds who have left school to continue availing of educational and training opportunities,
 - amend and update existing school legislation.
- 2.5.8 A new National Educational Welfare Board will be established under the legislation to assist schools, families and children by co-ordinating State services to children who have school attendance problems. A total of £4.25 million is being allocated over the next 3 years to facilitate the establishment of the Board and enactment of this legislation.

Early Education

- 2.5.9 The early years are crucial in helping children to acquire the learning skills which will allow them to develop to their full potential. Studies have consistently shown that educational disadvantage can already be entrenched by the time children go to school, if they have not been exposed to an environment which helps them to become ready to learn in a more structured fashion. It is vital therefore that action to improve educational attainment should start as early as possible. The *White Paper on Early Childhood Education* 'Ready to Learn' was published in December 1999 and provides a blueprint for developing and implementing early

education policy. Under the package of measures announced in December 1999, an additional £20 million has been provided over three years for investment in early education interventions. Funding was maintained during 1999 and 2000 for the provision of financial supports to certain pre-school services for children who are regarded as being at risk of disadvantage.

Tackling Educational Disadvantage

- 2.5.10 A number of initiatives are being progressed by the Department of Education and Science with a view to increasing retention rates in second-level education and improving educational attainment.
- 2.5.11 At primary level the new *package of measures* launched in December 1999 includes £25 million over the next three years for a new scheme to target the diverse range of educational disadvantage. A number of other programmes aimed at countering educational disadvantage will continue to operate, including *the Disadvantaged Area Scheme*, the *Home School Community Liaison Scheme*, *the Breaking the Cycle (Primary) Scheme* (covering 32 urban and 122 rural areas), *the National Educational Psychological Service* (expanded to all primary and post-primary schools from September 1999) and the network of *157 Youthreach* and *Senior Traveller Training Centres* offering almost 7,500 places and which, since 1998, have the benefit of both the new guidance, counselling psychological services measure and a childcare measure. Other initiatives include the provision in the 1999 Package of Measures of over £4 million to augment existing provision of Guidance at second level, £3 million to facilitate guidance for young people and adults availing of second chance education and a *National Reading Initiative*.
- 2.5.12 The first phase of the implementation under an *Early School Leavers Initiative* involving 17 projects in 14 areas began in September 1998. £2.3 million is available for this Initiative in 2000 and this will be increased to £6.5 million in 2001 and £7.1 million in 2002. The aim is to integrate strategic pilot projects in urban and rural disadvantaged areas to develop models of good practice, with a view to integration, for structured evaluation, into mainstream policy and practice. The initiative is being evaluated by the Education Research Centre, Drumcondra.
- 2.5.13 In June 1999, phase one of a £4.5 million Stay in School Initiative, aimed at keeping pupils in school up to Leaving Certificate level, was launched involving 57 schools. At the core of the initiative is a multi-annual retention agreement drawn up between the school and Department. This will provide for a range of targeted measures directed at the particular needs of the school, together with clear projected outcomes in terms of increased retention. This programme has been expanded to 116 schools from September 2000.
- 2.5.14 It is the policy of the Department of Education and Science to increase the number of Traveller children benefiting from education and to integrate Traveller

children into mainstream education to the maximum extent possible. This ties in with the NAPS objective for Traveller children of second-level school-going age of completion rates of 100% for Junior Cycle and 50% for Senior Cycle by 2007. In addition to pre-school, primary and Visiting Teacher Service provision already in place, a new capitation grant of £336 is paid to second-level schools for every enrolled Traveller pupil to help schools in the outreach necessary to help children and their families to participate successfully in the life of the school. This provision came into effect in January 1999. The primary Visiting Teacher Service was extended in September 1999 and is now available on a nation-wide basis. The network of **27 Senior Traveller Training Centres** continued to provide a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for some 697 Travellers annually in the 15+ age group, with 6 Junior Traveller Training Centres catering for 175 Traveller children.

2.5.15 With regard to initiatives focused on other groups with particular needs, under the **Women's Education Initiative**, funded by the Department of Education and Science and aided by the European Social Fund, a total of £0.6 million was provided in 1999 to support 13 projects to address gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women. In 2000, an Education Equality Initiative was launched to combat educational disadvantage among adults and promote equal opportunities within the education system. The Education Equality Initiative will build on the work of the Women's Education Initiative. A sum of £3.5 million will be available between 2000 and 2006 to support voluntary groups in this regard.

2.5.16 The Combat Poverty Agency's **Demonstration Programme to Tackle Educational Disadvantage** supported four local networks to develop an integrated, co-ordinated response to educational disadvantage in their areas and is currently being evaluated. Activities supported by the programme have included collaboration between those involved in the transition between primary and secondary school, joint approaches to develop and establish parents' roles and collaborative ways of organising the delivery of programmes.

Adult Education

2.5.17 One of the issues to emerge from the National Anti-Poverty Strategy is that many in our society are not only excluded in terms of distribution of wealth, but that they are also denied a voice in decision-making and are unable to participate fully in society. Adult education can play a transformational role for such groups, in giving them a voice and empowering them to use it. The publication, in August 2000 of the *White Paper on Adult Education 'Lifelong Learning'* highlights the commitment of Government to the promotion of lifelong learning. The principal proposals of the report include

- the implementation of a national adult literacy and numeracy programme.
- a major increase in investment to £73.6 million, to provide for an estimated 113,000 clients has been provided as part of the National Development Plan

2000-2006.

- investment of over £1 billion over the period 2000-2006 in a Back to Education Initiative aimed primarily at adults in the population who have not yet completed upper second level education, to be provided through the expansion of Youthreach, Traveller, Post-Leaving Certificate Courses and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme options on a part-time basis,
- proposed improvements in class size to a 10:1 ratio for all participants in the Back to Education Initiative with less than upper secondary education,
- abolition of fees for part-time third level students who are medical card holders or unemployed or means-tested welfare or Family Income Supplement recipients and their dependants,
- the establishment of a competitive targeted Higher Education Mature Student Fund as a means of supporting increased access of mature students to third level education
- the establishment of a National Adult Learning Council, the functions of which include developing policy, liaison with key interests and advising on quality standards and good practice,
- the establishment of Local Adult Education Boards representing key interests at local level, and
- proposals for 35 additional Adult Education Organisers to cater for the expansion in provision and to develop an increased role for the community/ comprehensive and secondary school sectors in adult learning provision.

2.5.18 The White Paper sets out a blueprint for the future development and expansion of adult education and for the establishment of national and local structures which will help provide a co-ordinated approach to the provision of adult education services.

North/ South Co-operation

2.5.19 The Good Friday Agreement established the North South Ministerial Council to bring together those with executive responsibilities, North and South, with the aim of developing consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland in relation to matters of mutual interest within the competence of both administrations.

2.5.20 The North/ South Ministerial Council held its first sectoral meeting on education in Dublin in February 2000 and subsequently met in County Down in July 2000. In its discussions, the Council has examined proposals on how best to take forward

matters for co-operation, having regard to common concerns and interests in both jurisdictions. In this regard, the Council has agreed the establishment of a number of Joint Working/ Co-ordination Groups, which are charged with delivering concrete proposals in each of the areas identified for co-operation. Joint Working/ Co-ordination Groups have been established for the following areas:

- *Special Education Needs Provision*
 - Special Education Co-ordination Group
- *Educational Underachievement*
 - Pupil Attendance/ Retention Joint Working Group
 - Literacy/ Numeracy Joint Working Group
 - Child Protection Joint Working Group
- *Teacher Qualifications*
 - Teachers Joint Working Group (including superannuation sub-group)
- *School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges*
 - Exchange Evaluation Project Steering Committee

2.5.21 It is envisaged that these groups will bring proposals to future meetings of the Council on the priorities they identify and the delivery measures they propose to put in place.

Urban Disadvantage

NAPS Objectives in relation to Urban Disadvantage

- 2.6.1 Overall Objective: *“The overall objective in relation to urban disadvantage is to bring about sustained social and economic development in disadvantaged areas in order to improve the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas, by empowering them to become effective citizens, improving the quality of their lives, helping them acquire the skills and education necessary to gain employment and providing them with employment opportunities.”*

Overall Target: *“To reduce the numbers of people suffering the greatest deprivation in disadvantaged urban areas by increasing their standard of living and providing opportunities for participation thus significantly reducing the measured indicators of disadvantage in the area, especially the rate of unemployment and particularly the rate of long term unemployment over the period 1997 - 2007.”*

Tackling Urban Disadvantage

- 2.6.2 The Area Based Partnership Companies and Community Groups, which are funded through the ***Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development*** (LURD) have demonstrated an ability to mobilise local effort, to target people who are socially excluded and to take innovative action in dealing with disadvantage. Their activities focus in particular on the long-term unemployed, lone parents, Travellers, people with disabilities and disadvantaged women. In 1999, over 10,000 people from disadvantaged communities obtained employment through the assistance of Partnership and Community Group services.
- 2.6.3 Some initiatives also had a focus on education. In 1999, just over 20,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds participated in Partnership and Community Group funded education projects aimed at reducing early school leaving. In addition, over 7,000 adults from disadvantaged communities participated in education or training actions aimed at helping them access employment opportunities. There are 20 Partnerships and 3 ADM Community Groups in Urban areas.
- 2.6.4 The ***URBAN*** initiative also supported a range of activities aimed at promoting social inclusion. These include the completion of the Enterprise Centre at Ballyvolane in Cork City, and funding for refurbishing an extended Community Centre in Farranree. Allied to the programme of capital projects, a whole range of actions are being implemented that have been designed to maximise local participation in the implementation of the plan, to address gaps in work-related and personal development skills and to meet the social needs of people requiring special support. The level and nature of any intervention varies in the light of

particular needs, from intensive support for a small group of young men who have few options available to them to after-school activities for the large numbers of young people who have poor parental support at home.

- 2.6.5 The ***Urban Renewal Scheme*** was launched in February 1999 and will operate until end 2002. A key feature of the latest scheme is a more planned approach under which Integrated Area Plans have been prepared for the areas most in need. This scheme now incorporates a social, as well as a physical dimension. Residential Incentives will apply to the designated areas from 1 March 1999 to end 2002. Approval for commercial and industrial incentives under the new scheme for the period 1 July 1999 to end 2002 has been given.
- 2.6.6 The ***Town Renewal Scheme***, which was launched in July 1999, aims to revitalise Ireland's smaller towns (population of between 500 and 6,000). Local Authorities have submitted Town Renewal Plans for the eligible towns to the Department of the Environment and Local Government. One hundred towns have been designated under the scheme.
- 2.6.7 The recommendations of the Inter-Departmental ***Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems***, provide an important means of promoting increased co-ordination and integration of development activities at local and community level with a more participatory role for all relevant stakeholders, particularly local communities.

Housing/Accommodation

- 2.6.8. Some 9,200 households on the ***Local Authority waiting lists*** were either allocated Local Authority/voluntary housing for rental or availed of a Local Authority social housing scheme (e.g. Shared Ownership) in 1999. Of these, about 3,700 were accommodated in houses new to the Local Authority stock.
- 2.6.9 The inclusion of housing in the National Development Plan reflects the priority that the Government has given to the housing issue. In the medium and long term, it is expected that the Government response to the ***Bacon Reports*** will provide an effective strategy for housing development. In the meantime, certain actions have been taken to try to alleviate the worst effects on low income groups, including the introduction of a Local Authority Affordable Housing Scheme in March 1999, improvements in the shared ownership scheme, increased funding for the voluntary housing sector, improvements in housing output, infrastructural housing related investment and other measures to expedite availability of land for housing and the provision of £6 billion for social and affordable housing in the NDP.
- 2.6.10 The ***Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act*** was enacted in July 1998. It imposes a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to prepare and adopt local Traveller Action programmes by 31 March 2000. The Department of the

Environment and Local Government made subventions amounting to £8.9 million in respect of the capital cost incurred by Local Authorities in meeting Traveller accommodation needs in 1999. The National Accommodation Consultative Committee has been established on a statutory basis to provide for consultation with Travellers on matters relating to Traveller accommodation.

- 2.6.11 In July 1999, the Government decided in principle to establish *a new Local Authority Rent Assistance Scheme* to replace, in the main, the current rent supplementation arrangements under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) system. This major development provides an opportunity to rationalise the administration of housing supports and to achieve greater effectiveness in meeting housing needs. A Planning Group was established to prepare a report by end 2000, which will enable Government to take definitive decisions on future rent assistance arrangements.
- 2.6.12 Over one-quarter of tenants in the private rented sector receive Supplementary Welfare Allowance rent Supplement and a significant proportion are on low incomes. The *Report of the Commission on the Private Rented Residential Sector*¹⁰, which was published in July 2000, will have a direct bearing on people on low incomes. The Commission, in their report, proposed a package of measures designed to put in place a new framework for the private rented sector. Mr. Robert Molloy, T.D., Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, welcomed the report and indicated that he will, in consultation with other relevant Government colleagues, study its findings and recommendations with a view to realising the vision for the private rented sector put forward by the Commission.

Homelessness

- 2.6.13 The Department of the Environment and Local Government also made subventions amounting to £22 million in 1999 to Local Authorities in respect of their expenditure on the provision of accommodation for *homeless people* and on emergency accommodation for asylum seekers (approximately £12 million). The results of the 1999 assessment of homeless persons showed that there were 5,234 homeless persons in the State compared with 2,501 in 1996 and 2,667 in 1993. The survey was undertaken in a revised format and using a broader definition of homeless persons, including those in hostels and Health Board Accommodation. In addition, the Eastern Health Board set up a multi-disciplinary team in 1999 to identify gaps in services and to draw up a detailed plan for the delivery of a co-ordinated service to the homeless. This Plan has been adopted by the Eastern Health Board and funding of £700,000 has been allocated by the Department of Health to the Board in 2000 to enable the plan to be implemented.

¹⁰ This Commission operates under the aegis of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Action against Drug Misuse

- 2.6.14 A review of the *National Drugs Strategy* has been initiated with a view to having a new drugs policy agreed and in place by the end of 2000. Local Drugs Task Forces continued to implement their action plans, with virtually all measures now in place. A review of the operation of the Local Drugs Task Forces has been completed and recommendations on their operation over the next two years have been agreed by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. £15 million has been allocated over 2 years for this purpose.
- 2.6.15 Over 300 projects and initiatives have been approved funding of almost £27 million under the *Young People's Facilities and Services Fund* (YPFSF) over the period 1998 – 2000. Of this amount, £25 million will be targeted at the 14 Local Drugs Task Force areas. The YPFSF aims to develop youth facilities, including sport and recreation facilities, to attract young people at risk of becoming involved with drugs into more healthy and productive pursuits.
- 2.6.16 The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science are running several *education and prevention programmes aimed at young people at risk of drug misuse*. “Walk Tall”, a substance misuse prevention programme for primary schools, was piloted in selected primary schools in the Drug Task Force areas in 1998. Following positive evaluation, £1 million was provided in the 1999 budget for the phased implementation of this programme to all primary schools by the end of year 2000. At post-primary level, the “On My Own Two Feet” drug misuse prevention programme has been distributed (is available) to all schools and is also being used in Youthreach centres. This programme was piloted and positively evaluated in some Task Force primary schools in 1998.

Initiatives to reduce Crime Levels

- 2.6.17 Crime is a particular issue of concern to urban dwellers. The *Probation and Welfare Service* of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, many of whose clients are from disadvantaged urban backgrounds, seeks to respond to the needs of offenders by providing a number of facilities for ex-offenders and people at risk of offending. The Department funds various workshops and training projects in many areas which aim to reduce recidivism through skills development, training in numeracy, literacy and life skills as well as counselling. Intensive Probation Supervision is provided through a number of projects, which divert serious offenders from prison at the court stage and place them in a demanding community-based programme with the ultimate aim of reintegrating participants into gainful employment. The financial allocation for 1999 included provision of £5.6 million for projects which promote social inclusion in areas of disadvantage. The service received an allocation of £24 million under the National Development Plan, covering the period 2000-2006 for a range of initiatives aimed at combating social exclusion. In addition, seven *Employment and Training Support Workers* were appointed by the Probation and Welfare

Service in late 1999, with the aim of identifying and working with individuals who are disadvantaged by way of educational and training deficits, as well as with potential employers, in order to maximise the employability of those involved.

- 2.6.18 Funding was provided in 1999 for 29 *Juvenile Diversion Projects* for young people involved, or at risk of getting involved, in crime - 14 in Dublin, 3 in Cork, 2 each in Limerick, Galway and Waterford and 1 each in Dundalk, Tralee, Sligo, Bray, Navan and Tullamore. These projects focus on juveniles who are already involved in crime or who are likely to drop out of the education system prematurely, together with those in need of developmental support due to family circumstances. Government approval has been obtained for the expenditure of £16 million under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 for the expansion of the scheme.

Integrated Services Process

- 2.6.19 The *Integrated Services Process* (ISP) proceeded to the implementation stage with the ultimate aim of developing new procedures to ensure a more focused and better co-ordinated response by statutory authorities to the needs of communities with the greatest level of disadvantage, as a basis for a model of best practice. The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion fully endorsed the First Progress Report in July 1999 and the Second Progress Report in May 2000 submitted by the ISP National Steering Committee. A Final Report on the pilot phase will go before the Cabinet Committee at the end of 2000. The project is initially focused on 4 target areas, 3 in Dublin and 1 in Cork, with the intention being that a successful model, evolved during the pilot stage, can be extended to other areas of urban disadvantage as a model of best practice.

Improving Access to Information for Families

- 2.6.20 The development of the Integrated Services Process is complemented by a *Family Services Pilot Project* being developed by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, as both focus on the more integrated delivery of public services in conjunction with the local communities. The project, which is being piloted in Cork, Waterford and Finglas, Dublin, will build on the one-stop shop concept with the aim of providing improved access to information for families locally through the Social Welfare Local Offices. Basic information on income support, family supports, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and access to education and training is provided. The project's focus is on the most vulnerable families, for example, lone parents, carers and families of the unemployed. The project is subject to an ongoing evaluation for the pilot phase. The funding allocation for this project in 1999 was £200,000. A further £12 million has been allocated in the NDP for the development of the project in the coming years.

Community Development/ Community Services

2.6.21 The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' schemes and programmes of support for community development focus on investment in capacity so that socially excluded groups and local communities can be active participants in identifying and meeting their own development needs, working alongside the other social partners. The support provided ranges from small, once-off grants to three-year renewable funding commitments under three main Community Development Support Programmes as follows;

- ***Community Development Support Programme*** (CDSPP), which aims particularly at mobilising the capacity of disadvantaged communities to participate in mainstream local development, training and education, enterprise and employment opportunities, as well as having a strong focus on influencing policy and working for change at regional and national level. There are currently 90 projects in receipt of funding, with an additional 40 projects coming on stream over the next 18 months.
- ***Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme***, which focuses particularly on combating disadvantage by improving the functioning of the family unit. The Commission on the Family recommended that a network of 100 Family and Community Services Resource Centres be established over a four to five year period. Centres can provide special services for lone parent families, young mothers and others considered in need of extra support and can act as a first step to community participation and social inclusion for the most vulnerable and marginalised families. These centres are also concerned with initiatives to enhance the role of young fathers in the lives of their children, to enhance their parenting skills and to promote the greater involvement of young men in the life of the community. There are currently 62 projects either in progress or in the process of being set up.
- ***Core funded Community and Family Support Groups Programme***, which provides support for smaller scale self-help work in specific target groups that experience disadvantage – disadvantaged women and men, lone parents, Travellers etc. – to articulate their point of view and participate in a process of personal and community development. Some 36 groups and networks are being funded at present.

These three programmes are included under the National Development Plan.

2.6.22 The needs of families within communities have also been given some attention. The Commission on the Family recommended that a network of 100 ***Family and Community Services Resource Centres*** be established over a four to five year period. The centres focus particularly on combating disadvantage by improving the functioning of the family unit and can act as a first step to community participation and social inclusion for the most vulnerable and marginalised families. By end December 1999, 62 centres were being funded or had been approved for funding and £1.2 million had been made available to fund the centres.

Rural Poverty

NAPS Objectives in relation to Rural Poverty

- 2.7.1 Overall Objective: *“The problems of poverty and social exclusion have a distinct impact in a rural context as they are compounded by aspects of physical isolation and demographic dependence. The overall objective is to tackle poverty and social exclusion in rural areas in a comprehensive and sustained manner by ensuring the provision of an adequate income, through employment and/or income support, and access to adequate services and infrastructure, co-ordination of responses and empowerment of local people and communities.”*

Overall Target: *“The overall target is to ensure that strategies are developed with regard to provision of services in rural areas, especially those concerned with educational disadvantage, unemployment and income adequacy, so that the overall targets of the NAPS as already stated are achieved in rural areas.”*

- 2.7.2 Given the spatially pervasive nature of poverty, many of the developments in combating rural poverty are similar in many respects to those identified in the previous section regarding urban disadvantage in so far as policies seek to tackle social exclusion nationally while taking into consideration the particular characteristics of different areas. In this regard, future developments in the ***Integration of Local Government and Local Development*** and the expansion of the Community Development Support Programme are equally important for rural and urban areas. In order to achieve greater co-ordination in the delivery of social inclusion measures provided for in the National Development Plan, it is envisaged that all local agencies, including areas based Partnerships, ADM, Community Groups, LEADER Groups and County Enterprise Boards will work with the relevant Director of Community and Enterprise and the City/ County Development Boards.

White Paper on Rural Development

- 2.7.3 A ***White Paper on Rural Development*** was launched in August 1999 and focused on social, cultural and environmental aspects of rural development, as well as the economic conditions in rural communities. It seeks to facilitate the capacity of rural communities to participate in, and contribute to, their own development and to address the issues of rural poverty and social exclusion. The strategy set out in the White Paper endorses and supports the objectives contained in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and will ensure that the overall strategy for rural development is underpinned by a socially inclusive dimension. Some of the commitments in the White Paper have already been implemented, including the establishment of a Cabinet Sub-Committee and an Inter-Departmental Policy Committee on Rural Development. Procedures are also being put in place for the ‘rural proofing’ of new policy proposals. The ***Agrifood 2010 Committee Report***, published in March 2000 also deals with a range of issues relating to rural

development, including the direction of future farm policy and targeted income support for poorest farm families. The report notes that the reduction of rural poverty should continue to be a key objective of the NAPS. A Plan of Action for Agriculture and Rural Development, in response to the Report, was published in August 2000. It recognises that rural development forms an increasingly important focus of Government policy and addresses a number of themes in common with the White Paper, including rural infrastructure, access to services, employment opportunities and rural poverty.

Tackling Rural Poverty

- 2.7.4 The traditional role of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has been centred on agricultural production and, until recent years, the contribution to social inclusion has largely been in terms of support for the agricultural and food sector. The situation has been changing over the past few years and the Department's rural development responsibility has expanded to include supporting rural communities in their efforts to improve their economy and social well-being. The Department's functions now encompass a number of policy areas and programmes which help to address social exclusion and so contribute to the NAPS. These include programmes for direct payments of income supports, encouraging and assisting enterprise and the empowerment of communities in rural areas. Two of the more significant programmes run by the Department are the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the LEADER programme.
- 2.7.5 The main objective of the *Disadvantaged Areas Scheme* is "to ensure the continuation of farming thereby maintaining a minimum population level". The scheme applies to 75% of the country and payments totalling £123 million were made to around 97,000 farmers in 1999. Because this scheme is confined to disadvantaged areas and has relatively low limits on the number of qualifying livestock, it is an important income source for low income farm families who derive a greater share of farm income from headage than is the case for better off farmers. Total direct payments (including headage and premia and other non-capital payments made directly to farmers) accounted for 48% of average family farm income in 1999 and over 50% on farms under 10 hectares, rising dramatically for hill farmers and small and medium sized cattle enterprises. In addition, the *Farm Assist Scheme*, introduced in the 1999 Budget to replace the previous Smallholders Unemployment Assistance scheme, makes a valuable contribution in supporting farmers on low incomes.
- 2.7.6 The Combat Poverty Agency has undertaken a study on the incidence and characteristics of low income farm households in Ireland. The report, due to be launched in September, proposes a number of areas where policy supports could be enhanced for low income farm households.

Community Development Initiatives in Rural Areas

- 2.7.7 **LEADER** is the EU Initiative for Rural Development, which provides a role for rural communities to involve themselves directly in the local development process. All rural areas are covered by the 37 groups approved under LEADER II (34 local action groups and 3 sectoral groups). The programme is designed to complement other measures under the Community Support Framework (CSF) and, in particular, to support “bottom-up” development. Each group must devote resources to support and facilitate community development both in the general sense of improving the community’s capacity to identify its own potential, set its own priorities and pursue its own goals as well as assisting individuals and entrepreneurial groups with project ideas through financial aid and other support. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to provide training in community development, as a complement to other activity. LEADER can make a significant contribution to promoting social inclusion by contributing to the general economic and social development of rural areas. £29 million was advanced to LEADER groups in 1999. Considerable investment has been directed towards the community and voluntary sector and small enterprises.
- 2.7.8 The Area Based Partnership Companies and Community Groups, which are funded through the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (LURD) have demonstrated an ability to mobilise local effort, to target people who are socially excluded and to take innovative action in dealing with disadvantage. Their activities focus in particular on the long-term unemployed, lone parents, Travellers, people with disabilities and disadvantaged women. There are 18 Partnerships and 30 ADM Community Groups in rural areas.

Cross-Border Initiatives

- 2.7.9 **INTERREG**, a cross-border EU initiative aims to address the specific problems encountered by border regions and operates a number of measures specifically aimed at economic regeneration, tourism and general improvements in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The programme covers all the border counties (including Sligo) and all of Northern Ireland excluding Belfast and is designed to address the peripherality of these areas and to encourage cross-border co-operation. To the end of 1999, some 32 projects had been approved under the Agriculture measure at a total cost of £8 million. A total of 90 full-time equivalent jobs are expected to be created as a result of this initiative.
- 2.7.10 The EU Special Support **Programme for Peace and Reconciliation** in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo), is unique in its implementation, as it is being delivered through Intermediary Funding Bodies as well as Government Departments, District Partnerships (Northern Ireland) and County Council led task forces (Republic of Ireland). Five themes have been identified to help further embed peace and promote reconciliation through this programme in relation to employment, urban

and rural regeneration, cross-border development, social inclusion and productive investment and industrial development. As well as promoting reconciliation, the theme of social inclusion, including targeting disadvantage and combating poverty, has been central in the activities of the intermediary bodies operating in the Border Counties, namely Area Development Management Ltd. and the Combat Poverty Agency. At the end of 1999, these bodies have jointly funded 1,500 projects across the border counties and on a cross-border basis. The majority of these projects involved the community and voluntary sectors, often working jointly or co-operatively with local agencies, Government Departments and statutory bodies.

Promoting Rural Development in Isolated Rural Areas

- 2.7.11 While the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has the main role in terms of promoting rural development, the Departments of the *Marine and Natural Resources* and *Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands* are also pursuing a number of measures supportive of social inclusion in rural areas. The Department of the Marine and Natural Resources conducts a range of schemes designed to maintain and improve employment and income generation in isolated rural communities in the areas of forestry, maritime transport, sea fisheries and processing, aquaculture, angling and mineral exploration and development. In addition, the Department also provides direct income support through schemes such as the Fish Assist scheme, which provides income support for fishermen. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands supports many projects such as waterways restoration, improvement works on Historic Properties and National Monuments, etc., as well as improvements in the Gaeltacht areas and off-shore islands. These projects are supportive of social inclusion, both directly through employment generated by projects themselves and future tourism potential, as well as the potential they contain for improving the rural environment and quality of life in rural areas. In 1999, over £5.8 million was spent on projects aimed at improving the economic, social, physical and cultural infrastructure of the Gaeltacht areas, while just over £3.4 million was spent on improving access to and the infrastructure of populated offshore islands.

Access to Services in Rural Areas

- 2.7.12 Access to adequate public services was one issue highlighted in the NAPS as being of particular importance to rural dwellers. The *Pilot Programme for the Provision of Integrated Public Services in Rural Areas* was completed at the end of 1998 and an evaluation report is currently being finalised. Under the programme, a number of pilot projects were operated by local project committees, in partnership with State agencies and local development and community organisations, to test community-based models for the delivery of essential public services in rural areas of low and dispersed populations.

2.7.13 A ***Working Group on Social Inclusion in Rural Areas*** was established recently by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in accordance with a decision by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. The Group held its first meeting in July 2000 and is in the process of preparing an action plan for delivery of services in rural areas for the Cabinet Committee by the end of September 2000.

Other Developments

There are several other areas of relevance to the fight against social exclusion where developments can be reported.

Childcare

- 2.8.1 With regard *to childcare provision*, the Report of the Expert Working Group on Childcare set up under P2000 was published in February 1999 and has been noted by the Government.
- 2.8.2 The *Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme*, which was developed in 1998, operated with a budget of over £6 million for 1998/99 to provide capital and staffing grants to community based childcare services and support to encourage employers to develop childcare services for their employees. A further £5 million was secured in June 1999 to invest in a range of training and development initiatives and to support the development of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations.

Supports for Families

- 2.8.3 In line with the Government's 'families first' policy, a *Families Research Programme* was established in 1999 to support innovative, original research in the field of family policy and family services and in areas highlighted by the Commission on the Family in their report 'Strengthening Families for Life' as being in need of further evaluation. Thirteen research programmes, 12 of which started in 1999, are being funded under the Programme. These projects are due to be completed over the period 2000/2001. The projects were selected on the basis of their potential to inform the future development of aspects of policies relating to families and family services. In relation to children, the Health Research Board has been invited to commission a design brief for a feasibility study into *a National Longitudinal Study of Children*¹¹ in Ireland which is being jointly funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Health and Children. Cabinet approval for this proposal has been granted and the potential for co-operation in relation to similar projects underway on the UK is currently being explored.
- 2.8.4 The *Family Affairs Unit* in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has been involved in a number of other developments in the family affairs area, including a Pilot Family Services Project, referred to in paragraph 2.6.20. A number of officers involved in the pilot projects are currently participating in an

¹¹ A Longitudinal Study is a comprehensive study, focusing on a significant number of children, which examines their progress and well-being at critical periods from birth to adulthood. Such a study would identify the persistent adverse effects which lead to social disadvantage and exclusion, educational difficulties, ill health and deprivation. By studying a representative sample of children over a period of time it is possible to identify the key factors which, independent of other influences, most help or hinder children's development.

International Initiative to develop and exchange experiences on models of working with communities to better support families and with a focus on specific outcomes. The Unit has also undertaken a series of Family Services Information Fora for voluntary and community groups to

- promote awareness about the State funded Family Mediation Service,
- provide information about new services for families provided by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, and
- provide groups with an opportunity to discuss the issues they encounter in the course of their work with families.

The Unit is also responsible for grant-aiding marriage, child and bereavement counselling services. For the year 2000, grants totalling £3.7 million have been allocated to almost 400 voluntary organisations providing counselling.

- 2.8.5 By the end of 1999, £3.1m was allocated to the Health Boards *SpringBoard Initiatives – Family Support Projects for Children at Risk*, operated by the Department of Health and Children. The objective of the SpringBoard projects is to establish a pilot Family Support Project in a number of identified communities throughout the country. These projects work intensively with children, mainly in the 7-12 year age group who are at risk of going into care, or getting into trouble, and their families. The main priorities in 1999 were the development of the national project evaluation and training strands, and ensuring an overall national focus on the pilot Family Support Projects. An Evaluator was appointed to advise and assist the individual initiatives with their self-evaluation.

Equality Initiatives

- 2.8.6 The ongoing development of the *equality agenda* is also complementary to the NAPS. The Employment Equality Act came into force in October 1999 and the Equal Status Act was signed into law in April 2000. The establishment of a new Equality Authority will support the implementation of the new legal provisions, while the proposed Human Rights Commission will provide a further safeguard against discrimination affecting some of the most vulnerable groups in society.
- 2.8.7 A total of £23.2 million was provided by the National Development Plan to promote equality, including retraining and upskilling of women employees and support for career development and entrepreneurship among women. The aim of this funding is to support positive actions targeted at women as part of an overall strategy of *gender mainstreaming* which is set out in the NDP.
- 2.8.8 A Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS) entitled ‘Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century’, known as *Beijing +5*, took place in June 2000 to review the progress made in the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and to discuss further action and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to implementation of the Platform. The Special Session adopted a political

declaration and outcome document. It is hoped that the outcome document will give a new impetus to accelerate implementation of the goals and objectives established in 1995.

Services for Asylum Seekers

- 2.8.9 In order to help address the needs of a vulnerable group emerging with particular needs, agreement was reached with the Legal Aid Board to provide a comprehensive legal aid service for asylum seekers, to include legal advice and legal aid for all asylum seekers at all stages of the asylum process. *The Refugee Legal Service*, which commenced operating in February 1999, is an independent, comprehensive legal service to assist asylum seekers in exercising their rights in all aspects of the Irish asylum procedure. In tandem with the establishment of this service, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform also established an independent monitoring committee for the new service, which will investigate complaints from customers of the service. In addition, an *Inter-Departmental Working Group* has been established on the integration of persons granted refugee status. The Working Group, which is expected to produce recommendations shortly, will review the arrangements for integrating persons granted refugee status or permission to remain in Ireland, including the appropriate institutional structures for the delivery of these important services.

Legal Services for People on Low Incomes

- 2.8.10 The *Legal Aid Board* has a vital role to play in providing access to justice in civil matters for people on low income. In 1999, the grant-in-aid to the Board was increased to almost £12 million: an increase of 24% on 1998 funding levels.

Services for Travellers

- 2.8.11 With regard to the *Travelling Community*, the First Progress Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community will be submitted to Government in 2000. Funding of £900,000 was allocated by Government to fund a Traveller Communications Programme operating from 1999-2001. The objective of the programme, which is being managed by the Traveller Communications Committee, is the promotion of greater understanding between Travellers and the settled community.

Services for People with Disabilities

- 2.8.12 There has also been considerable progress in combating the barriers faced by *people with disabilities*. The National Disability Authority Act was signed into law in June 1999 and will provide the legislative basis for the establishment of the National Disability Authority, as recommended by the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. The establishment of the Authority is expected to contribute significantly to the quality of service delivery to people with disabilities. A Progress Report on the implementation of the

recommendations of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, '*Towards Equal Citizenship*', was published in December 1999. The Report highlights the Commission's recommendations and the responses made to date in implementing them and also charts the way forward in improving the position of people with disabilities. Access to transport is a key concern for this group. By end 1999, a total of 800 wheelchair accessible taxi licences were approved by Dublin Corporation.

- 2.8.13 The new information agency *Comhairle*, established under the aegis of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, was launched in June 2000 with the aim of mainstreaming services available to people with disabilities. *Comhairle* combines the functions of the National Social Service Board with relevant functions of the now dissolved National Rehabilitation Board so as to form a new organisation providing mainstream information, advice and advocacy services for all.

Improving Service Delivery in the Public Service

- 2.8.14 In July 1999, in line with the Government's commitment to provide Government services electronically, the Government approved a proposal for an initiative to integrate public services. This initiative – known as *REACH* – will use the Personal Public Services Number and an associated Public Services card to integrate services to citizens across the whole public service. *REACH* is intended to help citizens access the full range of public services in a secure, convenient manner and improve administrative efficiency in the delivery of public services. A Director was appointed in May 2000 to the *REACH* initiative and the initiative will be progressed by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.
- 2.8.15 In July 2000, Government approval was secured for the initiation of a major *service delivery modernisation programme*. The purpose of the programme is to allow the Department to begin to deliver on its commitments under the Government's action plan for the information society. This radical transformation will take place over a number of years and will involve process and cultural changes as well as new IT infrastructure. This will help ensure that customer service delivery in this area will be more pro-active and more integrated in the future.

Foundation for Investing in Communities

- 2.8.16 The *Foundation for Investing in Communities*, launched in 1998, aims to establish a permanent structure to support community and voluntary activity through financial and volunteering support from the corporate sector. Over £1 million pounds has been invested in this initiative by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, £300,000 of which was paid in 1999. A Chief Executive Officer was appointed in 1999 and an ambitious programme of activity

is underway. The Foundation will focus on support for community and voluntary based projects on the basis of additionality, rather than duplication or replacement of existing State funding, continued development of the Local Enterprise Networks, and seeking new ways of addressing the needs of disadvantaged children. One of the functions of the Foundation is to build up an endowment fund, through corporate and private donations, which will provide a permanent funding source for community and voluntary activity.

CHAPTER 3: GOING FORWARD

New Directions

- 3.1.1 The recently ratified Programme for Prosperity and Fairness shows the priority given by all parties to social inclusion. In relation to NAPS, a *review* will be undertaken over the next 18 months, existing targets and the underlying methodology will be reviewed and revised where appropriate and *possible new targets considered* in consultation with the social partners under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing/accommodation. The NAPS analysis will be expanded to include emerging causes of poverty such as racism and attention will also be given to data collection systems for the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, including systems of measuring poverty among groups not currently included (e.g. Travellers, homeless people).
- 3.1.2 A key element of any social inclusion policy should be ensuring the participation of civil society and those representing the excluded community in advancing our social objectives. In keeping with this objective, mechanisms to strengthen the involvement of the social partners will also be considered in light of the PPF. The *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*, published recently, will be a useful addition to this process, recognising the participation of these sectors in decision-making and providing a framework for a more cohesive support by the State for the community and voluntary sector. This will help to inform the future development of the NAPS and partnership with the community and voluntary sector. The guidelines on involvement of excluded people and the organisations that represent them in the design, implementation and evaluation of anti-poverty policies, developed as part of the EU funded project led by the Combat Poverty Agency, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the National Anti-Poverty Networks will also be important in this regard.
- 3.1.3 The Programme also provides for the *extension of the NAPS to local level*. It envisages an expanded role for Local Authorities in promoting social inclusion. A key objective of the Programme is to *embed the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in Local Authority actions, policies and initiatives*. One of the provisions of the Programme includes the establishment of five pilot social inclusion units to be set up at local level. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Combat Poverty Agency worked with the Regional Authorities to organise four regional seminars as a first step in this extension of the NAPS to local level. The Combat Poverty Agency is working to develop a model of local government poverty profiling on a pilot basis and is currently establishing a local

government anti-poverty learning network in collaboration with the NAPS Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. It is anticipated that the network will provide a forum for innovation and exchange of good practice in relation to local anti-poverty strategies. The network will also provide members with opportunities for training and mutual support. Further activity and training will be undertaken by the Departments and the Combat Poverty Agency to further this process.

- 3.1.4 Other aspects of the Programme worth noting in the context of the NAPS include the establishment a Working Group in relation to benchmarking and indexation, the review of funding for the National Anti-Poverty Networks, the review by NESC of the tax and social welfare system in the medium term, the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee to examine the feasibility of introducing a Cost of Disability Payment, the establishment of a National Committee on Volunteering and the expansion of the number of Community Development Programme Projects.
- 3.1.5 As mentioned in the previous chapter, the independent review of the *poverty proofing* process has commenced and will take account of officials' experience of implementing the process and its effectiveness in its first year of operation. The review will look at the experience of the process to date, difficulties arising from the implementation of the process and the training needs of staff in this regard. The PPF envisages the extension of poverty proofing on a phased basis to a local level through the Local Authorities and Health Boards. A piloting of social inclusion units will be undertaken by 5 Local Authorities during the lifetime of the Programme. Following the review, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will be pursuing the possibilities for incorporating appropriate *training modules* on NAPS and poverty proofing into general service training courses. A research project which has been commissioned by the Equality Authority and the Combat Poverty Agency to assess, develop and support the application of the question in the poverty proofing guidelines to inequalities likely to lead to poverty, will also assist in this regard. The PPF also contains a commitment to poverty proof budget tax packages.
- 3.1.6 Additional research into poverty trends will be carried out by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, in conjunction with the ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency, during 2000. The most recent data in relation to poverty trends is taken from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey. The ESRI is also undertaking a cross-sectional and dynamic analysis of the evolution of poverty among the Living in Ireland sample from 1994 to 1998. The study will examine movements in and out of poverty and how these might be affected by various socio-economic influences and policy measures and whether they impact differently on sub-groups of the population. The results of this study, which are expected to be available by the end of 2000, will provide a valuable tool in designing anti-poverty policy and monitoring poverty trends in the years ahead.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the NAPS

- 3.2.1 Internationally and nationally, there is increased recognition of the need to continually re-evaluate policies to ensure their confirmed relevance. The recently published assessments of the NAPS by the Combat Poverty Agency and the National Economic and Social Forum provide a review of progress to date and highlight key issues for consideration in the further implementation of the NAPS. These publications are described in further detail in chapter 1 of the report.

Social Inclusion Programme

- 3.3.1 Some of the main items which will be emerging over the rest of the year in promoting the social inclusion agenda are listed below. This is by no means an exhaustive list and more detail can be found in Departments' 2000 workplans, copies of which are available from the NAPS Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs on request. Many of the measures referred to are ongoing and, as such, some of them will already have been referred to in chapter 2. Nonetheless, the following provides a flavour of the actions on social inclusion which are being pursued.

Unemployment

- 3.4.1 Securing employment has long been recognised as the most effective route out of poverty and social exclusion. Despite the recent progress in this area, there is still a need to focus on measures to increase labour market participation and, in particular, to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue to review, on an on-going basis, the effectiveness of its active ***labour market programmes*** in light of current labour market circumstances to ensure their effectiveness in enhancing the employability of long-term unemployed and socially excluded persons. In particular, that Department will continue to contribute at EU level to the development of an ***EU Employment Strategy*** and drive implementation of EU Guidelines nationally. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will also introduce and oversee the new ***Social Economy Programme***, due to be launched by the Tánaiste on 18th September, 2000. They will also continue to pursue, in conjunction with other Government Departments, the elimination of barriers which hinder the movement of unemployed persons into jobs.
- 3.4.2 Further measures include the systematic activation strategy of ***the Employment Action Plan*** to the remaining cohorts of adult unemployed, in the age groups 35-44 and 45-54, as they reach 12 months of unemployment. In addition, from Autumn 2000, unemployed adults will be referred for supports as they reach 9 months of unemployment on the Live Register. The restructuring of the Community Employment Scheme will also be continued as part of a strategic shift in policy towards greater investment in training places for the long-term unemployed, particularly for persons 25 years and over and lone parents. In

relation to participation by women, the *Report of the Working Group on Access by Women to Labour Market Opportunities*, will help inform future policy in relation to women's participation in education, training and employment programmes.

- 3.4.3 Another significant development is the commitment by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in the context of adaptation to continuing labour market change, to establish *a Task Force on Lifelong Learning*, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science.
- 3.4.4 The Task Force was established in February 2000 and has met on a number of occasions since. Its work is being expedited through two sub-groups, which are, respectively, examining access and barriers to training provision and workplace learning. These groups are expected to report to the Task Force in November 2000. The Task Force would hope to be in a position to have concluded its work by the end of 2000 and to report to Government in early 2001.
- 3.4.5 Other *initiatives of note in the PPF* relating to employment issues include;
- the establishment of a specific Working Group, comprising the social partners and representatives of Government Departments to
 - identify the key essential services currently being provided through the Community Employment (CE) Scheme,
 - assess the implication of those services for CE, in terms of budget, number of places and the objectives of CE,
 - the progression of the recommendations, in relation to economic activity, of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, in consultation with representatives of the social partners, inclusive of the national Traveller's organisations,
 - an overall appraisal of Active Labour Market Programmes will be undertaken, in participation with the social partners, which will aim, among other things, to re-orient these Labour Market Programmes so that the collective focus will be on the needs of disadvantaged groups (the long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers who have the right to work, women, dependent spouses and young people who are disadvantaged), with the objective of progression onto the open labour market, and
 - a range of measures will also be undertaken to improve integrated labour market opportunities for people with disabilities. Disincentives to people with disabilities entering the labour market will be examined and addressed as part of this process.

Income Adequacy

- 3.5.1 One of the objectives of the PPF in relation to income adequacy is to 'ensure that the real value of social welfare payments is maintained and where possible, enhanced, to ensure that all society share in the fruits of economic growth'. As a result of recent increases in social welfare rates, the minimum rates of payment recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare were achieved in 1999 for

all social welfare recipients. Further progress in this area is envisaged in the future. The PPF contains a commitment to make substantial progress over the period of the Programme towards a target of £100 per week for the lowest rates of social welfare, in the context of the increased living standards provided for in the Programme – with the rate of increase reflecting the availability of resources.

- 3.5.2 Recognising the complex issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments, including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments, a ***Working Group on Benchmarking and Indexation*** will be established with an independent Chairperson to examine these issues, including their long-term economic, budgetary, PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications, in light of trends in economic, demographic and labour market patterns. The Group will report by April 2001. The issue of relative income poverty will also be examined by this Working Group.
- 3.5.3 The ***level of State old age pensions*** will be improved during the period of the PPF, in line with the commitment given in the Government's Action Programme for the Millennium to increase the Old Age Pension to £100 per week by 2002.
- 3.5.4 Measures to tackle child poverty will also be undertaken over the three-year period of the PPF. ***Child benefit***, as a key mechanism to reduce levels of child poverty and to provide child income support, will be increased substantially over the period of the Programme, with a priority focus towards £100 per month for the third and subsequent children. In addition, over this period, Child Dependent Allowances will be payable to all social welfare recipients where the child is under 22 and in full-time education. The findings of the Combat Poverty Agency report, 'Child Poverty in Ireland'¹², researched by Brian Nolan of the ESRI and the deliberations of the Working Group on benchmarking and indexation, referred to above, will help inform future policy in this area.
- 3.5.5 A ***review of the Free Schemes operated by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs*** was published in April 2000. The report examines the objectives of the Free Schemes – Free Travel, Free Electricity / Gas Allowance, Free Telephone Rental Allowance and Free TV Licence, their underlying rationale and overall effectiveness in combating social exclusion and poverty. In Budget 2000, funding of £6 million was provided to implement two of the main recommendations of the report, namely the extension of the Free Schemes to all those aged 75 or over, regardless of income, and to those in receipt of the Carer's Allowance. Following the launch of the review, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs announced that he intends to move towards the establishment of a single Household Benefits scheme in future budgets. This will amalgamate the existing separate Free Schemes administered by the Department into a single Household Benefits scheme with a streamlined application process.

¹² Published by Oaktree Press for the Combat Poverty Agency

- 3.5.6 In line with a commitment in Partnership 2000, a *Working Group was established to examine options for a more tapered withdrawal of Supplementary Welfare Allowance rent/ mortgage supplements*, in order to reduce the work disincentives associated with the scheme. In advance of Budget 2000, the Group reached consensus on the general direction of reforms in this area and a proposal from the Group was included in the 2000 Budget and was implemented with effect from April 2000. The work of the Group, together with the recently published review of Free Schemes, the Report of the Working Group to examine the Treatment of Married, Co-habiting and One-Parent Families under the Tax and Social Welfare Codes, and updated ESRI data on poverty trends, will help inform future policy aimed at tackling poverty and fulfilling the PPF objective of ‘providing every person with sufficient income to live life with dignity’.
- 3.5.7 Following an analysis of the Report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Policy Initiative, “Securing Retirement Income”, work commenced in late 1999 on the drafting of a comprehensive new occupational *Pensions Bill*, which is due for publication in 2000.
- 3.5.8 Other *initiatives of note in the PPF* relating to income adequacy include;
- the establishment of Working Groups to produce proposals on the implementation of administrative individualisation within the social welfare system and for the development of a fully inclusive social insurance model which would facilitate combining work and family responsibilities in the context of changing working and social patterns,
 - the establishment of a Working Group representative of the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Finance and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, in consultation with the social partners, to examine the feasibility of the introduction of a Cost of Disability Payment,
 - recognition of the importance of the role of the Social Insurance System in the overall provision of social protection. The establishment of a Social Insurance Fund Board with representation from the social partners will also be examined,
 - in the context of the forthcoming review of the SWA system, the production of a user-friendly publication outlining Community Welfare Officer guidelines on the operation of discretion.

Educational Disadvantage

- 3.6.1 Educational qualifications, or lack of them, determine to a large extent the life chances of people. A holistic approach, encompassing interventions at pre-school, primary, and second and third levels, as well as in the area of lifelong learning, is required to tackle educational disadvantage. Current policy aims to provide such an approach. A new package of measures totalling £194 million was announced in December 1999, building on the £57 million announced in December 1998, which has an input into every level of education – from early education to adult literacy and everything in between.

- 3.6.2 The *White Paper on Early Childhood Education*, 'Ready to Learn', which was published in December 1999, sets out the Government's policy in relation to the development and implementation of a comprehensive early education policy. In line with a PPF commitment, the recommendation of the White Paper will be implemented on a phased basis. This will include the establishment of the Early Childhood Education Agency and the provision of targeted interventions in early education for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs. In keeping with this commitment, the Department of Education and Science will support directly early education places for key target groups in areas with significant concentrations of educational disadvantage.
- 3.6.3 Further improvements will also be made in the pupil teacher ratio over the coming years. In December 1999, £20 million was provided to enable the appointment of 1,000 *additional teachers* at primary and post-primary levels. Moreover, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness includes provision for an additional 1,500 teachers to be appointed during the three year term of the Programme. These additional 2,500 posts will further the decrease in the pupil teacher ratio, with the norm at primary school falling below 20:1 for the first time ever.
- 3.6.4 Initiatives such as the *Disadvantaged Areas Scheme* and *Breaking the Cycle* continued, with the expansion of *the Home School Community Liaison Scheme* to all designated schools. The Package of Measures to Tackle Educational Disadvantage (announced in December 1999) included provision for a new scheme at primary level to effectively target areas of greatest need. The supports will involve a mixture of additional teachers and resources including reduction of class size for infant classes, out of school activities, classroom resources, administrative assistance and community outreach. As a first step, a comprehensive study of all primary schools concerning the distribution of disadvantaged pupils was undertaken. £25 million will be available for this scheme over the next three years. In addition, the 8-15 Early School Leavers Initiative initiated in 1998 was recently extended to August 2002. The Stay in School Retention Initiative introduced in 57 schools in June 1999, aimed at improving retention rates to upper second level, has been extended to 116 schools from September 2000.
- 3.6.5 The policy of the Department of Education and Science seeks to facilitate, in so far as possible, the integration of children with disabilities into the mainstream system. *Significant improvements in the level and quality of special education supports* have been introduced in recent years, with the most significant move being the allocation of resource teaching and childcare supports on the basis of assessed needs, at a cost of £14 million in 2000.
- 3.6.6 Support will also continue for the estimated 5,000 primary age *Traveller children* in Ireland, the 4,560 children who attend school (4,300 in ordinary classes and 260 in special classes), the 4 primary schools for Travellers and the 417 resource

teachers, based on a pupil teacher ratio of 14:1, who work with Traveller children in 375 primary schools. A new capitation grant of £336 was introduced from January 1999 for second level schools to help them in the outreach necessary to help children and families participate successfully in the life of the school. In addition, the National Education Officer for Travellers promotes and oversees the implementation of the education service for Travellers, which involves identifying the needs of Travellers in a region, assisting in the planning and establishment of education provision and consultation with Traveller families. This service was expanded to all counties in September 1999.

- 3.6.7 With regard to the needs of early school leavers and adults, a ***Back to Education Initiative*** will be implemented, which will introduce a variety of targeted approaches. To optimise choice and flexibility, the Back to Education Initiative will involve the co-ordination and continuation of existing levels of provision under Youthreach, Senior Travelling Training Centres, the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme and Post Leaving Certificate courses. The overall target will be to increase the opportunities for lifelong learning through a significant expansion of part time options, so that by the end of 2006 approximately 50,000 early school leavers and adults will be participating annually in further education. Expenditure in this area will amount to £1,027 million over the period of the National Development Plan 2000-2006.
- 3.6.8 Other measures designed to increase ***third level access*** include the continuation of support by the Higher Education Authority for initiatives in a number of colleges specifically related to disadvantaged students. These include special entry arrangements, where more flexible entry criteria are applied and various supports put in place for students entering by this method. A major expansion of funding is already underway which will ensure that every college has an access officer and that targeted programme funding is increased significantly. In addition, mature student participation is being supported through a significant change in the eligibility criteria for the higher rate of grant support. An additional allocation of £30 million has been provided for this area over the next three years. An Action Group on access to third level education to advise the Minister on the most effective ways of increasing participation by disadvantaged groups at third level will be convened shortly.
- 3.6.9 Adult literacy problems have received increasing attention in recent years, including publication of the OECD International Literacy Survey of 1997, which highlighted the extent of the adult literacy problem in Ireland. The report showed that a quarter of all the adult population had limited literacy skills. A number of actions have been taken to address the problems identified. For example, ***the adult literacy budget*** has increased over six-fold from less than £1 million prior to 1997 to just under £6 million in 1999. The Green Paper 'Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning' identified adult literacy as the first priority in the field of adult education and notwithstanding increased provision to date very significant investment will be made over the next three years to combat illiteracy. The

recently published White Paper on Adult Education ‘Lifelong Learning’, as described in chapter 2, sets out a blueprint for the future development and expansion of adult education and for the establishment of national and local structures which will help provide a co-ordinated and integrated approach to the provision of adult education services.

- 3.6.10 The work of the *Adult Literacy Fund* - promoting awareness, developing outreach strategies, establishing referral networks involving FÁS, the Local Employment Service, Area Partnerships, welfare and health interests, the Garda and probation services, schools and youth services - will continue in 2000. It is expected that there will be continued expansion in the numbers availing of the family literacy groups, open learning centres and the groups for migrants, Travellers and the unemployed. Other measures being taken to improve literacy include a *National Reading Initiative*, which was launched in January 2000, with a budget of £2.5 million, to improve reading standards amongst all age groups.
- 3.6.11 The Department of Education and Science will continue to fund *the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme*, which provides funds through the VECs to enable disadvantaged adults to pursue adult literacy and community education programmes free, or at a nominal cost. It is estimated that, prior to expansion in 1998, some 5,000 participants per annum benefited from literacy provision and a further 14,000 from Community Education. The number availing of the Literacy Tuition Service has doubled to 10,000.
- 3.6.12 The *PPF provides for the following initiatives* aimed at tackling educational disadvantage;
- the implementation of the integrated plan to tackle educational disadvantage, the *New Deal – A Plan for Educational Opportunity*,
 - the establishment of an Educational Disadvantage Committee, which will play an important role in informing the detailed implementation of the above Plan,
 - the establishment of a National Educational Welfare Service, including representation by the Community and Voluntary Pillar, to promote school attendance and to support children at risk to remain in school,
 - progress will be made in improving the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance with respect to tapering, rate of allowance and income thresholds, in order to address barriers to participation. Progress will also be made in ensuring that all disadvantaged children can avail of an improved school meals scheme,
 - measures to enhance post-second level participation by disadvantaged groups through the provision of significant additional investment. In addition, a Group will be established, with appropriate social partner involvement, to examine and report on barriers to participation by mature students in higher education and to advise the Department of Education and Science on the development of a co-ordinated framework to promote access by mature and disadvantaged students to third level access.

Urban Disadvantage

- 3.7.1 National policy is now focused on identifying a more integrated approach to the physical, economic, social and environmental regeneration of urban areas, involving a partnership approach, with cross-sectoral consultation and participation. Such an approach is particularly evident in the implementation of the social inclusion measures outlined in the National Development Plan. The Minister for Environment and Local Government has set up a Working Group to consider and report on the most appropriate institutional arrangements for co-ordination and delivery of social inclusion measures provided for in the NDP. This report, which was finalised in May 2000, will have a significant impact on the development of a more coherent approach to the development of activities at local level.
- 3.7.2 The *urban renewal scheme* based on Integrated Area Action Plans, the pilot *Integrated Services Process (ISP)*, the pilot *Family Services Project* and the *Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund*, will continue to play an influential role in tackling urban disadvantage. In addition, the continued implementation of the *LURD* initiative will contribute to tackling social exclusion in urban areas. Based on the success of this initiative to date, the Government has committed over £30 million of funding in 2000. A review of the *National Drugs Strategy* has been initiated with a view to having a new drugs policy agreed and in place by the end of 2000, while the Department of Education and Science will continue to support the continuation of substance misuse education programmes, 'Walk Tall' (primary) and 'On My Own Two Feet' (second level).
- 3.7.3 Urban disadvantage will continue to be addressed, in part, by strategies in relation to housing. Strategy in relation to housing will continue to make an important contribution in addressing urban disadvantage. The Department of Environment and Local Government will continue to monitor the affordability of *housing* and the effects of the Government's housing strategy. Further measures to assist low income potential house purchasers will be developed, as well as appropriate strategies to increase house supply. A report on the housing supply position will be prepared for Government (and the market, as appropriate) every 3 months, to cover changes in land availability, housing completion, progress with densities etc. As outlined in the PPF, a Housing Forum will be established by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, and will include representatives of the social partners and relevant Departments, to
- monitor developments in relation to the supply and affordability of housing,
 - monitor the implementation of the housing Objectives and Actions set out in the PPF in the context of the targets set in the NDP,
 - provide the social partners with an opportunity to contribute to the further development by the Department of the Environment and Local Government of policy responses in respect of the housing issues identified in the PPF, and
 - involve the social partners with Government in tackling the constraints on the achievement of the housing supply targets referred to above.

- 3.7.4 Responsibility for overseeing the Local Authority housing programme and maintaining output under voluntary housing schemes as well as the redevelopment of Local Authority housing schemes in certain areas lies with the Department of Environment and Local Government. In the longer term, the latest assessment of housing needs, conducted in March 1999, showed an increase of 43% in households in need of Local Authority housing. Over £2.7 billion has been provided in the National Development Plan for the provision of **Local Authority housing**, which, combined with a new multi annual Local Authority housing programme which aims to provide 22,000 new homes over 4 years, should help address this housing shortage. About 5,500 'starts' are expected to commence in 2000, as part of this programme.
- 3.7.5 The report of the **Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness**, which was established at the direction of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, was presented to the Cabinet Committee in April 2000. The objective of the Cross-Departmental team was to develop an integrated response to homelessness, covering such issues as emergency, transitional and long term responses and secondary issues which have a particular effect on homeless people including health, education, employment and homemaking. The report highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling homelessness, involving both shelter and support to enable homeless persons re-integrate into society and makes a number of recommendations in this regard. These include the appointment by Dublin Corporation of a Director for homeless services in the Dublin area, provision of a greater variety of accommodation for a wider range of homeless households which includes couples and individuals with children and the establishment of settlement and outreach worker positions to facilitate and encourage persons to move out of emergency accommodation, including hostels.
- 3.7.6 Funding for Local Authorities for the provision of accommodation for the homeless and asylum seekers will continue. The Department will also promote the expansion of accommodation for Travellers and pay grants to Local Authorities for provision and management of Traveller accommodation.
- 3.7.7 The data from the 1999 assessment of homeless persons, together with the recommendations of the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness, will inform and direct future policy development in the area of homelessness. With regard to **youth homelessness**, a further £2 million was made available in Budget 2000 to address this issue. £1.5 million of this will be made available to the Eastern Regional Health Authority. The Authority has identified young people out of home as one of the key issues it has to address. The Authority launched an Action Plan to tackle youth homelessness in April 2000 in response to the Report of the Forum on Youth Homelessness. The plan includes:
- the provision of multi-disciplinary teams to target young people who are out of home and abusing drugs,

- funding for a new centre for young people who are out of home and abusing drugs,
 - opening a number of local residential centres,
 - contracting of GPs to provide primary health care services for young people who are out of home,
 - specific assignment of psychological and psychiatric service to this group,
 - increased access to drug treatment centres,
 - expansion of aftercare services,
 - commissioning of database to track progress of young people,
 - evaluation of Crisis Intervention Service and Out of Hours Service,
 - the establishment of a Provider Forum.
- 3.7.8 The Department of Health and Children is currently preparing a national strategy on youth homelessness. It aims to set out a framework for a more strategic and planned approach to address youth homelessness. Work on the plan is proceeding as quickly as possible with a view to being finalised this year.
- 3.7.9 In addition, the Department of the Environment and Local Government will fund the implementation by Local Authorities of *Traveller accommodation* programmes and ensure implementation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.
- 3.7.10 Increased funding for the future expansion of the *Community Development Programme* has been addressed in both the National Development Plan and the PPF. The Programme will receive £100 million over the lifetime of the NDP. A Social Impact Study of the CDP is currently being finalised. The purpose of the study is to consider how the programme is meeting its objectives and to develop indicators which will be used to measure the impact of the programme in the future.
- 3.7.11 With regard to service provision in urban areas, the experience of *the Integrated Service Process (ISP)* (referred to in chapter 2) will be taken on board and will be used to inform the delivery of public services to communities in disadvantaged areas. The recommendations contained in the Second Progress Report were endorsed fully by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in May 2000.
- 3.7.12 Other *initiatives in the PPF* aimed at addressing urban disadvantage include;
- continuation of funding for the Territorial Employment Pacts, which are engaged in mobilising social partner support to tackle unemployment at local level,
 - the establishment of an Interdepartmental Committee, in consultation with the social partners, to identify and clarify the range of existing and proposed social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan from which integrated targeted intervention measures can be developed. The Committee will make recommendations to Government by December 2000, enabling 25 areas of

disadvantage in urban and rural communities to be designated with a prioritised list of measures that can be implemented within a three-year time frame,

- the introduction of an URBAN II Initiative, which will include EU funding of 5 million (£3.9 million approx.), incorporating best practice from the existing URBAN initiative,
- a review and evaluation of the overall operation of the National Drugs Strategy, including consideration of workplace initiatives dealing with drug misuse, and
- the continued development by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform of programmes for young persons at risk of offending.

Rural Poverty

- 3.8.1 Both the National Development Plan and the PPF contain a number of measures to address rural disadvantage, with the aim of promoting the economic and social development of rural communities and improving the physical and social infrastructure in smaller towns and villages. The White Paper on Rural Development 'Ensuring the Future' represents a comprehensive and coherent approach to rural development in Ireland in the future. The NDP gives practical expression to the commitment in the White Paper, with a specific commitment to public investment of £6.7 billion over the next seven years in actions which directly impact on rural areas. A ***Rural Development Fund*** of £6 million has been provided under the NDP, £0.9 million of which will be available in 2000 to finance research, evaluations and pilot actions, where appropriate, and to provide information and advice to policy makers.
- 3.8.2 Also of relevance in terms of rural and urban development is the ***National Spatial Strategy***, which is currently being prepared by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. This Strategy will provide a framework for the spatial development, incorporating a more balanced regional development, of the country as a whole over the next 20 years. As stated in the National Development Plan, the proposed Strategy will, inter alia, identify broad spatial development patterns for areas and set down indicative policies in relation to the location of industrial and service development, residential development, rural development and tourism and heritage in order to provide a basis for policy formulation on land use, including decision-making on major investment in all forms of infrastructure.
- 3.8.3 Procedures for ***rural proofing*** of all national policies are now in place and will be supported by detailed guidelines for Departments, due to be completed in the near future. Taken in conjunction with other policy proofing arrangements (in particular poverty proofing and equality proofing), this will enable the issue of rural poverty to be mainstreamed in a comprehensive way.
- 3.8.4 Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development initiatives aimed at tackling rural disadvantage, such as the ***Disadvantaged Areas Scheme*** will

continue to operate in 2000. Expenditure in respect of this scheme is expected to be in the region of £120 million in the year 2000. Although not specifically addressing the problems of social exclusion, *the LEADER programme* can make a significant impact in this area, both by virtue of contributing to the general economic and social development of rural areas, and through its emphasis on capacity building and community development. Some £23 million is expected to be advanced to LEADER groups in the year 2000. A detailed interim report on the success of the LEADER II was published in April 2000, with the final post-operational evaluation expected to be completed by October 2000. LEADER II ends in December 2000. Plans for two new initiatives, LEADER+ and national LEADER mainstream measure, will be finalised in 2000. In addition, the continuation of the work of Partnerships and Community Groups will contribute to tackling social inclusion in both urban and rural areas. Based on the success of this initiative to date, the Government has committed over £30 million of funding in 2000 to cover both urban and rural areas.

- 3.8.5 Another initiative, which will impact positively on rural areas in the service delivery programme, is the evaluation and implementation of the lessons learned from the *Pilot Programme for the Provision of Integrated Public Services in Rural Areas*. The Report of this programme, currently being finalised, should aid Departments in improving their services to rural areas thus reducing the sense of isolation which can sometimes be experienced by people in such areas.
- 3.8.6 As with urban areas the implementation of the recommendations of the *Task Force on Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems* will be an important means of promoting rural development and tackling rural disadvantage. Furthermore, strategies mentioned elsewhere in this report and in the PPF, particularly those in relation to employment, income support, lifelong learning, housing and education, will also have a particular impact on rural poverty.
- 3.8.7 Other *initiatives in the PPF* aimed at addressing rural disadvantage include
- measures to promote the participation and empowerment of rural communities, including the establishment of the Rural Development Forum (under the White Paper),
 - improvements in access to key public services, including education, transport and healthcare,
 - allocation of resources for targeted measures, including community enterprise, community development, services for unemployed people and community capacity building, in accordance with the provisions of the NDP, and
 - a commitment to address rural housing needs in the context of the NAPS and the White Paper on Rural Development
 - a review and enhancement of the Farm Assist Scheme.

Other Developments

- 3.9.1 The Government has made childcare a priority under the National Development Plan and £250 million has been made available to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for the development of childcare service provision. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will be providing capital and staffing grants to community based/ not for profit childcare organisations and capital grants for self-employed childcare service providers. In addition, funding will be provided for the development of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations for the establishment of local childcare networks, innovative projects and childcare training.
- 3.9.2 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has established a National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee to oversee the development of childcare service provision. In addition, County Childcare Committees are being established to identify childcare needs in each county and to develop a strategic plan towards the meeting of those needs.
- 3.9.3 Further funding has been given to the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs for the development of out-of-school hours services and the Department of Education and Science for the provision of after-school support services. In addition, the Government recently announced, as part of its anti-inflationary package, a further £40 million expenditure on childcare, details of which are to be agreed with the social partners.
- 3.9.4 Further commitments are contained within the PPF in relation to childcare. The Government, recognising the progress made in this area in the PPF negotiations, and following a completion process with the social partners, plans to adopt, before the end of 2000, an equitable strategy to support parents in meeting their childcare needs, for implementation in the period of the Programme. This completion process will address proposals such as those put forward in the PPF negotiations, which included proposals for direct payments per child.
- 3.9.5 There are numerous developments in train in the area of promotion of a more equal society. These include the enactment of the ***Equal Status Act, 2000***, which was signed into law in April 2000 and the participation by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in discussions at EU level aimed at finalising two draft EU Directives issued in 1999. The first Directive is aimed at establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and the second at implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin but extending beyond the workplace. Enactment of equality legislation (comprising the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act), will enable Ireland to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

- 3.9.6 A Working Group comprising representatives from the Departments of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Finance and Health and Children and the Health Boards is undertaking a *review of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme* and related services. The review has a broad focus and all aspects of SWA will be covered, including consideration of appropriate objectives for the SWA, having regard to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and other agreed policies. The Working Group is undertaking an extensive consultation process in the course of the review, which will involve the placing of advertisements in the national newspapers in addition to requesting the views of specific organisations and surveying a selection of SWA customers.
- 3.9.7 In relation to *supports for families*, a number of developments will take place in 2000, aimed at strengthening families and targeting disadvantage. The Family Affairs Unit of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, will be involved in
- the evaluation of the pilot Family Services Project
 - the holding of Family Services Information Fora to provide information about services to families,
 - the completion, in 2000, of a number of projects under the Families Research Programme and
 - the establishment of the Family Mediation Service on a statutory basis (to be completed in 2001).
- 3.9.8 The *National Children's Strategy* is being prepared by an Inter-Departmental Group for publication later this year. The Inter-Departmental Group comprises staff from the Department of Health and Children, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Education and Science. The purpose of the National Children's Strategy is to provide a vision for the child and childhood in the first decade of the New Millennium and to propose new ways for a coalition of partners to work together more effectively to deliver that vision. The Strategy sets out to promote a more holistic view of the child. It will endeavour to position that view of the child more centrally and explicitly in public development and decision making. The Strategy will also reflect the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A comprehensive consultation process with all of the interested parties, including children will be carried out as part of the preparation of the Strategy.
- 3.9.9 The integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market will continue to be a major objective of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment over the coming years. Funding will be provided by that Department to the social partners to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Existing disincentives to people with disabilities in taking up employment will also be addressed. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will undertake *a Disability Awareness Campaign* to emphasise the ability and potential people with disabilities can bring to the workforce. Other developments

of note in relation to people with disabilities include the establishment of the National Disability Authority as a statutory body. In addition, the establishment by the Minister for Public Enterprise of a Public Transport Accessibility Committee will include representation from disability groups. In line with a PPF commitment, the publication of a Disability Bill, in consultation with the social partners, will provide a legislative basis to underpin the full participation of people with disabilities in society.

3.9.10 The Department of Health and Children are pursuing a number of initiatives aimed at improving the *health status* of disadvantaged people. Data from the National Health and Lifestyle Survey forms the basis of the Department's new Health Promotion Strategy for the years 2000-2005. The new strategy, which will be published in 2000, will have specific aims and objectives that in the long term will contribute to reducing health inequalities. The National Healthy Eating Campaign targets the general population and has specific initiatives aimed at lower socio-economic groups e.g posters and booklets for people with low reading ability. In 2000, the campaign will focus on heart health and will be targeted specifically at lower socio-economic groups. In relation to Traveller health, by the end of 2000, all Health Boards will have a Traveller Health Unit in place. In order to ensure a comprehensive approach to medium and long-term planning of health provision, resources have been allocated to health research under the PPF. Data systems will be adapted to enable disaggregation of health access and outcomes across NAPS target groups. This data will be monitored and reported on at national level.

3.9.11 Other *initiatives of note in the PPF* in relation to these issues include;

- continued monitoring of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community. A progress report on the recommendations is currently being prepared.
- the development of a comprehensive strategy for the integration of refugees, including employment and training issues,
- increased funding for the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, to enable it to undertake additional measures to address racism,
- the strengthening of child protection services, based on the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children – '*Children First*',
- the consideration by the social partners of recommendations emerging from the Equality Authority Advisory Committee covering the rights of older people, to establish how they might be progressed.

3.10.1 This chapter provides a brief overview of future developments within various Government Departments aimed at tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion. The following chapter sets out the domestic and international contexts for these developments.

CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROSPECTS

The Domestic Context

- 4.1.1 Everybody should have the opportunity and incentive to contribute to and share in our economic and social development – and we have much, as a nation, to share at present. Ireland’s economic progress in the 1990s has been outstanding. GNP grew in real terms by an average of 8.1% per annum between 1994 and 1999. The numbers employed increased by almost 30% in the same period, with the unemployment rate falling from over 15% in 1993 to 4.3% in March-May 2000. Looking towards the future, the prospects for the Irish economy in the short to medium-term remain positive. Overall GNP growth of around 8.3% is forecast for 2000. Domestic demand is expected to remain strong in all areas. Strong growth in personal consumption is expected to continue as a broad range of factors including lower interest rates, gains in disposable income, employment growth and falling unemployment help to support consumer confidence. Relatively strong employment growth is expected to continue in the coming years while the unemployment rate is expected to continue to fall. All of this gives Ireland greater potential, in terms of resources available, to give increased priority to social inclusion measures within public spending.
- 4.1.2 Tackling poverty and social exclusion continues to be one of the major challenges facing Irish society. The NAPS and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness provide a framework for addressing these issues. The Programme is based on the overall view expressed in the NESC Strategy Report on “Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice”, which advocates a ‘three-pronged approach to problems of poverty and exclusion, covering social welfare, mainstream public policy programmes and a special investment package.’ As has been mentioned earlier, during the course of the Programme, the Government will progressively introduce social inclusion measures with a total cumulative cost in 2003 of £1.5 billion. The Programme contains a wide range of targeted initiatives and relevant programmes and other policies aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion, building a fair, inclusive society and reducing marginalisation. The commitments contained within the Programme, particularly those in relation to income adequacy, education, employment, equality, health, housing and urban and rural disadvantage, along with commitments in the National Development Plan, outlined below, will play a major role in furthering the social inclusion agenda in the coming years.
- 4.1.3 The National Development Plan 2000-2006 will be a key element of the Government’s strategy for sustained economic and social development. The investment of £40.6 billion over the 7-year period of the Plan is designed to ensure that Ireland remains competitive and that economic growth is shared more equally at regional level and throughout society. The promotion of social inclusion is one of the four national objectives underpinning the strategy for the

NDP. A key priority of the NDP is the continuation of sustainable economic growth to promote jobs. The objective is that employment is opened up to all sectors of society, thereby assisting in the fight against poverty. However the Plan also recognises that ensuring the correct overall economic environment for job creation is not sufficient on its own to alleviate poverty. Targeted interventions are therefore provided for, primarily in the Regional Operational Programme, to deal with this issue. In total some £15 billion is provided in the Plan directly to promote social inclusion over the next seven years. This will be augmented by specific measures to promote social inclusion, notably in the areas of educational disadvantage, access to housing, local and community development, family services and childcare.

The International Context

- 4.2.1 The *follow-up summit to the World Summit for Social Development* held in Copenhagen in 1995, the original impetus behind the NAPS, was held in Geneva in June 2000. In preparation for the Summit, a comprehensive national report was submitted to the UN on progress in Ireland in relation to poverty, unemployment and social integration and this was published in January, 2000.
- 4.2.2 Ireland assumed the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the six months covering end 1999/ early 2000. During this time, Ireland hosted a European Conference on Social Development in Dublin in January 2000, organised by the Council of Europe. The Conference brought together about 200 high-level national representatives, members of parliament, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international bodies from across the whole European continent for an exchange of views on the topics to be discussed in Geneva, particularly those which fall within the social cohesion remit of the Council of Europe. A preparatory NGO Forum took place in Dublin Castle immediately before the Conference. Its theme was “Social Rights are Human Rights – People’s Priorities for the Social Summit Review”. The declaration adopted at the NGO Forum was presented to the Conference in plenary session, and various proposals emanating from the NGOs were taken up in the Conference conclusions. The French authorities, as a contribution to the Conference, commissioned and financed a “review of national reports on the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, submitted to the UN by Council of Europe Member and Observer States”, which was of great assistance to all Council of Europe Member States in preparing for the Geneva Special Session.
- 4.2.3 The statements by national delegations made it clear that the initiative by the Council of Europe to convene a European Conference on Social Development was widely welcomed. Many speakers saw the Conference as an important step forward in demonstrating the value of the Council of Europe’s new strategy for social cohesion and in preparing the way for an active and constructive pan-European contribution to the Geneva Special Session. The European Union also welcomed the opportunity provided by the Conference for an exchange of views

at the level of the wider Europe, seeing this as complementary to the preparations by the 15 Member States for the Geneva Special Session.

- 4.2.4 A delegation from Ireland, comprising the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, officials from relevant Government Departments and representatives from ICTU, IBEC, the Combat Poverty Agency and anti-poverty NGOs, attended this Special Session of the UN General Assembly. In his address to the Special Session, Minister Dermot Ahern, T.D., outlined the developments which have taken place in Ireland since the Copenhagen Summit and spoke of the Irish Government's commitment to poverty eradication both nationally and internationally. Obstacles to achieving greater progress on social development were identified and leaders agreed on new initiatives to strengthen efforts towards full and effective implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen Summit. The Summit also provided a useful opportunity for participating countries to exchange views and experiences on the implementation of social inclusion policy.
- 4.2.5 The *EU Communication on social exclusion* launched in March 2000 has reinvigorated debate on social exclusion. The Heads of State and Government at the recent European Council, the Lisbon Summit, for the first time placed social inclusion and the modernisation of social protection firmly at the heart of the EU agenda. Social Protection Ministers in the Labour and Social Affairs Council (LSAC) are now mandated to play a significant role in progressing that agenda. This mandate was set in the context of a new European goal of becoming over the next ten years "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".
- 4.2.6 Social inclusion and pensions are identified by the European Council as two priority areas in the context of *modernising social protection* and it is clear that Ireland will have much both to contribute to and to learn from the debate on these issues. The Heads of State and Government agreed that 'the number of people living below the poverty line and in social exclusion in the European Union is unacceptable and that steps must be taken to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by setting targets'. The development of indicators to enable meaningful comparisons to be made and progress to be measured is seen as a key task in this regard. The EU High Level Working Group on Social Protection (on which Ireland is represented by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs) will be centrally involved in this work. In addition, the Heads of State and Government have also invited the Council and Commission to mainstream the promotion of inclusion in Member States' employment, education and training, health and housing policies and to develop priority actions addressed to specific target groups (for example minority groups, children, the elderly and people with a disability), with Member States subsequently reporting on their implementation.

4.2.7 The value of an integrated approach to poverty and social exclusion has long been recognised within the European Union but has gained real impetus in recent times. The Commission recently proposed a 5-year *EU social action programme*, with a budget of 70 million euros (£55 million approx.), to further strengthen co-operation among Member States in combating social exclusion. It is envisaged that the proposed programme, which will run from 2001 to 2005, will have three strands, as follows;

- understanding – which involves promotion of research into social exclusion, as well as developing indicators for comparing progress and identifying good practice in combating social exclusion,
- co-operation – encouraging Member States to exchange information and good practices,
- capacity building – provision of financial and other supports to NGOs involved in combating social exclusion and the holding of an annual conference on the subject.

4.2.8 It is expected that the programme will contribute to supporting the efforts needed to significantly reduce poverty in Europe as proposed by the Commission in its contribution to the Lisbon European Council (reducing the numbers living below the poverty line from 18% today to 15% in 2005 and 10% in 2010 and halving child poverty by 2010.). Particular attention will be paid to addressing exclusion issues connected with the emerging knowledge society.

CHAPTER 5: PROGRESS TOWARDS NAPS TARGETS

Setting Targets

- 5.1.1 With the launch of the NAPS in 1997 Ireland became the first European Member State to adopt a global poverty reduction target. Target-setting is very important at political level, since by setting such targets, the Government acknowledges responsibility for reducing the overall extent of poverty. This is arguably the single most important element of the NAPS, as in aiming to meet these targets, the Government ensures that the policy framework and specific policies are adapted accordingly.
- 5.1.2 In the light of the progress made in relation to the original NAPS poverty targets, the original NAPS targets were revised in June 1999 and both the global target and further sub-targets in the five theme areas of the NAPS are to be re-examined in the context of the forthcoming review of the NAPS. The setting of possible new targets under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, the elderly, health and housing/ accommodation will also be considered.
- 5.1.3 In considering how existing targets might be improved and the role new ones might play, the following will be borne in mind¹
- it must be possible to monitor success in attaining the target, either with existing data or with information gathered through new systems set up for that purpose,
 - targets should relate to outcomes that can be influenced by policy,
 - targets should generally refer to desired outcomes and objectives, rather than policy interventions designed to attain those objectives,
 - the objective of a target should make a substantial contribution to attaining the overall anti-poverty target,
 - there has to be a significant 'value added' in each sub-target, over and above what is already covered by the global poverty reduction target and other sub-targets. This means that the objective encapsulated in a sub-target should either manifestly make a substantial contribution to attaining the overall anti-poverty target, or cover an important area which is in some sense not adequately encompassed within that overall target.
 - above all, it is important that any targets set must represent an appropriate balance between the need for ambition and realism.

¹ This paragraph draws on the paper presented by Brian Nolan, ESRI, "**Targeting Poverty in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy**", Paper for Combat Poverty Agency Conference, 'Planning for a More Inclusive Society', Dublin, 11 May, 2000

- 5.1.4 It will be important also to consider the timeframe for targets. Given the rapidity of developments in the relatively short time since the NAPS was launched, the appropriateness of targets with a very long, 10 year timeframe will need to be questioned. Shorter term, rolling targets of perhaps 3 to 4 years duration may be more appropriate in the future for certain targets, whereas other targets, for example in the area of health, may require a longer timeframe.
- 5.1.5 The availability of accurate and timely data is essential to the target-setting process and work towards this objective is progressing on a number of fronts. In particular, the issue of data collection will be examined in line with commitments contained in the PPF. One issue which will need to be considered is the need to expand data collection to include groups such as the homeless and those living in institutions (who are not covered by household surveys such as the Living in Ireland Survey). Also in terms of data collection, performance indicators in each of the theme areas, against which progress can be measured, will be considered as part of the target-setting process.
- 5.1.6 In addition, consideration will need to be given when setting targets, in particular the global and income support targets, to the appropriateness of measuring poverty trends by using mean (as currently used) as distinct from the median income. The mean can be sensitive to movement at either end of the income distribution. The median is generally more stable over time, but the mean provides a valuable reference point in terms of transparency. This issue will be addressed as part of the review of the NAPS. Another issue of relevance in ensuring accurate monitoring of poverty trends, concerns the continued relevance of the set of deprivation indicators currently used to capture generalised deprivation. These will continue to be reviewed from year to year by the ESRI in carrying out their research, as new survey information becomes available, and will be revised as appropriate. Finally, information obtained from the cross-sectional and dynamic analysis of the Living in Ireland data from 1994 to 1998, which is expected to be available by the end of 2000, will provide valuable input into the future target-setting process.
- 5.1.7 As outlined in Chapter 2, significant progress has been made in many of the areas in which NAPS has set specific targets: unemployment and income adequacy. Given the buoyant economic climate and the unprecedented increases in social inclusion spending outlined in the PPF, it is hoped that continued progress in these areas will be possible in the years ahead.
- 5.1.8 The following sections briefly outline progress which has been made to date against the targets and some of the issues which may need to be considered in conducting a revision of this aspect of the Strategy.

Global Target

- 5.2.1 The NAPS global target as revised in June 1999, is to reduce the numbers of “consistently poor” as defined by the ESRI from 9% to 15% of the population in 1994 to below 5% to by 2004 (revised in June 1999).
- 5.2.2 When the Strategy was initiated in 1997, the extent of poverty used as the baseline for the target was taken from the 1994 Living in Ireland Survey, the most recent then available. New data from the 1998 round of that survey, “*Monitoring Poverty Trends Results from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey*”, showed that by 1998, the numbers of ‘consistently poor’ have decreased significantly in recent years and are now down to approximately 6-8% of the population (having decreased from 9-15% in 1994 to 7-10% in 1997). These figures demonstrate that real progress is being made towards achieving the NAPS target of reducing consistent poverty to below 5% by 2004.
- 5.2.3 When setting a global poverty target, it is important to bear in mind the fact that the NAPS definition of ‘consistent poverty’ includes those who fall below a relative income line and also experience deprivation. Current data (from 1998) indicate that the numbers falling below the 40% and 50% relative income poverty lines, without reference to basic deprivation, have increased slightly, while there was a general decrease in the numbers below 60% of mean income. This has occurred as a result of the recent economic growth, which meant that social welfare support rates, although increasing well ahead of price rises, did not keep pace with the exceptionally rapid rise in average disposable income to which the poverty lines are linked. It is worth noting that other factors, such as increasing employment, recent tax reforms and household formation, have also resulted in an increase in the numbers below relative income poverty lines. There is a long term implication in trends of increasing income inequalities. Given the NAPS’s aim to reduce poverty, social exclusion and inequality this is an issue which may need to be considered further.
- 5.2.4 By contrast, deprivation levels, which fell markedly between 1994 and 1997, also fell from 1997 to 1998. However, it should be noted that the deprivation index is a relative measure of disadvantage and it is likely that, in the future, the index will be expected to include more items to reflect improved living standards and expectations. Given the ESRI projections of further disimprovements in the relative income measure, an increase in the numbers experiencing deprivation will have implications for the attainment of the NAPS global poverty target. Future global poverty targets will need to take into account such variations in the levels of relative income and deprivation.

- 5.2.5 It needs to be borne in mind that analyses of poverty and the role of social transfers in poverty alleviation tend to concentrate on cash income as the measure of resources available to households. However, in addition to cash transfers the State also provides a range of free or subsidised services and other benefits to households, which affect their living standards, and the resources they can devote to other uses. A study carried out by the ESRI in 1996¹³, in reviewing the Commission on Social Welfare's minimum adequate income recommendations, showed that in 1996, these extra benefits could add as much as 15-20% to the basic weekly payment for some beneficiaries, notably the elderly or families depending on long-term or unemployment assistance.
- 5.2.6 Target setting and future budgetary policy in the area of income adequacy will be informed by the deliberations of the Working Group examining the issues of benchmarking and indexation and the outcome of further ESRI research into the impact of non-cash benefits and the dynamics of poverty.

Unemployment

- 5.3.1 The NAPS unemployment target was re-set by the Government in June 1999 and was subsequently replaced by a new target as part of the Employment Action Plan. This new target is to reduce the rate of unemployment to below 5% by end 2000 and to reduce the rate of long term unemployment to below 2% over the same period.
- 5.3.2 Strong economic growth over the past 4 years and the success of the Employment Action Plan has been translated into substantial employment growth with the result that unemployment rates are at their lowest level in two decades and, at this stage, well below the European average. Progress in achieving the targets in this area has been very marked. The latest figures available from the CSO estimate that the unemployment rate in March 2000 to May 2000 was just 4.3%, a reduction of over 7 percentage points in under 4 years¹⁴. This means that the revised EAP unemployment target has now been achieved. Progress on reducing long-term unemployment is particularly significant, with the rate standing at 1.6% for the period March 2000 to May 2000, with the EAP target fully achieved.
- 5.3.3 Government policies to re-integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market, combined with recent social welfare and taxation measures to improve the incentive to work are expected to further reduce the unemployment rate in the years ahead. However, there remains a core cohort of long-term unemployed for whom lack of educational attainment and basic skills remains a critical factor in the risk of long-term unemployment. Future progress in eliminating unemployment must centre on enhancing the quality of labour supply through

¹³ Callan, T., Nolan, B. & Whelan, C.T (1996) "A Review of the Commission on Social Welfare's Minimum Adequate Income", The Economic and Social Research Institute, Policy Research Series Paper No. 29

¹⁴ The rate in April 1996 was 11.9%.

investment in education and training, combined with continuing the drive to reintegrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market. It will be important also to strengthen the preventative element of labour market strategy by reducing early school leaving and preventing the drift into long-term unemployment.

- 5.3.4 With regard to the setting of future targets in this area, account must be taken of the expected moderation of growth in the work force and of the significant progress that has already been made in this area. The challenge will be to find the lowest possible level of unemployment and to sustain it in the long term, while recognising that there will inevitably be periodic fluctuations around that target.

Educational Disadvantage

- 5.4.1 The NAPS target, as already stated is to eliminate early school leaving before the Junior Certificate and to increase the retention rates to Leaving Certificate level to at least 90% by 2000 and 98% by 2007.
- 5.4.2 As the figures for the 1998 Annual School Leavers' Survey show, a total of 81% of students left second-level school having completed the Leaving Certificate, 16% completed the Junior Certificate and 3% left without any qualification in that year. While the numbers leaving without any qualification continues to fall, the numbers completing the Leaving Certificate seem to have levelled out somewhat in the previous 3 to 4 years following significant increases throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.
- 5.4.3 Statistics indicate that there has been little progress in meeting the current NAPS target for senior cycle completion. Ironically, given the growth in employment opportunities, one of the reasons for this has been the 'pull factor' of abundant employment.
- 5.4.4 In evaluating the target in the Strategy, movement to a broader focus than just Senior Cycle completion. As it stands, the target is representative of school leavers to completion of Senior Cycle only and does not include completion of a Youthreach course or an apprenticeship as a measure of achievement – even though they have been shown to provide the basis for long-term success. Retention figures are improved when account is taken of the participants in such programmes.
- 5.4.5 As with the other key themes of the NAPS, the setting of future targets under the theme 'educational disadvantage' will be considered in the forthcoming review of the NAPS. In doing so, it will be important to bear in mind that, regardless of economic or educational conditions, it is, perhaps, unrealistic to expect that the formal educational system will be suitable for up to 98% of students. While the IDPC would not consider it appropriate that a target should be lowered simply because progress is slower than expected, it may in this instance be appropriate to

restructure future targets to give due regard to other, less formal, education and training opportunities. and to interventions outside the mainstream setting. The question of including targets in relation to adult literacy and life-long learning will also need to be considered in the forthcoming review of target-setting in this area.

Income Adequacy, Urban and Rural Disadvantage

- 5.5.1 A specific target of the NAPS in relation to income adequacy was that the minimum rates recommended by the Commission on Social Welfare would be achieved by the end of 1999. This social welfare payment target has now been met and exceeded, with all social welfare recipients receiving, since June 1999, between 100% and 124% of the recommended rates. The Working Group on benchmarking and indexation will examine the complex issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments and the implications of adopting a specific approach to the indexation of payments. The deliberations of this group and those of the Tax Credit Working Group will form an important element of future policy development in the area of income adequacy. Another issue which will be of relevance in setting targets in this area in the longer term is the ageing of our population. While the Government's commitment to increasing the Old Age Contributory Pension to £100 by 2002 will assist the income position of older people at present, the increasing proportion of older people will be a priority issue which will need to be addressed in the coming years.
- 5.5.2 Although specific targets were not set in the areas of urban and rural disadvantage, it is clear that some of the negative consequences of economic growth will require particular attention under these headings, given the impact on people's quality of life. Lack of availability and access to services, capacity constraints in transport systems and the increased cost of housing are of particular concern in urban and rural areas.
- 5.5.4 The setting of targets in relation to urban and rural disadvantage will be considered in the context of the forthcoming review of the NAPS. In the interim, the roll-out of the NAPS to Local Authorities will bring a more specific focus to target-setting in this area. The availability of accurate, relevant, standardised data will be critical to setting targets in this area in particular and to the success of local anti-poverty strategies. Future targets in the area of rural disadvantage will also need to take account of the White Paper on Rural Development, which is in itself a significant policy development in terms of tackling poverty in rural areas.

Housing and Homelessness

- 5.6.1 The issue of housing has come further onto the public agenda in recent years, with population expansion and the recent unprecedented increase in house prices having a negative impact in many areas of society. The Government's statement of the housing market, issued in March 1999, outlines a number of key measures to increase housing supply and achieve price stabilisation in the housing market, many of which are currently being implemented. In the period ahead, the priority will be to maximise the supply of housing in order to meet the unprecedented increase in demand for houses. Future targets in these areas may need to take account of the requirement for increased social/affordable housing.
- 5.6.2 This issue of accommodation will also be considered as a future NAPS target in the forthcoming review of the NAPS. The consideration of this issue in the NAPS review will be carried out with reference to the report of the Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness, 'Homelessness – an Integrated Strategy', which sets out the future direction of policy in this area, with particular reference to the issue of comprehensive service provision and preventive strategies aimed at at-risk groups.

Child Poverty

- 5.7.1 Child poverty is a major concern and it will be considered as a future target in the forthcoming review of the NAPS. In the interim, the Government is moving on a number of fronts in relation to policies affecting children. The recent 2000 Budget provides for substantial improvements in the monthly rates of child benefit and the PPF contains a commitment to increase Child Benefit substantially over the lifetime of the Programme, with a priority focus towards £100 per month for the third and subsequent children. In addition, all policy proposals across Government Departments are poverty proofed to ensure the needs of children, among other target groups, are kept to the fore in the design of policy. Services and facilities for children at risk are being further strengthened, as is the body of legislation affecting children. A number of innovative approaches have been developed in relation to consulting with children in the development of policy. An Ombudsman for Children is to be established and an integrated Children's Strategy will be published later this year.
- 5.7.2 Child poverty was singled out by the Taoiseach in his address to the Combat Poverty Agency Conference on the National-Anti-Poverty Strategy in May 2000, as being one of the key issues to be addressed under the Programme for Prosperity

and Fairness. The Combat Poverty Agency report researched by Brian Nolan ‘Child Poverty in Ireland’¹⁵, which indicates that children are twice as likely as adults to experience consistent poverty, highlights the need to address this issue. The issue of child poverty and the findings of the child poverty report will be considered further in the forthcoming review of the NAPS.

Women Living in Poverty

- 5.8.1 Women’s poverty is also identified as a central issue for consideration in the review of the NAPS under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. The number of women living in poverty, particularly as the sole head of a family, continues to be a major concern. In particular, one of the key findings of the Review of the One-Parent Family Payment was that some 30% of lone parent families are living below the 50% relative income poverty line.
- 5.8.2 The introduction of poverty proofing across all Government Departments is a major step in addressing the needs of women. Lone parents, older people and single adult households are given particular attention in this process. In addition, particular emphasis is placed on the various grant schemes operated by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs on support for community-based initiatives targeted at women in disadvantaged areas. The NAPS review and consultation process and the findings of the Review of the One-Parent Family Payment will assist with the further development of such policies to address the needs of women living in poverty. The availability of accurate, relevant data, disaggregated by gender, will be of particular importance in the development of these policies.

Older People

- 5.9.1 A report prepared in 1999 by the ESRI for the National Council on Ageing and Older People shows that, in income terms, the position of older people disimproved over the period 1987-1997. It is likely, however, that the situation of older people has improved since this date. Record increases in pensions rates over the last three budgets and the extension of the entitlement to the Free Schemes to all people over 75 years of age, regardless of household income or composition have improved the income position of older people. Further improvements are likely in the near future. In last year’s review of the Government’s ‘Action Programme for the Millennium’ the Government committed itself to the early achievement of the £100 target for Old Age (Contributory) Pension and, furthermore, extended it to all social welfare old age pensions by 2002. In addition, over the lifetime of the Government, all Old Age Pensions will increase in line with average industrial earnings.

¹⁵ Published by Oaktree Press for the Combat Poverty Agency

- 5.9.2 The National Council on Ageing and Older People report, which examines the causal effects of poverty and social deprivation among older people, provides an informative, historical analysis for policy makers in the area of income adequacy. The deliberations of the Working Group on benchmarking and indexation and the outcome of ESRI research into the impact of non-cash benefits will also be of use in developing future budgetary policy in this area.
- 5.9.3 Consideration of the issues affecting older people in the context of the NAPS review will need to take into account the multi-dimensional nature of concerns affecting this group, which range from income to health care to service provision. The targets set in this area must take account of this complexity.

Poverty and Ill-Health

- 5.10.1 It is now widely recognised that people living in poverty are at increased risk of experiencing ill health. The review of the NAPS will also include consideration of this area, in the context of future target-setting. Preventative and educational strategies, combined with research and data analysis, will play an important role in the development of a health-related dimension to the NAPS.

Conclusion

- 5.11.1 One of the key elements of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to date has been the setting of targets, which provide a meaningful goal against which progress can be measured. As we consider the next stage of the Strategy, existing targets will be reviewed and revised where appropriate, to ensure that they remain relevant in the years ahead. In addition to the existing NAPS themes, the main priorities we will have to address include child poverty, women's poverty, poverty experienced by older people, health and housing/accommodation. The main objectives when setting these targets will be to ensure that they represent an appropriate balance between the need for ambition and realism. In this regard it is preferable to set a small number of comprehensive targets, which can be effectively monitored. If targets are realistic and based on solid research they can make a valuable contribution and maintain the focus and credibility which the NAPS has developed.

CONCLUSION

“Tús maith leath na h-oibre” – “A good start is half the work” is the seanfhocail that comes to mind at the publication of this report – the end of the first phase of the NAPS 10-year strategy. Much has been achieved since the NAPS was launched in mid-1997. Key features of the Strategy include

- a Cross-Departmental approach, which recognises the multi-dimensional nature of poverty,
- the development of an ambitious national strategy, including specific targets for poverty reduction,
- structures which place poverty at the heart of public policy.

Over the last year, through the National Development Plan, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the building blocks for sustainable prosperity and inclusion have been put in place. While much has been achieved, much remains to be done, as outlined earlier in the report. A socially inclusive society empowers individuals and communities to make a contribution to the fullness of their potential. It is a society where each person’s rights and responsibilities are recognised and valued. Our work must be to build such a society, where every individual and community has the opportunity and incentive to participate fully in the economic and social life of this country. There can be no greater challenge for everybody involved in the development, implementation and review of public policy.

The new century marks the start of the next phase of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. In 2000-2001, the opportunity will be taken to review and revise the NAPS to ensure that the themes are still relevant, that the targets set are ambitious and achievable and that those most in need have an active role in the process. The review is intended also to ensure that the focus on inclusion is maintained. Particular attention will be paid to data collection and the poverty proofing process is being reviewed. New targets will be considered under the themes of child poverty, women’s poverty, health, older people and housing/ homelessness. An enhanced National Anti-Poverty Strategy will need to be extended across the public service in order that poverty can be effectively addressed at national and local levels.

The new political arrangements in Northern Ireland and the establishment of the North South Ministerial Council and Cross Border bodies creates exciting new opportunities to develop a stronger cross-border focus on poverty and social exclusion. The enhanced focus on issues of poverty and social exclusion at UN and EU levels also provides important new contexts for further developing the NAPS.

As the first stage of the Strategy comes to an end, it is fair to say that a sound basis for a fully inclusive society in Ireland has been provided. While there is no room for complacency, what has been achieved should not be minimised. The basis provided by

the first phase of the NAPS will be built on in 2000-2001 to ensure that NAPS is implemented to maximum effect.

APPENDIX A

Membership of the NAPS Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NAPS INTER-DEPARTMENTAL POLICY COMMITTEE

Dermot McCarthy ¹⁶	Department of An Taoiseach
Deirdre Carroll ¹	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
Patricia O'Connor	Department of Education and Science
Leo Sheedy	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Aoife Nic Reamoinn	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Frank O'Donnell	Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Charlie Hardy	Department of Health and Children
Joe Mooney	Department of Finance
Tony Fitzpatrick	Department of the Marine and Natural Resources
Kathleen Stack	Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
David Monks	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
Margaret O'Connor ¹⁷	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Gerry McDonagh	Department of Public Enterprise
Dermot McGauran	Department of Foreign Affairs
Hugh Frazer	Combat Poverty Agency
Tony Crooks	Area Development Management Ltd
Gerard Walker	FÁS

¹⁶ Co Chairperson

¹⁷ replaced in June 2000 by Niall McCutcheon

APPENDIX B

Poverty Proofing Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POVERTY PROOFING PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the Government decision of 23 July 1998, in line with a Partnership 2000 commitment to strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing in the context of the NAPS, it is now a **requirement** in the updated Cabinet Handbook, published in October 1998 (p.19), that memoranda for the Government involving significant policy proposals "**indicate clearly the impact of the proposal on groups in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty in the case of significant policy proposals**".
- 1.2 Although some Departments' remit may not seem to impact directly on poverty, and while some Departments are not involved in direct service delivery, it must be noted that this is an **obligatory requirement**. While the secondary effects of some proposals (particularly those which are not directly aimed at alleviating disadvantage) may not be immediately apparent, **they may still have an impact on the poor**, or may, inadvertently, lead to a risk of poverty for some people/groups.
- 1.3 The statement of impact on poverty should be based on a **systematic analysis**, using the Framework previously circulated and outlined again in section 4 below.

2. What is Poverty?

- 2.1 Poverty is defined in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (adopted by Government in April 1997) as follows:

"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society."
- 2.2 The NAPS overall target focuses on the 9-15% of Irish households that were determined, in the ESRI's 1994 Living in Ireland Survey, currently being updated to 1997, to be "consistently poor" (based on the 50% and 60% relative income lines **combined with** the presence of basic deprivation). The target is to reduce this proportion to less than 5-10% of households by 2007.

There are also subsidiary targets in relation to the five key themes identified in the NAPS: Educational Disadvantage, Unemployment, Income Adequacy, Disadvantaged Urban Areas, and Rural Poverty.

3. What is Poverty Proofing?

3.1 Poverty proofing is defined as follows:

" Poverty proofing is the process by which Government Departments, local authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction."

3.2 The primary aim of the process is to identify the impact of the policy proposal on the poor so that this can be given proper consideration in designing the policy. It is not intended that Poverty Proofing would require that all policies be fundamentally transformed so that they are **explicitly** targeted at the disadvantaged. (Attention is drawn to the point made at 3.3 following.)

3.3 The potential effects of some policy proposals may be ambiguous in the sense that the policy may have a positive effect on some poverty risk groups and a negative (or no) effect on others. In such cases, **all** potential effects should be highlighted. One should consider the varying effects (if applicable) to each of the poverty risk groups as outlined below (4.4) and how any adverse effects on these groups might be counteracted. The possibility of particular groups being inadvertently excluded from the potential benefits of a proposal should also be noted.

4. Poverty Proofing Procedure

4.1 The procedure outlined below is as previously circulated in the document, "Policy Proofing in the Context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy".

4.2 Proofing What?

Poverty proofing should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

- * in the preparation of **SMI Statements of Strategy** and **Annual Business Plans**;
- * in **designing policies** and preparing **Memoranda to Government** on significant policy proposals;

- * in the preparation of the **Estimates** and **Annual Budget proposals** - this will also include **expenditure reviews** and **programme evaluations** ;
- * in the preparation of the **National Development Plan** and other relevant EU Plans and Programmes; and
- * in the preparation of **legislation**.

4.3 **Proofing How?**

In the circumstances outlined above, Departments should individually address the following questions:

- * What is the primary objective of this policy / programme / expenditure proposal?
- * Does it . . .
 - i) help to prevent people falling into poverty?
 - ii) reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty?
 - iii) ameliorate the effects of poverty?
 - iv) have no effect on poverty?
 - v) increase poverty?
 - vi) contribute to the achievement of the NAPS targets (including subsidiary targets under the five themes)?
 - vii) address inequalities which might lead to poverty? (See 4.5 below)
 - viii) as proposed, reach the target group(s)? (See 4.4 below)

and what is the rationale and basis of the assessment (for example, administrative data sources/household survey data, Working Group or Task Force Reports etc.) behind each of these replies?

- * If the proposal has the effect of increasing the level of poverty, what options might be identified to ameliorate this effect? [*this could include proposals to counteract adverse effects which may be identified for certain sub-groups even where the impact on the overall population is positive - see 3.3 above.*]
- * If the proposal has no effect on the level of poverty, what options might be identified to produce a positive effect? [*Again this could address any potential for certain social categories to miss out on benefits generally available to the target group.*]

4.4 In answering these questions, **particular attention should be paid to those groups which have been identified as being either in persistent poverty or known to be at risk of poverty** (in both rural and urban areas), viz.:

- * the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed;
- * children, particularly those living in large families;
- * single adult households and households headed by someone working in the home;
- * lone parents;
- * people with disabilities;
- * older people, in particular households headed by a retired person;
- * members of the Traveller community;
- * the homeless;
- * ethnic minorities.

[It should be noted that the extent and composition of these groups are likely to change over time and the focus of proofing would change accordingly over the lifetime of the NAPS.]

4.5 Particular attention should also be paid to **inequalities which may lead to poverty**. These could arise, for instance, in the context of age, gender, disability, belonging to an ethnic minority (including membership of the Traveller community) or sexual orientation.

5. Evaluation

5.1 Poverty Proofing is currently in place on a one-year pilot basis.

The effectiveness of the process will be reviewed at the end of the trial year (Summer/Autumn 1999). Officials in all Departments will be asked to respond to an evaluative process on their experience of the Poverty Proofing Procedure in order to inform that review.

Should you have any queries on these guidelines, please contact the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs at (01) 7043031 or 7043827.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy Unit,
April 1999.

APPENDIX C

Main Social Welfare and Social Inclusion/ NAPS Commitments in Programme for Prosperity and Fairness

MAIN SOCIAL WELFARE & SOCIAL INCLUSION/NAPS COMMITMENTS IN PROGRAMME FOR PROSPERITY AND FAIRNESS

Framework I for Living Standards and Workplace Environment¹⁸

1.1.6 Tackling Tax Evasion and Fraud

Social Partners are committed to strengthening the role of the existing Monitoring Group and to measures to increase the resources applied to tackling tax and social welfare fraud and evasion.

1.1.7 Tax Credits

A special Working Group on the lines of the Tax Credit Working Group should be established to examine the role which refundable tax credits on play in the tax and welfare system.

This examination will include the possibility of paying FIS through the tax system.

A progress report will be prepared by the end of 2000.

1.1.11 Medium Term Tax Policy

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

1.2 Pensions

1. During the period of the Programme, the level of State old age pensions will be improved in line with commitments in the Review of the Government's Action Programme for the Millennium.
2. New pre-funding arrangements will be established to meet part of the future costs of social welfare pensions. The necessary legislation will be passed in 2000.

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(Numbering is consistent with numbering in Programme for Prosperity and Fairness)

3. The new Pensions Bill will be published in July 2000.
4. A survey of occupational pension coverage will be undertaken in the first 15 months of the Programme in order to monitor progress towards the NPPI target. Details of the nature and timing of the survey and subsequent reviews will be agreed in consultation with the Pensions Board.
5. A Working Group of the public service unions and relevant Government Departments and other appropriate parties will be set up to advise on the implementation of the relevant Government decisions on the Report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions.

1.3(b) Workplace Environment

6. The Bill implementing EU Directive of Part Time Work will be introduced in June 2000. The Government will confirm that the definition of “remuneration” in the Directive will include occupational pensions.

Framework III for Social Inclusion and Equality

3.1 National Anti-Poverty Strategy

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

criteria for funding, including how funding will be provided for new emerging needs.

- Mechanisms for strengthening the involvement of the social partners in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy will be considered.

Poverty Proofing

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

3.2 Income Adequacy

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

Social Welfare Payments

3. Recognising the complex issues involved in developing a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments, a Working Group will be established with an

independent Chairperson to examine the issues, including their long-term economic, budgetary, PRSI contribution, distributive and incentive implications, in light of trends in economic, demographic and labour market patterns and to report by April 2001.

4. Child Benefit, as a key mechanism to reduce levels of child poverty and to provide child income support, will be substantially increased over the period of this Programme, with a priority focus towards £100 per month for the third and subsequent children.
5. Over the course of the Programme, Child Dependent Allowances will be payable to all social welfare recipients where the child is under 22 and in full-time education.
6. All rates of social welfare will be increased in real terms over the life of this Programme. The rate of increase will reflect the availability of resources and increasing rates will have a high priority in the event that economic growth in excess of the expected rate on which this Programme is based generates additional resources.

Social Insurance System

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

Carers

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

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

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

Other

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

3.3 Urban Disadvantage

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

3.4 Rural Poverty

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

Farm Assist

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

3.6 Targeted Investments in Disadvantaged Areas

1. An Inter-Departmental Committee will be established to identify and clarify the range of existing and proposed social inclusion measures in

the National Development Plan from which integrated targeted intervention measures can be developed.

2. The Committee will, inter alia, have regard to the experiences and implications of the
 - Community Development Programme
 - The Family Services Project.

3.9 Supporting Voluntary Effort and Participation

White Paper

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

Foundation for Investing in Communities

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

3.10 Healthcare

Services for People with Disabilities

11. The Department of Health and Children, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Department of Finance will set up and participate in a Working Group which will consult with the social

partners to examine the feasibility of introducing a Cost of Disability Payment.

Health Research

25. Resources will be allocated to health research as part of a comprehensive approach to ensuring adequate medium and long-term planning of health provision. Data systems will be adapted to enable dis-aggregation of health access and outcomes across NAPS target groups. This data will be monitored and reported on a national level.
26. A Working Group will be set up in 2000 to identify the scope for developing a NAPS framework within the health sector.

3.12 Equality

Equality Proofing

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

Disaggregated Data

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

Accessibility of Public Services

19. Each Government Department will ensure that reasonable steps are taken to make its services and those of agencies under its remit accessible to people with disabilities. To facilitate effective action and acceptable standards in this regard, the National Disability Authority will issue guidelines in accordance with international norms and will award an accessibility symbol to compliant public offices. Government

Departments and agencies will take all reasonable action to qualify within five years.

Employment of People with Disabilities

27. Every Department will take appropriate action to ensure that agencies under its aegis achieve the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the Public Service at an early date.

Framework IV Labour Market

4.2 Labour Market

Access by Women

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

Community Employment Scheme

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

4.3 Childcare and Family-Friendly Policies

Development and Expansion of Childcare Facilities

5. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs will assist in the development of out-of-school hours childcare services by community groups.

Completion Process

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

Family Support

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

services and supports are intended to enhance the capacity of those in the most difficult family circumstances and to improve their personal situations.

4.6 Commitment to the Wider World

Ireland's Relationships with our EU Partners

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

EU Treaty Reform

6. Ireland will encourage the bringing forward of Directives, based on Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, on discrimination and racism in the fields of employment and access to goods and services, as well as a Community Action Programme on Counteracting Discrimination.
7. An ambitious response to Article 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty will be pursued.