

*TOWARDS 2016*

**TEN-YEAR FRAMEWORK SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP  
DRAFT AGREEMENT 2006 - 2015**

## **Foreword by An Taoiseach**

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## **Overview**

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Agreed Objective of the Agreement**

The shared overall goal for this new ten-year framework agreement covering the period 2006 – 2016 is to realise the NESC vision for Irish society by:

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

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

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

Economic and social progress in Ireland is now more broadly based and has deeper roots than in the past. At the same time economic progress is vulnerable in a number of ways, some of which are new. In the past the performance of the economy set limits to our social and environmental possibilities. However, economic policy and social provision can be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

### **1.3 Achieving the goals set out in this framework agreement within the timescales envisaged depends on attaining the levels of growth indicated in chapter 2. Should economic growth exceed these levels, and subject to the key principles of macro-economic policy set out in this agreement, additional resources will be distributed in a balanced way to accelerate progress across the priority objectives of the agreement, particularly social inclusion. However, if economic growth falls below the projected levels, it will be necessary to re-prioritise or make more gradual progress in order to adhere to these key principles while emphasising the need to protect the most vulnerable people. This aspect will be kept under review by the Steering Group.**

#### **1.4 Adopting A Longer Term Perspective**

Dramatic changes are already taking place in the level and composition of Ireland's population and in the global market which present significant opportunities and challenges. A large increase in population is expected in the coming years, which while representing opportunities for Ireland will put further pressure on services, infrastructure and the environment. This and other changes make a compelling case for taking a longer-term view to policy analysis, formulation and implementation.

The Government and the Social Partners accept that to achieve the NESC Vision of Ireland requires a longer-term strategic planning perspective, which, in turn, warrants a longer-term partnership framework. Thus a ten-year framework has been agreed with the Social Partners. Within this ten-year framework agreement it is understood by the parties that there are identified strategies and actions to be achieved during the first phase of this agreement (27 months).

The major economic/infrastructural, social and environmental issues which require a longer-term focus and a coherent and "joined up" policy approach pose challenges to the governance of public service organisations. Departments and agencies will need to work closely with the social partners and others to become networks that undertake delivery, outreach and analysis effectively.

#### **1.5 National Instruments**

Considerable work has already been done in preparing and setting out the change agenda to address the challenges ahead. A number of instruments are either already in place or are being finalised that will contribute to the realisation of this agenda. These include:

- The new National Development Plan 2007-2013
- The National Spatial Strategy (NSS)
- National Action Plan on Social Inclusion
- At EU level, the revised Lisbon Agenda to which Ireland subscribes fully and through the National Reform Programme, which is prepared under it.

#### **1.6 Building a New Social Policy Perspective**

The life cycle approach adopts the perspective of the citizen as the centrepiece of building a new social policy approach, within this ten-year framework agreement. The key lifecycle phases include *children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities*. Chapter 3 of this agreement sets out the key goals and strategies across these key phases for the provision of three critical and overlapping types of interventions identified by NESC: key services, income supports and activation measures requiring new and innovative responses.

The development of the lifecycle approach is further informed by a range of infrastructural policy supports as set out in chapter two. The lifecycle approach also poses major challenges in terms of coordinated policy formulation, and leveraging the public service modernisation programme to ensure integration at service delivery level.

#### **1.7 North/South Co-operation and Reconciliation**

The Government and the Social Partners remain committed to full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the early establishment of the North/South Consultative Forum with the participation of the social partners. North/South co-operation needs to be at the heart of strategic planning on the island. The focus must be on mutual gains to demonstrate that the economic and social success of each part

of Ireland is advantageous to the other. Conversely, economic and social failure in one part is damaging to the other. There is also a historic task of completing the process of reconciliation between the two traditions on the island of Ireland.

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

### **1.8 The Role of Social Partnership**

It is recognised that consultations take place regularly between Government, the wider civil society and a range of interests. The process of Social Partnership is a set of relationships based on trust and problem solving. The ten-year framework allows those relationships between Government and the Social Partners to evolve.

### **1.9 Implementation Arrangements**

Chapter 4 addresses the implementation arrangements for the ten-framework work agreement, including an agreed protocol for engagement between Government and the Social Partners, mechanisms for engagement at national and sectoral level, more streamlined arrangements for monitoring and review. The valuable role of the Community & Voluntary Sector is also recognised. The monitoring and review arrangements for the duration of the agreement are also set out.

## **Chapter 2. Enhancing Ireland's competitive advantage in a changing world economy and building sustainable social and economic development.**

### **Macroeconomic Policy**

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

### **Context**

2.2 The current economic background is broadly favourable and it is likely that there will continue to be strong growth in employment over the medium term. The global economy is expected to grow by 4.4 per cent in 2006 and by 4.3 per cent thereafter in the medium term up to 2012. The ESRI has projected average GNP growth in Ireland of between 3.5 per cent and 4.9 per cent over the period to 2010, and between 3.1 per cent and 3.3 per cent from 2010 to 2012. There are currently a number of significant risks domestically and internationally: for example the housing market is vulnerable to a downturn and the US current account deficit is a risk. A sudden correction of this deficit could be associated with a sharp depreciation of the dollar and a large rise in US interest rates, leading in turn to a US and global recession.

2.3 This agreement is based on the judgement that, on balance, there will be a continuation of strong growth in the Irish economy in the coming years. However these risks and challenges cannot be ignored and the possibility of more adverse economic conditions needs to be seriously taken into account. Therefore this Agreement has been drawn up with an objective of mitigating these risks and strengthening the competitiveness and productive capacity of the economy.

### **Principles underlying Macroeconomic Policy**

2.4 Maintaining a supportive policy framework for a small open economy in the longer term will require adherence to a number of key principles:

- An increased focus on high value-added economic activity.
- Working to restore and improve Ireland's competitiveness in all its dimensions and to maintain low inflation.
- Promoting sustainable growth and a socially inclusive and environmentally friendly society.
- Building an equitable tax system which encourages economic growth so as to ensure employment growth, and continuing improvements in living standards for all.
- The Government will be pressing for the maintenance of the current VAT regime in relation to labour intensive services and construction in whatever common EU VAT system may emerge in the future.
- Maintaining a sound budgetary position that supports stable economic growth and ensures that the public finances will be in a position to meet future expenditure pressures, even in times of lower growth.

- Providing a balance between net exports and domestic consumption and investment as drivers of economic growth.

### **Actions to be taken**

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

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

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

### **Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity**

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

2.8 The complex issue of productivity is important and is of concern to Government and the social partners. Strengthening our productive capacity and performance will increase the resources available for higher living standards and further investment in social and economic infrastructure.

2.9 The NESC in its strategy report also reaffirmed its belief that the networks approach should play a more significant role in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

### **Strengthening Consumer Protection**

2.10 Improving competitiveness also means bringing more competition and a fair deal to consumers. Providing better consumer information and protection will empower consumers to achieve good value for money and help lower costs.

The value of a pro consumer agenda will be promoted in stronger terms as the National Consumer Agency (NCA) strengthens its operations and as its mandate develops into consumer advocacy, research, information, enforcement, education and

awareness. The NCA will become a forceful, statutory advocate for consumer rights and will be empowered and resourced to promote the consumers' case with regulated industries and individual regulators.

### **Principles underlying Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity**

2.11 The approach to Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity within this ten-year framework agreement is informed by the following underlying principles:

- Building on successful adoption and operation of advanced technologies to achieve greater innovation in products, processes and organisation both to improve productivity and improve service delivery.
- Strengthening the competitive advantages of our economic and industrial base and promoting a more entrepreneurial culture.
- Improving investment in human capital and adapting the education and training systems, including emphasis on upskilling those already at work and those who wish to return to work, including older people, and those whose need for learning is greatest, and focusing on increasing education participation and completion at all levels and in all sectors.
- Creating a more competitive business environment and encouraging private and enterprise initiative through better regulation, greater competition and stronger consumer protection and advocacy.
- Developing and broadening innovation and productivity to include an organisational culture which will enable the delivery of high quality services in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors.
- Adapting more responsively to changes needed to maintain high levels of employment.
- Maintaining a strong focus on attracting inward investment while supporting the development of the services sector, with particular emphasis on the indigenous sector, as a driver of exports.

### **Overall Policy**

2.12 The overall policy focus is to increase and improve the levels of activity in research and development, in the public and private sectors, and to facilitate greater levels of creativity and innovation, through greater investment in human resources.

2.13 The key development in the last decade has been the increased investment in basic research. However, there is a need for a more strategic direction in policy and innovation.

### **Actions to be taken**

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

## **Sectoral Strategies**

- 2.15 In the context of globalisation and growing competition for both trade and investment, the lifecycle of policymaking is getting shorter. Long-term progress in social and economic terms will require consistent improvements in competitiveness together with the productive capacity and scale to adjust with flexibility to changes as they arise in the markets in which we trade. To ensure our economy, enterprises and our labour force have the capacity and skills to adapt to the current of international business, there will be periodic policy reviews throughout this agreement to ensure there is no diminution in the competitive capacity of the economy to be attractive for higher value added activities.
- 2.16 Over the life of the ten-year framework agreement new arrangements will inevitably emerge to deal with evolving competitiveness issues, to amplify their importance for enterprise and to consider policy changes that better meet both economic and social objectives. This will see a different process of communication between Government and broader interests on those issues of greatest importance to sustaining a vibrant enterprise economy.

## **Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation**

- 2.17 Government will publish during 2006 a comprehensive Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation for the period 2006 – 2013. The strategy provides for the continued development of a world-class research system underpinned by the essential physical and human infrastructure, significantly increasing the number of PhD graduates over its lifespan. Top-level researchers will also be drawn from both home-grown talent and the brightest who can be drawn from overseas. The strategy will also propose mechanisms to 1) ensure that the investment in research is turned into commercial value to the greatest extent possible, and 2) in regard to enterprise, the strategy will set out structures and mechanisms to enhance supports to industry and encourage firms to become more engaged in R&D activity.
- 2.18 The strategy will be judged over the ten-year framework agreement in terms of the achievement of the following outcomes:
- Increased participation in the sciences by young people,
  - Significant increases in the numbers of people with advanced qualifications in science and engineering,
  - Enhanced contribution of research to economic, social and environmental development,
  - Transformational change in the quality and quantity of research undertaken by companies – both directly and in cooperation with third level institutions,
  - Increased participation in international S&T cooperation and trans-national research activity,
  - An established international profile for Ireland as a premier location for carrying out world class research and development in key sectors.

## **Better Regulation**

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

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

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

## **Knowledge Society**

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

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

## **Public Enterprise**

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

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

## Manufacturing Sector

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

- Provide a proportion within the overall provision of additional resources for upskilling those in employment (as provided for in section x of Part Two of the agreement relating to Pay, the Workplace and Employment Rights and Compliance) , to which projects to up-skill workers in manufacturing would have priority access, with priority also being given to the low-skilled.
- Appoint a Director for the Framework R&D Programme Support Structures to support manufacturing companies to maximise their involvement with these programmes.
- Undertake a dedicated promotional campaign to increase awareness within the manufacturing sector of the Export Orientation Programme, the Diploma in International Trade and EI's key sales and marketing personnel grants and review the operation of these programmes with a view to identifying further measures by which the take-up by manufacturing companies can be increased.

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

- Managing change to sustain competitiveness, in particular measures to
  - Create an awareness of the critical importance of a flexible and positive attitude to change in technology, systems and processes. This embraces investing in enabling technologies and organisational restructuring with a view to addressing imbalances in productivity performance*
  - Assist smaller manufacturing firms to realise the potential of information technology*
  - Support upskilling of low-skilled workers in the manufacturing sector*
  - Support the change process in companies through advice and assistance*
- Enhancing the contribution of research, development and innovation, in particular measures to
  - Support the establishment of R&D units in manufacturing companies*
  - Support companies applying for R&D grants under EU Framework Programmes*
- Improving the environment for manufacturing, in particular measures to
  - Ensure good quality regulation*
  - Ensure that there are no unreasonable increases and impacts in local charges.*

*-Increase knowledge and awareness of the changing conditions in the sector, including exploring the possibility of creating a post of Chief Manufacturing Advisor*

- Better exploit domestic opportunities, in particular measures to
  - Encourage greater linkages between MNCs and indigenous manufacturers to support innovation, research and marketing*
  - Facilitate companies in applying for public sector contracts*
  
- Growing sales in export markets, in particular measures to
  - Provide access to market information and opportunities*
  - Enhance the sales and marketing capability within manufacturing companies*
  - Enhance the effectiveness of the Export Orientation Programme and the Diploma in International Trade in the manufacturing sector.*

### **Food and Drink Sector**

2.25 The Government recognises the key importance of the food and drink industry to the economy and acknowledges the significant challenges and opportunities it faces in the light of changing national, EU and international trade policies and major market developments. The Agri-Vision 2015 Action Plan set out a vision for the development of sector and a wide range of actions to meet these challenges. In this context a Committee, chaired at Ministerial level and comprised of senior representatives of the industry will be established to identify issues impeding the development of the sector and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with them in a holistic manner.

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

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

### **Infrastructure and Planning**

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

### **Overall Context**

2.29 Ireland is at present engaged in a major programme of capital investment by Government, with close to 5 per cent of GNP being used for this purpose. This programme has greatly improved infrastructure from a low base and while further significant improvements are in prospect, a significant infrastructural deficit still

remains. Despite levels of current income which compare favourably with many of our EU counterparts, Ireland's total accumulated wealth, of which infrastructure is a part, still lags many other developed countries. For this reason Government and the social partners support the continuation of a major infrastructure investment programme and the need for more balanced regional development, particularly in the context of the dramatic changes in the level and composition of Ireland's population.

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

### **National Spatial Strategy**

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

- The new NDP will have prioritised capital investment in line with the NSS.
- All City and County Development Plans will have incorporated the policies and aims of the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines.
- Each Gateway will have in place an overall framework for strategic development and investment adopted by its constituent local authorities.
- The agreed framework will be in place to enable collaboration and cooperation in relation to spatial planning issues on the island of Ireland.
- Research programmes will be underway delivering information on the economic potential and performance of the Gateways and their more rural hinterlands.

- 2.32 The high level outcomes sought within the longer-term 10-year framework agreement are as follows:

- Substantial and faster growth evident in all of the Gateways
- Gateways both individually and collectively providing alternative locations for investment and economic activity complementing Dublin
- Hub Towns extending the impact of Gateways more widely within their regions.
- Enhanced quality of life through more balanced development of the Gateways and their wider regions, the co-ordinated delivery of infrastructure and amenities and improved connectivity between urban and rural areas.

- 2.33 The effectiveness of the NSS Strategy itself in meeting its objectives and the medium

and longer term outcomes identified over the duration of this agreement will be the subject of periodic review with the partners.

### **National Development Plan (NDP 2007 – 2013)**

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

### **Principles underlying the NDP**

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

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

### **Public Private Partnerships**

- 2.36 In the context of this agreement and in line with the vision set out in the NESC Strategy, People, Productivity and Purpose, public authorities will seek to pursue the PPP option in accordance with the National Framework for Public Private Partnerships, as adopted under the partnership process in 2001 and in accordance with related guidelines including on the application of the public sector benchmark and on stakeholder consultations.
- 2.37 Government is favourably disposed to providing for trade union representation on the Board of the National Development Finance Agency. Government also recognises the complex issues that arise in seeking to develop PPPs. In that regard, resources will be made available through partnership funding structures to part fund appropriate training for unions to fully familiarise themselves with the PPP process and related procedures

### **Sectoral Strategies**

- 2.38 Government will work in an island-of-Ireland context, wherever possible in the formulation and implementation of relevant sectoral strategies.

### **Transport 21 (2006 – 2015)**

- 2.39 Transport 21 is the Government's capital investment framework for transport for the 10-year period 2006 to 2015. Transport 21 involves investment of in excess of €34 billion and entails 2 key strategies – A Greater Dublin Area strategy and a national strategy.
- 2.40 The Dublin strategy aims to transform the transport system in the Greater Dublin Area to enable it to cater effectively for existing demand and for future population and economic growth. There will be a particular emphasis on the development of an extensive, modern, integrated public transport network. This is to be achieved through a major expansion of rail-based public transport services and a significant increase in bus capacity and in the number of Quality Bus Corridors. A new Dublin Transport Authority will be established to manage implementation of this crucial strategy. Congress and other interested parties will be consulted during the drafting of the legislation. The main elements of the Dublin Strategy include:
- The development of Metro North (St. Stephen's Green to Swords) by 2012
  - The phased implementation of Metro West (Tallaght-Clondalkin-Blanchardstown-Ballymun) by 2014
  - The provision of a new Luas line to Lucan by 2013
  - The phased development of a Luas line from St. Stephens Green to Liffey Junction by 2012
  - Extension of the existing Luas network to Cherrywood, Bray, Docklands and Citywest
  - The completion of the Kildare rail line upgrade project by 2010
  - The phased development of a rail link to Navan by 2015
  - The construction of a new rail station in the Docklands and the implementation of city centre rail resignalling project by 2009
  - The construction of a rail interconnector and associated electrification works.
  - A 60% increase in bus capacity over the programme period
  - A doubling of the length of the Quality Bus Network by 2009
  - Phased upgrading of the M50 by 2010.

- 2.41 The national strategy involves the development of a high-quality national road and public transport network, the provision of improved regional and local public transport services and investment in essential capital works at regional airports.
- 2.42 The national road programme will include:
- The completion of the inter-urban motorways linking Dublin to Belfast, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford by 2010
  - The phased development of the Atlantic Road Corridor by 2015
  - Substantial upgrading of the rest of the national primary network and targeted investment in national secondary roads over the programme period.
- 2.43 The main features of the national investment in public transport include:
- Phased upgrading of intercity rail services by 2009
  - Phased re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor by 2014
  - New and improved commuter rail services in Cork and Galway by 2008
  - Upgraded bus services and improved bus priority and park and ride in the four provincial cities
  - Upgraded regional and local bus services
- 2.44 Transport 21 includes a financial provision to ensure that the transport system is accessible for people with physical, sensory and cognitive impairments. This will be achieved in two ways. Accessibility will be designed and built into new projects. Substantial funding will be provided to enable the phased retrofit of existing infrastructure. The details of the accessibility implementation programme will be set out in the Department of Transport's sectoral plan under the Disability Plan 2005.

#### **Rural Transport Initiative (RTI)**

- 2.45 The Government decided in 2005 that the RTI would be put on a permanent footing from 2007 onwards. Funding of the order of €5m is in place for the Initiative in 2006. In addition, as indicated at the launch of Transport 21, there will be a doubling of the cash funding available to the RTI by 2007. Thereafter, a steady increase in funding will be provided for rural transport services, ultimately to a cash level about four times the 2005 allocation. The community and voluntary sector has a vital contribution to make and role to play in local and rural transport services and has been actively involved in the development of RTI.

#### **Public Transport Partnership Forum**

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

#### **Road Safety**

- 2.47 Government is committed to the urgent enactment of the Road Traffic Bill. The primary purpose of the Bill is to provide for the necessary statutory background for a range of specific measures set out in the Road Safety Strategy 2004 to 2006. Reversing the negative trends in road deaths and the achievement of enforcement targets is particularly dependent on the introduction of this primary legislation particularly in relation to mandatory roadside alcohol testing and the privatisation of speed cameras.

#### **Current Priorities**

- Enactment of the Road Traffic Bill 2006.
- Expansion of the Traffic Corps over the next three years. By the end of 2006, over 800 Officers will be serving in the Corps. The planned staffing

threshold for the Corps of 1,200 officers will be realised by the end of 2008, with overall authorised numbers.

- Introduction of mandatory alcohol testing to deter drink driving.
- Privatisation of speed cameras to enforce speeding controls.
- Preparation of a new Road Safety Strategy.

#### Long Term Goals

- Reduce and maintain a decrease in the level of road deaths in line with National Road Safety Strategy.
- Increased, sustained and visible enforcement
- Changes in attitudinal behaviour in relation to speeding and drink driving brought about by greater enforcement and the increased risk of being caught.
- Increased role of new Road Safety Authority, a single agency with responsibility for a wide range of functions which have a bearing on road safety. It will have the legislative and financial muscle to coordinate and advance the road safety agenda through delivery of road safety programmes such as testing of drivers and vehicles, road safety research and data collection, driver education and the promotion of awareness of road safety in general.

### **Housing Policy Framework – Building Sustainable Communities**

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

2.49 The Government and the Social Partners endorse the important principles set out in the Housing Policy Framework - *Building Sustainable Communities* which provides a vision of the kind of high quality, integrated sustainable communities that are worth building. This also aims to take into account other factors in the areas of balanced regional and rural development, planning, physical and social infrastructure and environmental sustainability and the development of social capital. The parties agree to work together toward the delivery of this vision over this ten-year framework agreement. A more detailed policy statement will issue during 2006, reflecting these principles and taking account of this Agreement. Working through the Housing Forum, the Government and the Social Partners will focus on five main areas to achieve the objectives of creating sustainable communities:

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

- 2.50 The approach seeks to ensure that all housing is seen as being on an equal footing whether provided fully by the State or supported in some way. All parties have a role in developing this ethos, which makes no distinction between types of housing or tenure. A critical factor in determining housing interventions is the requirement for a clear perspective as to the scale and nature of need, including local variations. In framing responses, account should be taken of individual and family circumstances and each person's position in the lifecycle. The approach should also seek to encourage choice, personal autonomy and a sense of community involvement for all those across the life-cycle. To advance these goals, a new means of assessment will be developed to provide a better basis for policy development and service delivery to ensure that all people can live with maximum independence within their community.
- 2.51 The parties acknowledge the view taken in the NESC report on housing that an additional 73,000 social housing units should be provided in the period 2004 to 2012. The parties consider this target as being of continuing relevance to the expected response under this ten-year framework agreement. Implementation of such an objective will be assessed in the light of work on the assessment of need, the emerging picture in relation to need, the evolution of the various housing programmes and the outputs achieved under these, and the resources available.
- 2.52 Key areas for development under the first phase of this ten-year framework agreement include new means of assessing need and enhancing delivery of social and affordable housing. The Government are committed to expanding the social and affordable housing options over the coming years and have indicated that increased investment will meet the needs of some 50,000 households over the three years to 2008, through the existing range of social and affordable housing options. Further households will benefit from the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).
- 2.53 The Government is committed to providing additional investment over the period 2007-2009, which will provide an expanded range of housing options to households who cannot afford to provide for their accommodation needs from their own resources. This will include
- The commencement/acquisition of an additional 4,000 new housing units over the period 2007 to 2009 for such households [through a combination of local authority (2,000), voluntary and co-operative housing (1,000), and RAS long-term contractual arrangements for new supply (1,000)]. This will bring the total number of new commencements/acquisitions in the period to 27,000 units.
  - In addition, further households will benefit from full implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, involving contractual arrangements with landlords, for existing properties transferring from rent supplement.
  - Implementation of the Local Authority Traveller accommodation programmes.
- 2.54 In addition to the current affordable housing measures which will deliver some 17,000 units over the period 2007 to 2009 through a more streamlined approach currently under development, the Affordable Homes Partnership is undertaking initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Greater Dublin Area. A key instrument is their role in bringing forward additional land for housing development. It is understood that the Partnership is at an advanced stage in selecting suitable sites from its first call for proposals, which subject to planning, could deliver a substantial affordable housing yield. Other innovative means of increasing the supply of affordable housing will also be explored during the first phase of this

agreement. Throughout the period of agreement there will be an emphasis on innovation and joint policy approaches with the social partners to accelerate delivery, including affordable rental and shared equity options.

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

2.56 As a result of the various social and affordable housing measures the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households will be addressed over the period 2007-2009. The multi-annual action plans in place at local authority level, supported by active land management strategies announced by the Government last year are key instruments in delivering this ambitious programme. These will be bolstered by the following measures:

- Active engagement with the voluntary and co-operative housing sector to increase their role in delivering on needs, through a rationalisation, early in the first phase of the agreement, of administrative and approval arrangements to ensure the earliest possible delivery of suitable quality projects, improvement in funding arrangements and measures to enhance governance of the sector and an expanding role for the sector under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.
- To further assist the voluntary and co-operative sector in the context of the programme outlined at 2.53, the Government will arrange through local authorities for additional land/units to be provided under this Agreement for the purpose of meeting identified housing need. It will be expected that units/sites sufficient to supply some 3,000 dwellings will be identified and made available over the period 2007-2009.
- The National Building Agency, which has considerable experience in area of regeneration and remedial works, will establish with immediate effect a dedicated unit to support local authorities in undertaking regeneration and remedial programmes as part of a programme to bring all social housing accommodation up to the best possible standard.
- Minimum standards regulations for the private rented sector will be updated by the Dept of Environment, Heritage and local Government and effectively enforced by Local Authorities.

2.57 The Housing Forum will play an important role in inputting to policy development and evaluating outcomes over the period of the ten-year framework agreement. This will include housing issues in both the urban and rural environments. Progress will be reviewed following the first phase (during 2008) of the ten-year framework agreement. This will inform the delivery under the next series of multi-annual housing action plans, taking account of market developments and capacity. In many areas, the outcomes for individuals will be critically dependent on the inter-linkages of services as described under the key lifecycle phases set out in Chapter 3.

## **Construction**

- 2.58 The Government recognises the key contribution of the construction sector in the development of the overall economy, and specifically in the delivery of public and private infrastructure. The sector employs 250,000 people across three major sub-sectors: Housing, General Contracting, and Civil Engineering.
- 2.59 The efficient and effective operation of each of these sub-sectors is important for future economic and social development. New Government construction contracts have as their objective the delivery of fixed price lump sum construction contracts, which transfer appropriate risk to contractors.
- 2.60 Government commits itself to working actively with the sector with regard to meeting national priorities. In this context, the Forum for the Construction Industry will continue to provide a means for consultation on matters relating to the industry.

## **Energy Policy**

- 2.61 It is imperative for a modern competitive economy to have reliable, secure and competitively priced energy available to it. Long-term actions and decisions regarding the energy sector must also be sustainable from an environmental perspective in order to provide safeguards for future generations.
- 2.62 Energy policy aims to achieve 3 fundamental objectives:
- ▶ Security of Energy supply
  - ▶ Environmental sustainability
  - ▶ Economic competitiveness
- 2.63 In this context, the Government will publish an Energy Green Paper in mid 2006 to consider our energy options for the future. This Paper will set out the challenges facing us in the energy area as well as outlining policy responses already taken and those being proposed. The Government believes this will provide clarity and certainty to the sector in terms of a national energy strategy between now and 2020.
- 2.64 In the context of Ireland's small energy market size and particular exposure to sustained high global oil and gas prices and supply risks, and noting that high energy costs are an increasing concern for enterprise and consumers, key priorities for energy policy over the period will include the delivery of critical energy infrastructure; expansion of the contribution of renewable energy; progression of structural changes in the energy sector and the regulatory framework to encourage competition in an all-island economy, increased cost efficiencies and best value for both consumers and enterprise; delivery of the single all-island electricity market to schedule; support for significant expansion of energy RTDI; and actions to improve energy efficiency and demand management across all sectors and to address fuel poverty.
- 2.65 The Government wishes to see a productive consultation process involving all stakeholders on the challenges identified and directions proposed in the Green paper before finalising a White Paper by the end of 2006.
- 2.66 The key outcomes to be achieved during the course of the first phase and the wider ten-year framework agreement include:

- Publication of the Green Paper on National Energy Policy (mid 2006)
- Publish White Paper on National Energy Policy (end 2006)
- Launch National Energy Efficiency Awareness Campaign (September 2006)
- Establishment of the Single Electricity Market (July 2007)
- Establishment of an Energy Research Council (mid 2006)
- Continued and extended support for renewable energy sources, including implementation of renewable energy strategies and a National Bio-Energy /biofuels Strategy ( 2006)
- Completion of the North/South Gas Interconnector project (2011)
- Completion of the East/West and North/South Electricity Interconnectors (2012)
- Progressive delivery of the All Island Energy Market Framework (2006-2012)

2.67 In relation to bio-fuels, the targeted Budget 2006 package of excise relief valued at €205 million will allow the EU target of 2% to be achieved by 2008. Government and the Social Partners recognise the potential to further develop capacity in this area and to achieve even more challenging targets in relation to bio-energy/biofuels in light also of EU developments. Government will put in place high-level coordinated arrangements, to deliver a cohesive policy approach, all elements of the Bio-Energy value chain (i.e. producer, processor, and consumer) to optimise the potential sectoral benefits across the agriculture, enterprise, transport and energy sectors, including an appropriate forum for engagement with the social partners.

### **Telecommunications**

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

2.69 The overall Government goal is to achieve a vibrant, competitive telecoms market that facilitates the widespread availability of a choice of high-quality telecommunications services to business and residential end-users by a variety of providers over a range of technology platforms, including fixed-line, mobile, wireless, and satellite, which is comparable to our international peers. This goal will be progressed in the context of the recent EU commitment to increasing the availability of broadband in under-served locations, aiming at broadband coverage to reach at least 90% of the EU population by 2010.

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

address market failures, which would impact on its overall goal, including infrastructure deficits, by targeted actions in the market.

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

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

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

### **Education and Training**

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

2.74 In this context the high level outcomes to be achieved within a ten-year framework agreement will be to:

- Enhance early education provision for children from disadvantaged communities and for those with special needs.
- Substantially reduce literacy/numeracy problems among children, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities, and the adult population.
- Encourage children to be active agents in their own learning and to engage in collaborative active learning.
- Strengthen the technical and vocational dimensions of curricula and to embed key skills such as learning to learn and ICT, to develop higher order thinking skills, to diversify and strengthen language learning, to modernise the technology subjects, and to increase the take up of the physical sciences at senior level.
- Drive the lifelong learning agenda by enhancing access to training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher-level qualifications.

- Learning opportunities for adults targeted at vulnerable groups and those in disadvantaged communities with low levels of educational attainment.

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

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

2.76 The educational commitments arising under the key life cycle phases are set out in chapter 3.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

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

#### **Context**

2.78 Over time, protection of our environment has assumed increased importance and relevance to all the social partners. This arises both from the intrinsic value of an unpolluted natural environment and its associated economic value especially in terms of agriculture, tourism and resource-based industry. The excellent quality of Ireland's environment provides a national long-term strategic asset. There is a need to continue to educate the wider public as to the quality and value of our environment and the corresponding need to protect and improve it.

2.79 The NESAC concludes that, in common with other countries, we have seen significant evolution in the instruments of environmental policy. These now include public expenditure (capital and current), legislation and related enforcement, economic instruments, awareness initiatives and the involvement of all those who share environmental concerns. It also sees merit in further study of structures and procedures for conflict resolution and consensus building, especially in relation to the provision and location of certain environmental infrastructure.

### **Principles Underlying Environmental Sustainability**

2.80 The environmental challenges have profound implications for the future, including for economic performance and requires the following principles to be reflected in policy formulation:

- Recognising that our environment is a national and key strategic asset.
- Ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and strengthening the synergies between environmental protection, the economic and social aspects of development and improved productivity.
- Ensuring medium and long-term economic and fiscal sustainability.
- Putting in place an infrastructure in water treatment and waste management which represents best practice internationally.
- Maintaining a high quality environment as a source of competitive advantage, by developing a leading position in the research, development and application of environmental technologies and by further integrating climate change and energy policy.
- Continuing to implement environmentally sustainable agricultural development to ensure that the current needs of the sector are met while maintaining the long-term development potential and viability for future generations and enhancing the production of public goods.

### **Strategies**

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

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

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

## **Rural Development**

- 2.81 The NSS concept of selected "gateway" centres dispersing development to linked towns and rural hinterlands will be an important driver of the rural economy. Key requirements will include programmes to support the infrastructure of such areas to ensure their attractiveness as places in which to live and work, encouragement of greater innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas, harnessing the potential of the country's natural resources for energy generation e.g. in the marine sector, forestry and bio-fuels and the development of new market opportunities in areas such as specialist food production, leisure, tourism, culture and heritage.
- 2.82 The national strategy for rural development is currently being prepared jointly by the Department of Agriculture and Food and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as required by the EU framework on rural development. This will be the basis for a national rural development programme, commencing in January 2007, which will provide support under three broad rural objectives:
- To improve the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors;
  - To improve and protect the environment and countryside; and
  - To enhance the quality of life in rural areas and diversify the rural economy.
- 2.83 Measures under the third objective are directed towards improving the economic and social well being of rural communities and will focus on actions such as:
- Promoting economic activity locally, including, for example the development of indigenous rural resources in artisan food, forestry, marine, rural/agri tourism and cultural heritage;
  - Developing local initiatives essential to community well-being, with particular focus on the availability of local culture and leisure facilities;
  - Village and countryside enhancement; and
  - Environmentally friendly initiatives and conservation of areas of high natural and cultural value.
- 2.84 The allocation of the funding under the national rural development programme to individual measures will reflect the need to underpin the competitiveness and sustainability of the agriculture and forestry sectors while, at the same time, acknowledging and supporting the key contribution being made to rural areas by the wider rural economy. Engagement between local development agencies and the co-operative movement will be encouraged, to ensure their familiarity with the co-operative option, particularly where incorporation is a condition of funding for applicants.
- 2.85 In addition, in the context of the preparation of the next NDP, an inter-Departmental Group on the development of the Rural Economy will prepare a draft chapter for inclusion in the NDP covering, inter alia, the main challenges specific to the rural economy, issues critical to its future development and existing and planned sectoral measures from across Departments that significantly support or impact on the rural economy.

## **A Competitive And Profitable Agri-Food Sector.**

2.86

The radical changes to the CAP, and changes in trade policy likely from the WTO Doha Round, pose major challenges for the Irish farm sector. These changes are taking place in the context of declining availability of EU funding and Ireland's position moving from that of a substantial net recipient of EU funds towards that of a net contributor. Given the right conditions, the agriculture sector can respond positively to these major changes and continue to make a significant contribution to economic and regional development within Ireland. The NESC Strategy 2006 Report has set out a comprehensive analysis of the sector in the context of the national rural economy and what needs to be achieved.

2.87 In order for the agricultural sector to meet its potential going forward, policies and strategies must be directed at the attainment of five key objectives:

- A profitable and competitive production base with the productive capacity necessary to generate a comparable income in line with the rest of the economy from efficient and consolidated family farm production units.
- A competitive agri-food sector providing quality and safe products on the domestic and international market place.
- An agricultural system that is environmentally sustainable.
- A broadening of agricultural activity to include, in particular, generation of renewable energy.
- Ensuring that agriculture makes the maximum contribution to a vibrant rural economy and society.

2.88 The delivery of a set of integrated national policies to implement these five key objectives for the entire sector will be implemented by pursuing the priorities set out in the Agri-Vision 2015 Action Plan. This will include the relevant measures under the 2007-2013 national rural development programme.

## **Art, Sport and Tourism**

### **Art and Culture**

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

2.90 Policy for the arts and national cultural institutions is set out in the Statement of strategy of the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism for the period 2005/2007. The Government is committed to facilitating the promotion and sustainable development of the arts and culture sectors and their contribution to national economic and societal progress through the provision of an appropriate legislative, policy and resource framework. In this regard the Government will

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

## **Sport**

- 2.91 The Government and the social partners recognise the important contribution which sport makes to the social and economic development of the country. The benefits can be assessed in terms of physical and mental well being of the population, social and cultural development, education, personal development and economic impact.
- 2.92 The Government's policy for sport is set out in the Statement of Strategy of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism for the period 2005-2007. The overall Department objective for Irish sport over the next three years is to promote and encourage a vibrant and active sports sector, especially in areas of disadvantage, with increased participation levels, good quality sustainable facilities and opportunities for people to play an active role in sport; where the talents, potential and needs of competitive and elite athletes are also cherished and supported in their pursuit of excellence and success. A policy for physical recreation will be developed, to complement existing policies in sport for the enhancement and support of participation, and the strengthening of social capital.
- 2.93 In this regard the Government, through an appropriate policy and resource framework, will:
- Support and influence increased interest and participation in sport among all age groups
  - Provide funding towards the development of modern, well equipped and well managed sports facilities at national, regional and local level
  - Enhance the supports required to improve the standards of performance of Irish sportspeople in an environment which respects the ethical values of sport

## **Tourism**

- 2.94 The policy for the development of tourism sets out a new vision for Irish tourism, identifies key drivers of success and includes strategic targets for the 10-year period to 2012. A new Tourism Strategy Implementation Group has been established to champion the implementation of the outstanding elements of the strategy.
- 2.95 The strategy incorporates not only specific policy measures in the areas of marketing, product development and human resources development, but also seeks to positively influence the broader agenda which impacts on sustainable tourism development e.g. access and internal transport, competitiveness, the natural and built heritage, taxation, the environment, the marine, rural development.
- 2.96 The key targets, as endorsed by Government, are to double overseas tourism revenue to €6 billion over the period 2003 – 12, with an associated increase in visitor numbers from just under 6 million in 2002 to 10 million in 2012. Targets have also been set for promotable visitor numbers, domestic tourism and regional spread. In line with the strategic policy framework, the key Tourism State Agencies (Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland) will continue to roll out a range of programmes and policies to deliver on the objectives.

## **Recreation**

- 2.97 The Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs in conjunction with Comhairle na Tuaithe will address the three issues of access to the countryside,

developing a countryside code and developing a national countryside recreation strategy. Any proposals emerging in the strategy including implementation issues will be considered by the Minister and as relevant other Ministers/Departments, and publication will be considered in that context.

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

- 2.98 The Lisbon Agenda, of 2000 was relaunched in 2005 with a renewed focus on growth and jobs. Whilst this is appropriate in the EU context, it is equally important that progress be made in parallel with social equity and sustainable environmental development.
- 2.99 As part of the 2005 relaunch, the concept of National Reform Programmes (NRP), setting out the range of measures being taken by each Member State to realise the Lisbon Agenda, was introduced. The NRPs, which are three-year programmes, with annual progress-reporting to the European Commission will take into account priorities for action under the Lisbon Agenda.
- 2.100 The social partners will be consulted in the course of updates, progress reports and new iterations of our NRP. In Ireland's case, our Social Partnership process represents an important element of the overall approach to achieving the Lisbon goals and will contribute through the NRP and the associated progress reporting arrangements.
- 2.103 The National Reform Programme, which was submitted to the European Commission in October 2005, brings together the broad range of policies and initiatives at the macro and micro economic level, the implementation of which aims to sustain Ireland's economic growth and employment performance as its overall contribution to the re-launched Lisbon Agenda over the period to 2008.
- 2.104 Where appropriate, new policy directions or initiatives contained in this agreement arising from engagement with the social partners in the context of, or arising under, this ten-year framework, will be incorporated into the ongoing reporting arrangements under the Lisbon programme.

### **External Relations – EU and the Wider World**

- 2.105 The Government will continue to promote and protect Ireland's interests at the heart of the European Union as it continues to evolve and enlarge. This includes the further development of our relations with our current and future EU partners, a number of whom are very interested in the success Ireland has enjoyed as a result of social partnership.
- 2.106 The Government will also continue to promote and protect Ireland's interests in other international fora and in the wider world.
- 2.107 In the context of the Union's relations with the wider world, we will work to ensure that the interests of people in the world's poorest countries are protected as far as possible.

### **Official Development Assistance (ODA)**

- 2.108 The Government is committed to reaching the United Nations target for spending 0.7% of our GNP on official development assistance (ODA) in 2012. As an interim step towards reaching the target, our ODA spending will reach 0.5% in 2007.
- 2.109 The fight against HIV/AIDS is an essential element of the fight against poverty and will continue to be central to the work of the aid programme. The Government is committed to spending a significant proportion of the expanding ODA budget on the fight against HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases.

### **Irish Abroad**

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

## **CHAPTER 3            The Lifecycle Framework**

### **Introduction**

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

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

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

### **Applying the Lifecycle Framework**

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

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

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

### **Review of Progress**

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

## **Lifecycle Stage - Children**

### **Vision**

The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.<sup>1</sup>

Ireland has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to its implementation in our laws and policies.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for children in Ireland:

- Every child should grow up in a family with access to sufficient resources, supports and services, to nurture and care for the child, and foster the child's development and full and equal participation in society.
- Every family should be able to access childcare services which are appropriate to the circumstances and needs of their children.
- Every child should leave primary school literate and numerate.
- Every student should complete a senior cycle or equivalent programme, (including ICT) appropriate to their capacity and interests.
- Every child should have access to world-class health, personal social services and suitable accommodation.
- Every child should have access to quality play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.
- Every child and young person will have access to appropriate participation in local and national decision-making.

### **Priority Actions**

The parties agree to work together in pursuit of these goals through relevant strategies and processes, including NAPinclusion, the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) and the National Children's Strategy, where policies will be elaborated in greater detail.

They have also agreed to the following priority actions in order to make progress towards these long-term goals during the first phase of the agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> *National Children's Strategy 2000*

## ***1. Early Childhood Development and Care***

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

Actions to achieve this will include:

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

This will ensure substantial progress towards meeting the Barcelona targets of making childcare available to 90% of children aged between 3 and the mandatory school age and 33% of children aged under 3 years by 2010.

It is also agreed that:

- A review of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 will be undertaken prior to its conclusion in consultation with the social partners. This will assess the progress made to date to address childcare needs with a view to developing

new policy responses and successor programme(s) appropriate to emerging needs in childcare.

- The early childhood education component of the DEIS programme will be extended to encompass the remaining 140 urban/town primary school communities under the School Support Programme, following completion of roll-out to the existing target group of 180 urban/town primary school communities.

## **2. *Improving education outcomes for Children***

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

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

This will include:

- Adopting a more focussed approach and putting in place a range of additional supports under DEIS to tackle literacy and numeracy problems in primary schools. Targets will be put in place at both national and individual school level to substantially reduce the literacy and numeracy problems in schools serving disadvantaged communities. Additional literacy supports, under DEIS, will also be targeted at junior cycle students.
- To help further address absenteeism, early school leaving, behavioural problems and special needs an additional 100 posts in total will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009.
- There will continue to be flexible responses to meeting the needs of those young people who leave the formal education system early through second chance education measures such as Youthreach where a significant increase of an additional 1,000 places will be provided by 2009 and the opportunities created for recognition of learning through the national framework of qualifications.
- Protocols will be developed and put in place to ensure co-operation and mutual support among those working to improve attendance and retention in schools. DEIS provides that the National Educational Welfare Board and the Department will work together to ensure that an integrated approach to children at risk is adopted between educational welfare officers and other staff involved in the implementation of the new School Support Programme.
- The Education Act 1998 provides for school boards to publish their admission policies. Legislative and other provisions in relation to admission will be kept under regular review in the context of the ten year framework agreement, with a view to fostering an inclusive school environment.
- Future provision of schools will reflect the increasingly diverse nature of pupil enrolment in response to the local demand and in conformity with the provisions of

the Education Act, 1998 and with established criteria and procedures for recognising new schools.

- Enhanced support for the effective integration of international children at both primary and second-level through the provision of an extra 550 language support teachers by 2009 and the reform of the current limit of two additional teachers per school.
- The Government has already committed itself to reducing the number of children per classroom teacher at primary level to 28:1 in 2006/2007 and 27:1 in 2007/08 and the actual pupil teacher ratio at primary and post-primary will continue to improve as a result, in particular, of the application of resources in respect of special needs pupils.

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

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

- To strengthen the technical and vocational dimensions of curricula, to embed key skills such as learning to learn and ICT, to develop higher order thinking skills, to diversify and strengthen language learning, to modernise the technology subjects and to increase the take up of the physical sciences at senior level. It will continue to be a clear objective of the school building and modernisation programme that there should be adequate laboratory and other specialist room provision for all schools teaching science and technology.
- To implement an ongoing programme of curricular reform building on the review of mathematics and languages already underway, the new syllabi in the technology subjects already developed, and the reconfiguration of subjects proposed as part of senior cycle reforms.

Further actions include:

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

per child basis and that all buses participating in the school transport service will be fitted with safety belts. Following a pilot period, consideration will also be given to rolling out nationally the Warning Flashing Light System on school buses.

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

### **3. *Improving health outcomes for Children***

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver tangible improvements in the health outcomes for children over a ten-year period. This will involve addressing a range of issues including:

- Prevention, early intervention and treatment services within the health sector.
- Policies in other areas such as education, income support, accommodation, childcare, food and the environment.
- Lifestyle related risk factors.

Our approach to health services for children will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the *Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (2001)*.

Actions to be prioritised include:

- Delivering, under the framework of the *Vision for Change* Strategy, a significant number of child and adolescent community mental health teams (CMHTs) within the context of a 7-10 year target of 1 CMHT per 100,000 of the population by 2008, subject to sufficient resources being made available, and two CMHTs per 100,000 of the population by 2013. These child and adolescent CMHTs will develop clear links with primary and community care services and identify and prioritise the mental health needs of children in each catchment area.
- Intensifying our efforts to achieve the WHO target of 95% immunisation for children and actively targeting areas where take-up rates are below this level.
- Developing a new strategic Health Promotion policy by end 2007 which will address the lifestyle factors undermining the health of young people.
- Launching a National Nutrition Policy to address Children's Food Poverty and Obesity.
- Developing a national database to monitor prevalence trends of growth, overweight and obesity.
- Developing the School Meals Programme which will receive €2m in additional funding in 2006.

- Monitoring prevalence trends of smoking and substance use through the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys and the European School Survey Project on alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD).
- Carry out a review of secondary care paediatric services outside Dublin.

#### **4. *Promoting Recreation, Sport, Arts and Culture in the lives of our children***

The Government and social partners recognise the importance of recreation, sport and physical activity for the balanced and healthy development of children.

The Government is committed to:

- Increasing support for sports infrastructure and sporting organisations recognising that sport has the potential to be a driver for social change and that targeting specific groups can address issues of exclusion and inequality.
- Promoting sport in education settings as it is important in addressing negative trends of participation among young people particularly those in the late-teens. This is supported by research undertaken by the ESRI last year and reinforced in the Task Force Report on Obesity.
- Achieving the Irish Sport Council target for 2006 to 2008 to increase by 3% the numbers of children taking part in sport. This will involve the implementation of the complete national roll-out of the Local Sports Partnership network and the associated roll-out of the Buntús programme for primary schools and pre-schools through the LSP network; the introduction of the LISPA child centred model for lifelong participation in Irish sport (Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity); and support for national sports organisations that attract young people.
- Publishing a National Recreation Policy to complement the National Play Policy already in place. These will provide frameworks to address the availability of amenities for younger children and youth friendly and safe facilities and environments for older children/young people. The OMC (Office for the Minister of Children) will work with Government Departments, including the Departments of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Education and Science, to examine spending programmes across Government with a view to the adoption of a more integrated strategic approach to meeting prioritised needs at local level consistent with the National Recreation Policy.

Through the use of existing facilities, and the developments set out in Chapter 2 of this document the Government will continue to encourage participation by children in arts and cultural activities as a means to enrich their quality of life.

#### **5. *Income support***

Very significant additional resources are being made available in 2006 to help tackle child and family poverty. Actions to make further progress towards the objective of eliminating child poverty will include:

- Progress towards the existing NAPS target for those relying on social welfare payments, which the parties agree remains valid and appropriate – i.e. that the combined value of child income support measures be set at 33-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate.
- Progressing, as a priority, further work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes. This could include enhancing existing provisions or the introduction of new or reformed mechanisms. Child income supports which avoid employment disincentives will be reviewed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs as a priority and this work, which will be informed by the NESC study on a second tier child income support, will be completed within one year.
- Focusing on children in lone parent households and larger families, informed by the Government discussion paper on supports for lone parents, and a review of the re-focusing of the family income supplement in favour of larger families with low earnings.

## **6. *Children and their Families***

The Government and the social partners recognise the central importance of the family unit to the lives of children and the need to strengthen the system of supports available to children and their families.

Priority actions to be pursued include:

- Putting in place enhanced policies to support families in a changing society and in particular to ensure that policies are designed to promote family formation and family life.
- The development and delivery of Family Support Initiatives to further develop and strengthen child welfare and protection services as part of national policy for child support.
- Continuing to enhance maternity leave entitlements, in line with the measures announced in Budget 2006, aimed at helping children and their families to experience the qualities of family life, particularly in the important first year of life of the child. This will involve extending the period of paid maternity leave to 6 months by March 2007 and the unpaid maternity leave entitlement to 16 weeks. Together with the existing 14 weeks parental leave, parents' entitlement to paid and unpaid leave will be increased to a total period of 56 weeks (or 70 weeks if the father's parental leave entitlement is also included). The level of provision of maternity/paternity leave will be reviewed again before end 2008.
- Strengthening services under the Teen Parent Support Initiative, which supports teen parents during pregnancy until their child reaches two years of age.
- A study of the extent to which children undertake inappropriate care roles will be undertaken (with the involvement of relevant Departments) to establish the extent and degree to which this issue arises and the levels of impact it has on the lives of children concerned. Based on the outcome of this study and an analysis of the issues identified, a programme of in-home supports will be developed to alleviate specific problem areas identified for children.

- Accelerated implementation of the Children Act 2001, building on the additional resources being made available in 2006, will strengthen national management of High Support Units, Special Residential Services and associated services in the HSE to complement the new Irish Youth Justice Service with increased collaborative working in this area.
- Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children's residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published in the Autumn 2006 Session.
- Implementing the Youth Homelessness Strategy (YHS) with the objective of reducing and if possible eliminating youth homelessness through preventative strategies. The OMC will undertake a review of progress on the implementation of the Strategy. On this basis a future programme of action will be developed.
- Closer links will be developed at national and local level between the Youth Homeless Forum and the Adult Homeless Forum in each area to improve and monitor the effectiveness of systems at local level and ensure continuum of care for the individual upon reaching 18 years of age.

### **Innovative Measures**

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

#### ***1. Establishment of the New Irish Youth Justice Service***

- The new Irish Youth Justice Service will facilitate reform of the youth justice area and provide the leadership necessary to implement the key remaining provisions of the Children Act 2001. The co-location of the Irish Youth Justice Service in the OMC will facilitate a cross-cutting and proactive approach to both the reform process and the implementation of the Act at the earliest possible date.

#### ***2. Integrated services and interventions for children at local level***

- A cross-departmental team chaired by the OMC is developing an initiative to test models of best practice which promote integrated, locally-led, strategic planning for children's services. The objective of this initiative is to secure better developmental outcomes for disadvantaged children through more effective integration of existing services and interventions at local level. As an initiative for prevention and early intervention in children's lives, the aim will be to avert children succumbing to the risks associated with disadvantage as well as giving them the resilience to overcome those risks. As such, the initiative will focus on children who are at risk of suffering from multiple disadvantage relating to poverty and social exclusion, including children of migrant and Traveller communities, and to vulnerable families including due to substance abuse.

#### ***3. Children's and Young People's Participation***

- The OMC will establish a Comhairle Na nÓg Implementation Group to ensure the development of effective Comhairlí na nÓg throughout the country. The Implementation Group will include representatives from Government departments, local government, the youth sector and organisations representing hard-to-reach children and young people and will report to the Minister for Children.

In addition, the OMC will continue to undertake specific participation projects in partnership with statutory bodies, Government Departments and non-Government organisations. The OMC is committed to ensuring that the hard-to-reach children and young people are included in participation structures and projects.

### **Governance Framework**

The newly established OMC (Office of the Minister for Children) brings together the key areas of policy for children's services (other than health and school age education services) in one structure. The key areas of policy within the OMC are Child Welfare and Protection, Childcare, Early Years Education, Youth Justice and the National Children's Strategy.

The co-location of each of these areas within the OMC will bring a cohesive approach to the delivery of services based on the recognition that they are fundamentally interlinked and must be responded to on this basis to secure the best outcomes for children and young people.

### ***Monitoring Progress***

At national level there will be an Implementation Group chaired by the OMC involving the relevant Departments, the HSE, representatives of local authorities, the education sector and other key agencies as required, which will link with the Expert Advisory Group on Children being established by the HSE.

At local level a multi-agency Children's Committee will be established within each of the City/County Development Boards. These committees will be chaired by the HSE who are best placed to drive this initiative to achieve coordinated and integrated services.

The establishment of effective systems and strategies to enable the OMC to meet commitments under the National Children's Strategy will be a key challenge in the initial strategic timeframe which is set to conclude in 2010.

A second ten year National Children's Strategy will then be developed, in conjunction with stakeholders, in the light of the experience gained under the first ten year strategy (which covers the years 2000 to 2010) to follow on immediately from the existing strategy, informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As the Government Office with overarching responsibility for tackling poverty, the Office for Social Inclusion will also work closely with the OMC in promoting the social inclusion agenda in relation to children and their families and in identifying and driving strategic responses in this area.

### **Research and Data**

The OMC will continue to undertake research and data development to assist good policy formulation including overseeing the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland (NLSCI). In addition, the findings from other national studies such as *Health Behaviours in School-going Children*, and tools such as the National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators,

will assist in monitoring the impact of services and programmes in terms of child outcomes, including children at risk and needing preventative services, and in planning and evaluating policies, programmes and resource allocations.

A new National Data Strategy to support the planning and delivery of policy and services in relation to early childhood care and education and school age childcare will be developed by the OMC in liaison with the HSE and CECDE and other relevant agencies. The strategy will identify additional key areas where data is required to inform policy and, in the longer term, to evaluate both the impact of investment on the quality of life experienced by children and where specific targeting of resources is most needed.

## **Lifecycle Stage – People of Working Age**

### **Vision**

The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland where all people of working age have sufficient income and opportunity to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life and where all individuals and their families are supported by a range of quality public services to enhance their quality of life and well-being.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for people of working age in Ireland:

- Every person of working age should be encouraged and supported to participate fully in social, civic and economic life.
- Every person of working age would have access to lifelong learning, a sense of personal security in a changing work environment and an opportunity to balance work and family commitments consistent with business needs.
- Every person of working age would have an income level to sustain an acceptable standard of living and to enable them to provide for an adequate income in retirement.
- Every person of working age on welfare will have access to supports towards progression and inclusion, access to quality work and learning opportunities, encouraging a greater degree of self-reliance and self-sufficiency.
- Every person, irrespective of background or gender, would enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination.
- Every family would have access to health and social care, affordable accommodation appropriate to their needs and a well functioning public transport system.
- Every person with caring responsibilities would have access to appropriate supports to enable them to meet these responsibilities alongside employment and other commitments.

### **Priority Actions**

The parties agree to work together in pursuit of these goals through relevant strategies and processes including NAPinclusion, the NDP, Ireland's National Reform Programme and the forthcoming National Women's Strategy (and parallel work for men) where policies will be elaborated in greater detail.

They have also agreed to the following priority actions in order to make progress towards these long-term goals during the first phase of the agreement.

#### ***1. Employability***

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver policies that are focussed on ensuring that Ireland has a fully-trained, well-educated workforce in order to achieve the vision of a socially cohesive, knowledge-based innovation-driven economy whilst

significantly increasing the skills levels of those in employment and consequently reducing the number of low skilled in the workforce.

In the context of enhancing employability, the achievement of a balance between flexibility and security is important. This involves a smooth transition between jobs without a prolonged absence from the workforce; the ability of employees to continuously develop their skills and competencies through lifelong learning and up-skilling; supports for those with caring responsibilities and greater flexibility in work organisation, such as multi-tasking and more adaptable work schedules and practices. See also Section 7 in Part II.

Actions to be prioritised include:

- Increasing participation in Lifelong Learning in particular among the workforce categorised as low-skilled/low paid by enhancing opportunities to access education and training, the development of new skills, the acquisition of recognised qualifications and progression to higher level qualifications to equip all individuals with the skills, capacity and potential to participate fully in the knowledge-based society and progress to better quality jobs.
- Focusing on helping adults from disadvantaged communities including those in rural areas, to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills and tackling barriers/disincentives to lifelong learning. The parties will work to ensure that life-long learning provision is flexible and addresses the various needs of learners.
- Providing additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education.
- Providing targeted support for employees participating in part-time courses at third level (see Section 7.9 in Part II).
- Formulating a National Skills Strategy which will put in place a strategic framework for the implementation of skills and training strategy into the medium term. This strategy will recognise the respective roles of the public, and private sectors with the emphasis of the former on where the market fails, including the low-skilled.
- FÁS will continue to review the curricula, assessment process and delivery mechanisms for apprenticeships and continue to progress additional occupations towards formal apprenticeship training and qualification.
- Prioritising adult literacy in the area of adult education. The annual student cohort availing of the general national literacy service delivered by the Vocational Education Committees will be significantly increased by the provision of an extra 7,000 places by 2009. There will be a particular focus on increasing the number of migrants receiving an English language service (ESOL). Having regard to developments generally in adult literacy and its expanding role, the family literacy project under DEIS, the implementation plan of the national adult literacy advisory group published by NALA and the role of the VECs, consideration will be given to the appropriate support structures in this area.
- Guidance/counselling will be provided to literacy and language learners and the needs of migrants will be considered in the context of the Educational Equality Initiative. Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area.

- A Family Literacy Project will also be put in place under the DEIS initiative.
- The Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) will be expanded by 2,000 places by 2009. The BTEI (part-time) will continue to be built on existing provision under the adult literacy services, community education, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Programmes, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. Measures will also be adopted to monitor and evaluate progress in this area.
- Having regard to developments in the PLC sector, including the McIver report, concrete prioritised proposals in relation to PLC provision and focused in particular on the larger PLC providers will be prepared and will be the subject of further negotiations between management and unions. The level of resources for the PLC sector will be determined in the light of resources generally and the implications for other areas of education. The union side will engage positively in relation to commitments on future working arrangements and developments in the sector. Student numbers will be subject to audit on an ongoing basis. The scope for rationalisation of provision will also be examined having due regard to ensuring appropriate provision on a geographic basis and the necessary critical mass for delivery of a quality education service.

## **2. Access to Employment**

The Government and the social partners recognise that employment is a major factor for people exiting out of poverty and that it also influences quality of life and social well-being.

The parties share the view that there should be a greater focus on activation and participation through an integrated approach across relevant programmes including:

- The National Employment Service and the Local Employment Services;
- The National Employment Action Plan, the High Supports Process, the Bridging/Foundation Programme, the Pathways to Employment processes;
- The Social and Family Support Service and
- Other new and existing training and employment programmes.

These processes and programmes will explore the use of innovative approaches and will increasingly focus on the long-term unemployed, the unemployed who are 16-24 years old, people who have completed the NEAP process but who remain unemployed and those furthest from the labour market, including certain women workers and people with disabilities.

The parties agree that the actions to be considered as a priority over a three-year period will include:

- Applying the National Employment Action Plan referral process earlier than the current 6 months.
- Extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to other groups such as lone parents and those with disabilities, with due regard to the special needs of those groups. The NEAP will be operated in a supportive and positive manner working in an inclusive way with the customer.

- Introducing an active case management service for social welfare customers of working age, including collaboration to ensure that customers, agencies and service providers in this area engage actively with each other. This will place activation on a level with service delivery and control as a central part of the core business of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Changes will be implemented in a positive and supportive manner.
- Following the consultation process on the Government's Discussion Paper on Lone Parents, proposals will be brought forward aimed at supporting lone parents into employment. This will address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes and positive opportunities for customers.
- Funding for the Community Services Programme which targets, in particular, people with disabilities, Travellers, lone parents and people seeking to move from part-time CE to full-time work will be further increased, building on the additional investment in 2006. In this context, there will be consultation with the social partners in relation to its development and targeting. The programme will be kept under review to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that it is co-ordinated appropriately with other relevant programmes.

### **3. Income**

The Government and social partners are committed to working together to sustain an acceptable standard of living for all people of working age in particular by:

- Ensuring that social protection adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour force or out of it. It will facilitate labour market participation, mobility and transition. Reforms will be introduced that aim to provide those most marginalised with the confidence and supports necessary to accept the risks involved in taking up employment. This will involve the provision of extended information and supports dealing as far as possible with the financial and non-financial barriers to employment, in particular those which present poverty traps and encourage dependency.
- Other elements of social protection will be examined to ensure that atypical working, the reconciliation of work and family life and those working on low incomes are supported.
- The standard means test for SWA rent supplement (and other secondary benefit payments) will be kept under review with a view to providing enhanced financial incentives to take up part-time employment, training, education or other progression options, and minimizing where possible, the impact of the withdrawal of social welfare. However, the overall emphasis will be on the provision of appropriate long-term housing solutions rather than on moving retention thresholds at which some or all of the social welfare payment is lost.
- Achieving the NAPS target of €150 per week in 2002 terms for lowest social welfare rates by 2007. The value of the rates to be maintained at this level over the course of the agreement, subject to available resources.
- Other elements of social protection will be examined to ensure that the reconciliation of work and family life is supported.

#### 4. *Improving Health Outcomes for People of Working Age*

The Government and social partners agree to work together to deliver tangible improvements in the health outcomes for people of working age over a ten-year period.

Our approach to health services for people of working age will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the *Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You* (2001) and the *Primary Care Strategy: "Primary Care, a New Direction"* (2001).

Actions to be pursued as a priority over a three-year timeframe will include:

- Planning and implementing a programme of re-organisation and re-alignment of existing resources in order to deliver a person-centred primary care service through multidisciplinary teams and networks, serving defined populations. New service arrangements will facilitate the delivery of services on an integrated basis, both within the primary and community sector and across the health services as a whole.
- Ensuring that service development and delivery are informed by needs assessment, undertaken at national, local and other levels as appropriate. Communities and service users will be enabled to participate in this process.
- Developing primary care services drawing on the Primary Care Strategy. This will entail ongoing investment to ensure integrated, accessible services for people within their own community with a target of 300 primary care teams by 2008, 400 by 2009 and 500 by 2011. A review of these targets will be undertaken in 2008.
- Further developing, as a priority, out of hours GP services with a view ultimately to having those services available to the whole population.
- Reviewing all existing eligibility legislation and drafting legislation that clarifies and simplifies eligibility and entitlements to health services, in line with the goals of the National Health Strategy.
- Delivering tangible reductions in waiting times for public patients, through the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), with the goal that no public patient will wait longer than three months for treatment following referral from an outpatient Department.
- The Health Strategy contained a commitment to increase total acute hospital bed capacity by 3,000 by 2011. An additional 900 in-patient beds/day places are largely in place with a further 450 acute beds/day places to be put in place under the Capital Investment Framework 2005-2009. An initiative to provide an additional 1,000 beds for public patients in public hospitals was launched in 2005. In light of developments since the publication of the Health Strategy the HSE will carry out a review of the acute hospital bed requirements up to 2020.
- Developing a high-quality community-based mental health service in accordance with the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, *A Vision for Change*. A monitoring committee has been appointed to monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations.

- Ensuring that people who are not able to meet the cost of GP services for themselves and their families are supported appropriately, either by means of a medical card or a GP visit card, depending on their means.
- Reviewing the eligibility criteria for assessment of medical cards in the context of medical, social and economic/financial need. The review will clarify entitlement to a medical card.
- Developing a strategic integrated approach to rehabilitation services within the context of the Multi-Annual Investment Programme with a view to supporting people back into employment as appropriate through early intervention and enhanced service provision.
- Working in partnership to develop specific community and sectoral initiatives to encourage healthy eating and access to healthy food and physical activity among adults, with a particular focus on adults living in areas of disadvantage.
- Further developing palliative care throughout Ireland, with particular reference to the Baseline Study on the provision of Hospice/Specialist Palliative Care Services.
- The HSE Corporate Plan for 2005-2008 commits it “to develop a consistent approach to access to service throughout the country, based on identified need”. The 2007 Plan will, specifically, include a section devoted to Consistency and Social Inclusion which is to contain details of initiatives being pursued by the HSE.

## 5. *Caring Responsibilities*

The Government and the social partners recognise the importance of helping families to balance their work responsibilities with their family, caring and other commitments and acknowledge, in particular, the important role played by family carers.

In order to achieve this objective, priority actions will include:

- Work of the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, initially established under the PPF, will continue. The Committee will continue to support and facilitate the development of family friendly policies aimed at assisting in the reconciliation of work and family life at the level of the enterprise. The activities of the Committee will continue to be supported by a specific budget.
- Expanding the income limits for the Carer's Allowance so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify and implementing significant increases in the value of the respite care grant for carers, subject to available resources. Significant progress has been made on both commitments in recent Budgets. The earnings disregard for a couple is currently set at €80 per week. The gross average industrial earnings for 2005 was €80.76. The aim should be for the level of the disregard to keep pace with gross average industrial earnings.
- Continuing to review the scope for further development of the Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and the Respite Care Grant having regard to the recommendations of the Equality Authority Report "*Implementing Equality for Carers*"; the Carer's Association Report "*Towards a Family Carer's Strategy*"; and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social and Family Affairs Report on the Position of Full-Time Carers and other available research.

- The Department of Social and Family Affairs, in the context of its Sectoral Plan will work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS to progress issues associated with training for carers.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs will lead the development of a structured consultation process to inform future policy in this area. This will involve an annual meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies.
- Examining the potential for improved support services to carers. Consideration will also be given to enhancing economic and social inclusion supports to people whose caring responsibilities have concluded.
- Continue to support information and awareness campaigns.
- A National Carers' Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by end 2007. There will be appropriate consultation with the social partners.

## **6. *Housing and Sustainable Communities***

The Government and the social partners endorse the important principles set out in the *Housing Policy Framework: Building Sustainable Community* which provides a vision of the kind of high quality, integrated sustainable communities that are worth building.

The parties agree to work together toward the delivery of this vision over a ten-year period. They recognise that the achievement of sustainable communities will be greatly aided by the implementation of spatial policy frameworks such as the NSS, Regional Planning Guidelines and the development plan process. Planning for future housing must also take account of the needs of a modern, dynamic and multi-cultural society reflecting a diversity of housing needs.

Chapter 2 sets out the key proposals aimed at:

- Ensuring the provision of good quality social and affordable accommodation (including the provision of housing under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts) in sustainable communities reflecting its important role in improving the life opportunities of the more vulnerable and disadvantaged people within our society. A key aim of housing investment will be to ensure that the system of housing supports is flexible enough to deal with the changing circumstances of the individual and family throughout the lifecycle, while ensuring equitable treatment and interventions that maximise individual choice and personal autonomy.
- Advancing particular actions to assist people with special housing needs. Actions relating to older people and people with a disability are specifically referred to in sections XX and YY respectively. Ensuring improved outcomes for all people with special housing needs will require greater inter-agency co-operation, so that a combined approach to the accommodation and care dimensions is taken.
- In the case of homeless people, it is proposed to amalgamate and update the Government's Integrated and Preventative Homeless Strategies taking on board the recommendations of the recent independent review of the strategies. The situation of homeless persons who are currently in long-term emergency accommodation is of

particular concern. The revised strategies will have as an underlying objective the elimination of such homelessness by 2010<sup>2</sup>. Particular emphasis will also be placed on improved co-ordination of service provision through the extension of joint agency approaches at local level to facilitate the development of a holistic response to the needs of homeless person. This will be achieved through the further development of a case management approach, based on individual needs assessment with provision for access to multiple services by all the statutory agencies involved. The involvement of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector will be strengthened through the establishment of a National Homelessness Consultative Committee including representatives of the social partnership C&V Pillar under the aegis of the Housing Forum.

- Social Capital can make an important contribution to healthy and sustainable communities. Proposals to support volunteering and other aspects of social capital are included in Section [X].

## **7. Equality/Equal Opportunities**

The achievement of a fairer society and equality for all citizens is a key principle of the partnership approach. Policies and programmes at each stage of the lifecycle will be implemented having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The achievement of true equality necessitates a holistic approach and a society-wide understanding of the complementary roles and skills of both men and women. In particular, the Government is committed to promoting gender equality across all stages of the lifecycle through a range of measures including the forthcoming National Women's Strategy.

While the introduction of a strong body of anti-discriminatory legislation and other supporting mechanisms has contributed to the reduction of gender inequality in Ireland over the past thirty years, there is still evidence which shows that we have some way to go to achieve true gender equality.

Key priority actions to be pursued include:

- Implementing policies to increase employment levels with the goal of exceeding the EU Lisbon employment rate targets for 2010 of 70% overall, 60% for females and 50% for older workers.
- Further support linked, as appropriate, to the forthcoming National Development Plan for innovative actions building upon the achievements of the NDP Equality for Women Measure. This will also link with the gender equality focused initiatives to be developed under the National Women's Strategy, to be published later this year.
- Focusing on actions by the social partners to encourage greater numbers of women to advance to the higher levels within their chosen careers through training and cost effective reviews of equality policies within organisations.
- Further exploring the causes of the gender pay gap in order to reduce it further.
- Reviewing as necessary existing equality legislation with a view to establishing best practice in relation to positive action, particularly in access to employment, across all nine equality grounds.

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<sup>2</sup> Recognising that this involves addressing the needs of up to 500 households.

- Reviewing expenditure on the equality infrastructure provided by the Equality Acts to reduce the incidence of discrimination. A particular priority will be the removal of the current backlog of cases before the Equality Tribunal.
- Continue to encourage companies and organisations to meet proactively the challenges of diversity and equality.
- Collecting data to support policies for the promotion of equality of opportunity across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation.

## **2(a) Young Adults (18-29)**

The Government and social partners recognise that young adults (18-29) face particular needs and challenges which must be addressed. These include:

### **1. *Education, Training & Employment***

The parties agree to work together to address the particular education, training and employment needs of young adults by:

- Investing in further support measures in the areas of further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular: socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, members of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities, mature students, lone parents and students with a disability. These measures will include; needs assessment, technology support, community based strategies, childcare supports and access routes.
- Focusing specifically on young people as part of the increased training for the low-skilled in employment, FAS will continue to work in partnership with the Community Training Centres to provide early school leavers with basic skills and work experience and to assist with progress to further training and development.

### **2. *Health and social Services***

The parties share the view that young adults have a range of particular health-related needs. The parties agree to address these needs through the following priority actions:

- Combating substance misuse through a concerted focus on supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research. Specifically, rehabilitation is being added as a fifth pillar of the National Drugs Strategy, in line with a commitment given in the mid-term review of that Strategy, and a Working Group is developing an integrated rehabilitation provision. Also in line with the mid-term review, the Department of Health & Children is exploring the potential for better co-ordination between the areas of drugs and alcohol with the aim of improving synergies. Additional funding is being provided in 2006 to develop facilities and services for young people.
- Ensuring a greater focus on reducing alcohol related harm including implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on Alcohol, established under

Sustaining Progress, taking account of the recommendations of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol.

- Ensuring implementation of the *National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention, 2005-2014*. Specifically this will involve:
  - Working intensively to co-ordinate suicide prevention activities across the country.
  - Disseminating research and best practice and, where necessary, commissioning and supporting new research.
  - Consulting with those working to reduce suicide and those responding to suicide, to ensure their voice is heard in planning future suicide prevention initiatives.

### **3. Housing and accommodation**

The parties recognise that young adults in the 25 to 34 age bracket are the key household formation group and they acknowledge the particular challenges faced by them in accessing quality housing/accommodation in the current market environment.

The parties agree to work together to tackle these challenges as a priority by:

- Policies and investment to address the accommodation needs of young adults as set out in Chapter 2, in particular:
  - Implementing the Rental Accommodation Scheme to help to provide the necessary springboard to accessing employment, training or education opportunities which may lead to broader accommodation options for the individual in the future.
  - Commencing a pilot project on affordable homes for renting, as outlined in the Housing Policy Framework, which should further expand the choices available to this age group.
  - Developing proposals to provide a more comprehensive and objective means of assessing need, associated with a focus on the provision of housing advice to allow housing supports to be tailored to reflect the changing accommodation needs throughout a person's lifecycle.

### **4. Motor Insurance for Young People**

- The Government will commission an independent review of the effectiveness of the policy measures introduced on foot of the MIAB report designed to reduce motor insurance costs to look at the impact of these measures on young drivers and make recommendations on how to reduce the cost of insurance for young drivers.

### **Innovative Measures**

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

## **1. *Integration of Migrant Communities***

- A new framework will be finalised to address the broader issue of integration policy. The Government will develop a comprehensive strategy for all legally resident immigrants following consultation with relevant stakeholders including the social partners which will build on and be linked with progress already achieved in the areas of social inclusion and anti-racism. Appropriate co-ordinating mechanisms to implement such a strategy will be developed and the scope for a role for civil society organisations will also be explored.

A range of strategies will also be pursued as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism. Furthermore, racism in the workplace will be proactively addressed in the context of the Anti Racist Workplace Week in keeping with best international practice in this area.

There is also a distinct and separate response in this Agreement to tackle exploitation of migrant and other vulnerable workers.

## **2. *Social and Economic Participation***

- A programme of investment under the NDP 2007-2013 will be introduced to promote participation through activation measures aimed at people of working age. This will work towards providing a single transparent system with a primary focus on the customer and a route map starting with the first point of engagement with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. This will provide an active outcome-focused individual case management of all social welfare customers of working age who are not progressing into employment or accessing training or employment opportunities. There will be consultation with the social partners on how this will be implemented.

## **3. *Exploitation of Information and Communications Technology***

- A strategic framework on eInclusion is currently being developed by the eInclusion Stakeholders Group. Its priority areas for action are access and connectivity, skills, awareness and content. In this context, a national eInclusion strategy will be developed so that everyone has the opportunity, through encouragement, awareness, support, enablement and participation, to exploit ICTs to improve their quality of life, and the cohesiveness and well-being of their communities. It will be developed in line with the NAPinclusion and the i2010 Initiative - 'a European Information Society for growth and employment'. The role of intermediaries, including community & voluntary organisations, in reaching the late adopters of technology will be critical to the implementation of this Strategy.

## **4. *Travellers***

- An integrated approach to providing services and supports to Travellers will be developed in line with the recommendations of the Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, taking account of the Second Progress Report of the Traveller Monitoring Committee. The Government and social partners agree to give concentrated attention to achieving progress on this approach, including opportunities for Travellers to participate in employment in the public, private and voluntary

sectors and to support measures to improve communication between Travellers and the general population.

### **Governance Framework**

Given the complexity and range of issues, there is a need to identify the appropriate institutional structures to enable us to respond in a coherent and effective way to the challenges which face people of working age and to enable us achieve the outcomes we have identified for this lifecycle group.

#### ***Monitoring Progress***

Through the Housing Forum the social partners will have a particular role in inputting to policy development in relation to housing and accommodation issues and evaluating outcomes over the period of the agreement.

A structured consultation process on carers' issues will be led by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which will involve an annual meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies.

The eInclusion Stakeholders Group will develop, implement, communicate, and monitor progress on a new national eInclusion strategy which will address those in each lifecycle stage that are digitally excluded. Its membership includes Social Partners, representatives from Government Departments and Agencies, academics, and those engaged in the delivery of eInclusion projects and programmes at local and EU level.

The C&V Pillar will be consulted on the health aspects of this agreement and on their perspectives on the ongoing reform of the health system and the HSE. It is envisaged that this structured consultation will involve quarterly meetings between the C&V Pillar, the Department of Health and Children, the HSE and other Departments as relevant.

#### ***Research and Data***

The Office for Social Inclusion will continue its work on developing a data strategy to ensure that robust and reliable data is available in a timely manner to enable effective monitoring of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion. The availability of comprehensive data will also assist the formulation of effective evidence-based policies. The Office will also work on the further development of indicators and measures to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation process.

The implementation of the National Health Information Strategy recommendations in respect of the use of a system of a unique patient identifier and the development of an electronic healthcare record will contribute to establishing a holistic picture of individual needs as well as providing data to aid the development of high quality and cost effective health services to address those needs. The development of a system of unique identification for the health service will be considered in the context of a public service wide approach to the development and use of unique identifiers, proposals for which will include discussion with the health sector. This process will inform the preparation of a Health Information Bill which will provide a legislative framework for health Information governance.

## **Lifecycle Stage – Older People**

### **Vision**

The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland which provides the supports, where necessary, to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, as well as to live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for older people in Ireland in the context of increased longevity and greater possibilities and expectations for quality of life of older people:

- Every older person would be encouraged and supported to participate to the greatest extent possible in social and civic life.
- Every older person would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living.
- Every older person would have adequate support to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This will involve access to good quality services in the community, including: health, education, transport, housing and security.
- Every older person would, in conformity with their needs and conscious of the high level of disability and disabling conditions amongst this group, have access to a spectrum of care services stretching from support for self-care through support for family and informal carers to formal care in the home, the community or in residential settings. Such care services should ensure the person has opportunities for civic and social engagement at community level.

### **Priority Actions**

The parties agree to work together in pursuit of these goals through relevant strategies and processes, including NAPinclusion and the NDP where policies will be elaborated in greater detail.

The following priority actions have been agreed in order to make progress towards these long-term goals.

#### ***1. Pensions/ Income Supports***

The Government and social partners agree to work together over a ten-year period to enhance pension provision and income supports including:

- Future policy in this area will be considered in the context of the National Pensions Review, the outcome of the further work requested in relation to mandatory pensions, the publication of a Green Paper by the Government on pension policy and the views expressed by stakeholders including social partners. (See section 8.8 in Part II)

- Enhancement of social welfare pensions over the period, having regard to available resources, building on the existing Government commitment for a rate of €200 per week for social welfare pensions to be achieved by 2007.
- To increase the level of qualified adult allowance for pensioner spouses to the level of the state non-contributory pension.
- To provide an adequate income in retirement which, as far as possible, is related to pre-retirement income. The target income level suggested in the National Pensions Policy Initiative (1998) was 50% of pre-retirement earnings from all sources, including social welfare supports, private and occupational pensions and savings and investments.
- Enhance the level of occupational or private pension coverage. The National Pensions Policy Initiative also suggested that 70% of those at work who are 30 years and over needed an occupational or private pension to supplement the social welfare pension if they are to meet the income target. At present just under 59% have the necessary coverage.
- The role and economic contribution of spouses working on the farm will be recognised within the social insurance system through improved information services on the social welfare implications of families working together.
- Following the conclusions of a PPF Working Group on Administrative Individualisation facilities were introduced in October 2002 to allow new pension claimants to have the qualified adult portion of their pension paid direct to their spouse or partner. It is agreed to finalise, without delay, the current examination of the administrative and legal implications of enhancing these arrangements to provide for an increase in the number of personal payments being made through the direct payment of the qualified adult allowance.

## **2. *Long Term Care Services for Older People***

The Government and social partners agree to work together to develop an infrastructure of long term care services for older people, responding to the demographic trends facing the country, and that the following principles should inform the development of policy in this area:

- All relevant public services should be designed and delivered in an integrated manner around the needs of the care recipient based on a national standardised needs assessment. Care needs assessments should be available in a timely, consistent, equitable and regionally balanced basis.
- Access to joined-up, user-friendly, customer-focused service consistent with individual needs.
- The use of community and home-based care should be maximised and should support the important role of family and informal care.
- The continued development of sheltered housing options, with varying degrees of care support will be encouraged.

- Where community and home-based care is not appropriate, quality residential care should be available.
- There should be appropriate and equitable levels of co-payment by care recipients based on a national standardised financial assessment.
- The level of state support for residential care should be indifferent as to whether that care is in a public or private facility.
- No current resident of a nursing home, public or private, should be put at a disadvantage by whatever new co-payment arrangements for residential care are introduced.
- Information about entitlements and benefits should be clearly set out and communicated to older people.
- The financial model to support any new arrangements must be financially sustainable. Further data collection and evaluation is required on different options and may be a combination of different options including co-payments, additional sources of funding beyond existing taxation sources, a social insurance type arrangement and/or a pre-funding mechanism.

The Government and social partners parties agree that the following early steps will be taken to progress this work within the next two years:

- Additional resources of €150 million in a full year (€10 million in 2006 and €40 million more in 2007) are being allocated to Services for Older People and Palliative Care. Reflecting the new emphasis on home and day care, almost three quarters (€109 million) of the €150 million is being committed to community care supports.
- The HSE will develop a national standardised care needs assessment which will be completed by the end of 2006, as well as a standardised financial assessment process for the extra 2000 home care packages.
- A needs analysis of residential care requirements for older people is being undertaken to inform policy in this area and will be completed by September 2006.
- A planning exercise on staffing requirements for future developments will be undertaken and will be completed during 2007.
- National protocols for case management for home care packages will be developed by the HSE by end of 2006.
- A steering committee will be set up to begin the preparatory work of evaluating the effectiveness of the additional home care packages.
- Work will be taken forward to produce draft guidelines for standards in long-term residential units, both public and private. It is intended to have this draft document prepared and circulated to interested parties, including the social partners, for consultation in Summer 2006. Once agreed, these will be widely disseminated.
- Under the Health Bill 2006, the Social Service Inspectorate will have an inspectorate role for public and private nursing homes.

- The HSE has developed a standardised approach to inspection and reporting of private nursing homes across the system which included the development of standardised documentation in all HSE areas. The HSE has begun implementing the new standardised approach in all areas.
- The National Implementation Group on Elder Abuse has been established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report on Elder Abuse. A total of €2m is being allocated to address the issue of elder abuse over 2006 and 2007.

This work will inform future decisions on the structure and financing of long-term care for older people.

The Department of Health & Children will establish a structured consultation with social partners on the development of policy in relation to long-term care issues for older people on the basis of the principles and actions outlined above.

### **3. *Housing and accommodation***

Good quality housing is important to supporting the independence of older people. In some instances, housing and care services delivered in an integrated manner are essential to allowing older people to live at home for as long as possible. In other cases, older people may need to move to alternative accommodation, including sheltered housing with varying levels of support. Therefore, the range of responses include:

- The availability of a mix of dwelling types of good design across all tenures. Details of investment proposals are included in Chapter Two.
- For older people on lower incomes, the availability of:
  - disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grants Schemes and the Special Scheme of Housing Aid for the Elderly, which allow people to remain in their own homes;
  - the provision of social housing including through downsizing schemes, and;
  - specific sheltered housing options.

Future actions will include:

- Ensuring that future Housing Action Plans address special needs in a more strategic manner and specify, in particular, the role of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector in meeting the associated accommodation requirements;
- Developing and implementing new protocols for inter-agency co-operation where there is a care dimension additional to accommodation needs;
- Reforming the grant schemes for older people in private housing to improve equity and targeting. This reform will build on the experience of a number of local authorities that have been able to prioritise spending through targeting of priority clients and standardised costs. The new arrangements will be more streamlined, cutting down on administration to make the schemes more accessible and provide a

more seamless set of responses to the needs of people with a disability and older people.

- Services to provide enhanced home security, energy conservation and other measures for vulnerable older people will continue to be a priority activity within the Community Services Programme.
- Sustainable Energy Ireland and the Combat Poverty Agency are undertaking an action research project to improve heating systems and insulation in selected older private dwellings and to monitor the outcomes in terms of improved cost efficiency and household comfort and health levels. The results of this project will assist with the development of future policy in this area and may also be of relevance to the ongoing development of existing housing grant schemes to assist older people and people with a disability.

#### **4. *Ensuring mobility for older people***

Accessibility of transport for older people is vital in terms of accessing health and other services, social networks and remaining active. The Government and social partners are committed to the further development of the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) which is making a very important contribution to supporting community-based living as follows:

- In developing proposals for the roll-out of the RTI from 2007, particular attention will be paid to the transport needs of rural communities that do not currently have access to public transport, having particular regard to the special transport needs of older people with disabilities;
- Funding for the RTI will be doubled by 2007 (based on the 2005 allocation of €4.5m). Thereafter, funding for rural transport services will be steadily increased; ultimately to a cash level of about four times the 2005 allocation. The Fitzpatrick Review of the RTI will be finalised shortly and, subject to available resources, consideration will be given to the findings of that Review.

#### **5. *Ensuring quality health services for older people***

Our approach to health services for older people will be informed by a number of strategic policy frameworks including the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You (2001) and Primary Care: A New Direction: A Health System for You (2001).

Priority actions to be pursued include:

- Ensuring that older people will be provided with the appropriate access to a full range of health services to suit their needs, including primary care, acute care and mental health care;
- Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children's residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published during the 2006 Autumn session.

## **6. *Promoting education and employment opportunities for older people***

In the context of changing demographic patterns, a key objective for the Government and social partners is to maximise the opportunities for older people to participate in education, employment and other aspects of economic and social life. This will include:

- Targeted adult and community educational opportunities. Older people will be further encouraged and supported to access further and higher education and appropriate targets will be set in the context of proposals on life long learning and access to further and higher education set out under Section XX.
- Older people will be encouraged and supported in actively involving themselves in areas such as family literacy projects, as set out in DEIS, and bringing their knowledge, skills and experience to bear in furthering the aims of such projects.
- The continued participation of older people in the labour market will be encouraged and facilitated to meet the challenge of an ageing society. A cultural mindset change will be promoted among both employers and employees to encourage older workers to remain in employment. Promotion of training and upskilling of employees, particularly for low-skilled/older workers, will take place to enhance employability in the context of the impact of globalisation. The preventive process will be extended to those aged 55-64 to facilitate unemployed older workers remaining attached to the labour market. This will tie in with the phasing out of the Pre-Retirement Allowance (PRETA).
- Training and advisory services, including those provided by FÁS, will assist older people who wish to return to the workplace.
- The exploitation of information and communications technology to improve the quality of life of older people and to assist them in independent living will be encouraged and supported. The national eInclusion Strategy Framework, currently being discussed by the eInclusion Stakeholders Group, will prioritise action in the areas of ICT access and connectivity, ICT skills, awareness of the potential of ICT and how they can be used to assist every older person in their home life, social life, and where appropriate their work life.
- Public information campaigns to tackle ageism serve a useful purpose in raising awareness. The Equality Authority, HSE and the National Council on Ageing and Older people will continue to promote such initiatives over the course this agreement.

### **Innovative Measures**

The following innovative measures respond to emerging needs and provide an opportunity for learning about new, more integrated ways of designing and delivering services over the first phase of the agreement:

#### **1. *Pilot programmes of care for older people / home support packages***

- Home support packages have already been piloted successfully in a number of HSE Areas. A total of 3,100 (2,000 from Budget 2006) home support packages are seen as pilots to test best models of delivery of these packages and to test their impact on the wider health system. Home support packages provide for a broad range of support personnel in addition to personal and social services. A Steering Committee is being

set up to begin the preparatory work of evaluating the effectiveness of the additional home care packages. A key issue is effective integration between housing, care and other supports.

## **2. *Community Intervention Teams***

- Community Intervention Teams will assist in preventing avoidable hospital admission and the facilitation of early discharge from hospitals. They will operate in addition to existing mainstream community services and they will address issues such as capacity to fast-track non-medical care or supports for an interim period, while mainstream services are being arranged for the patient.

## **Governance Framework**

The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Social and Family Affairs have lead roles in policy and achieving progress in relation to targets for older people. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government will actively engage on the issues involving older people from an accommodation perspective. The Department of Health & Children will establish a structured consultation with social partners on the development of policy in relation to long-term care issues for older people on the basis of the principles and action outlined above.

The Pensions Board will continue to play a key role in terms of the operation of the Pensions Act and advising on the future development of pensions policy. The Pensions Board will continue to engage actively with the Social Partners.

A cross-departmental team on sheltered housing is being established by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to oversee progress in that area. There will be provision for consultation with social partners through the Housing Forum.

## ***Monitoring Progress***

Information gaps relating to the service needs of older people are being addressed by the Department of Health and Children with the National Council on Ageing and Older People, HSE and various stakeholders.

As the implementation of this lifecycle approach for older people is further developed, there will be a need and scope for further learning and for the revision of goals and targets in the light of experience.

## **Lifecycle Stage- People with Disabilities**

### **Vision**

The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life with their families and as part of their local community, free from discrimination.

To achieve this vision, the Government and the social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals with a view to continued improvements in the quality of life of people with disabilities:

- Every person with a disability would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living.
- Every person with a disability would, in conformity with their needs and abilities, have access to appropriate care, health, education, employment and training and social services.
- Every person with a disability would have access to public spaces, buildings, transport, information, advocacy and other public services and appropriate housing.
- Every person with a disability would be supported to enable them, as far as possible, to lead full and independent lives, to participate in work and in society and to maximise their potential.
- Carers would be acknowledged and supported in their caring role.

### **The National Disability Strategy**

The Government and the social partners agree that the National Disability Strategy represents a comprehensive Strategy for this aspect of the life cycle framework and that implementation of the Strategy should be the focus of policy over the lifetime of the agreement.

The Government will publish a document which will pull together for ease of reference the vision, mission and strategic objectives which have already been agreed and announced by Government under the Strategy.

Implementation of the National Disability Strategy will also take account of linkages with other relevant national strategies and policies.

The Strategy includes the Disability Act 2005, six Sectoral Plans, Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill 2004 and a Multi-Annual Investment Programme of close to €900m over the years 2006 to 2009.

It provides the framework for delivery of the long-term outcomes outlined above. A series of Sectoral Plans are currently being developed by the following Departments:

- Health and Children
- Social and Family Affairs
- Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Transport
- Communications, Marine and Natural Resources

- Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Each plan will set out, for each of these Departments and the public bodies under their aegis, the programme of measures to be taken in relation to the provision of services for people with specified disabilities. The plans are to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas not later than 28 July 2006.

The Plans will include specific targets, where practicable, and timescales against which progress will be measured. They will also address cross-departmental issues in a coherent manner.

### **Priority Actions**

The parties agree that future policy in relation to people with disabilities will be progressed through the National Disability Strategy with particular expression being provided through sectoral plans currently being developed and other relevant mechanisms. Key issues which will be addressed in these sectoral plans and other aspects of the Strategy include:

1. Assessment for, and access to, appropriate health and education services including residential care, community based care, and mental health services within the framework of the Disability Act, 2005 and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004. Developments will include:
  - Implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 and implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
  - Person-centred supports will continue to be developed for long stay residents in psychiatric hospitals, with a view to their movement back into community living.
  - Central to the successful implementation of the National Disability Strategy will be a process of financial accountability. Clear guidelines will be developed to ensure that the investment in the Strategy delivers value for money and real tangible benefits to people with disabilities.
  - Person centred supports will continue to be provided to ‘adults with significant disabilities’, having regard to the range of support needs which they require, e.g. nursing, personal assistance, respite, rehabilitation, day activities, etc.
  - In its consideration of the core funding requirements of agencies providing services for people with disabilities, the Health Service Executive will be asked to take into account the appropriateness of core funding essential health and personal social services.
  - Establishing on a statutory basis the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) (which currently inspects children’s residential and foster care services on an administrative basis) through the legislation for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) which is expected to be published during the 2006 Autumn Session.
  - Developing a strategic integrated approach to rehabilitation services within the context of the Multi-Annual Investment Programme with a view to

supporting people back into employment, as appropriate, through early intervention and enhanced service provision.

2. The elaboration of a comprehensive employment strategy for People with Disabilities including a range of measures to promote education, vocational training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including:
  - Consolidating and progressing vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities.
  - Exploring the potential for extending the NEAP FÁS referral process to people with disabilities in the context of their special needs and the Government's commitment to mainstreaming. This will include exploring issues of health and welfare entitlements and benefits and examining and addressing the disincentives for people in receipt of income maintenance or secondary payments who wish to participate in training or employment initiatives.
  - Public service employment in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Act, 2005.
  - Promoting awareness regarding the employment of people with disabilities and promoting employment retention.
  - The suite of materials developed under the Workway initiative will inform future policy and best practice in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.
3. National Standards will be introduced in respect of specialist health services for people with disabilities, taking into account the draft standards already prepared by the National Disability Authority, together with the report of the Working Group on the development of a Code of Practice for Sheltered Workshops.
4. In terms of ensuring adequate levels of income for people with disabilities, we will work for the continued enhancement and integration of supports in line with overall social welfare commitments and targets. This will include a rationalisation of existing allowances for people with disabilities in the context of the Government's policy of mainstreaming and the proposed transfer of functions from the HSE to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Other issues around cost of disability will be considered following the development of a needs assessment system provided for under Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005.
5. Evolving building standards and the potential for advancements in design in the future should lead to general improvements in the accessibility of the Irish housing stock over time. However, it is recognised that people with a disability often have fewer choices in terms of providing for their housing and accommodation needs.

To bring a new focus to addressing these needs, a National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities will be developed as recommended in the NESC '*Housing in Ireland*' Report in order to support the provision of tailored housing and housing support to people with disabilities. This would have particular regard to adults with significant disabilities and people who experience mental illness. This will be progressed through the establishment of a National Group under the aegis of the Housing Forum, headed by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local

Government, and involving the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive, social partners and other relevant stakeholders.

6. The development of information and advocacy services for people with disabilities. In particular, legislative provision for the introduction of the new personal advocacy service will provide for the assignment of a personal advocate to a person with a disability who is unable or who has difficulty in obtaining a social service without the assistance or support of the personal advocate. This will complement, in a balanced way, the other advocacy and support functions of Comhairle in relation to people with disabilities.
7. The question of accessible public transport services will be addressed in the Sectoral Plan being developed by the Department of Transport. The Plan will deal with the accessibility of the range of transport services, including the continued introduction of accessible vehicles, the provision of accessible infrastructure and travel information systems.

### **Governance Framework**

#### ***Monitoring Progress***

Progress reports will be prepared on sectoral plans after 3 years and the Disability Act will be reviewed after 5 years.

Detailed consultations have been undertaken with stakeholders in relation to each of the sectoral plans being developed. Arrangements will also be put in place to ensure a continued constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the Strategy as a whole. This will include bi-annual meetings between senior officials and other stakeholders.

In addition, each sectoral plan will include monitoring and review procedures. Departments are also required to set out in the sectoral plans the arrangements that will be put in place to monitor the compliance of state bodies and other relevant service providers with the provisions of the Disability Act.

Departments have published Customer Charters which include commitments in relation to equality and access and are required to report on performance in their Annual reports.

Inclusion of service accessibility and sectoral plan measures where relevant in the strategy statements of all Departments will be considered in the context of updating of guidelines for the preparation of Departmental Strategy Statements.

The Government has agreed to amend the Cabinet Handbook to incorporate a requirement that all substantive memoranda submitted to Government take account of the impact on people with disabilities. Appropriate guidance will be developed to assist with the proofing requirement in the context of proposals being developed in relation to equality proofing more generally.

The National Disability Authority is a source of advice on disability practice and policy, and in the context of the life-cycle approach, will continue to contribute to the co-ordination and development of actions and priorities in this area.

Complementary to the statutory remit of the National Disability Authority is the role which the voluntary disability sector continues to play as an advocacy and service delivery mechanism.

A National Carers' Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by end 2007. There will be appropriate consultation with the social partners. Further actions relating to those with caring responsibilities are set out in Section XX.

### ***Research and Data***

The results of the first National Disability Survey, together with the data emerging from the Physical and Sensory and Intellectual Disability Databases will further help in monitoring progress in this area. This will also be enhanced by the collection of aggregate data through the implementation of the needs assessment process under the Disability Act 2005.

The implementation of the National Health Information Strategy recommendations in respect of the use of a system of a unique patient identifier and the development of an electronic healthcare record will contribute to establishing a holistic picture of individual needs as well as providing data to aid the development of high quality and cost effective health services to address those needs. See Section XX.

The National Longitudinal Study of Children will identify, in the first instance, children who have been diagnosed as having a disability by age 9 months, 3 years, 9 years and 13 years. This study will allow for both point prevalence and incidence to be recorded within the child population.

Reporting arrangements have been put in place in relation to spending under the multi-annual investment programme and it is intended that the sectoral plan review process would also be used to measure outcomes under the Strategy.

## **Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach**

Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach poses a significant challenge to Government and to all other stakeholders. Proposals in relation to monitoring, implementation of this approach, and developing it further in consultation with all the social partners are set out in Chapter Four. However, as highlighted by NESCS, particular challenges arise in relation to the role of the C&V Sector and a number of proposals to support this role in the future are set out below.

## **Role of the Community & Voluntary Sector**

In pursuance of its objective of supporting sustainable and inclusive communities, the Government recognises the valuable role of the Community & Voluntary sector. The Government is committed to the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the sector as set out in the *White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity*.

The Government commits to implementing the NESCS proposal of maximising the contribution of the C & V Sector by deepening the partnership between statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations. The Government will engage with the sector in relation to future frameworks to support this relationship.

The Government recognises that community and voluntary activity forms the very core of a vibrant and inclusive society. The great strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities. While the Government should not seek to control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, it does have a responsibility to provide an enabling framework to help the sector. Where this involves direct supports, a delicate balance must be struck between having a relatively light regulation and maintaining proper accountability.

## **Task Force on Active Citizenship**

Future policy will take account of the work of the Task Force on Active Citizenship which has been asked to recommend measures which could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage a greater degree of engagement by citizens in all aspects of life and the growth and development of voluntary organisations as part of a strong civic culture.

Arising from the work of the Task Force, consideration will also be given to the development of appropriate measures and indicators of social capital, and to future approaches in relation to citizenship education and voter participation.

## **Regulation of the Community & Voluntary Sector**

Legislation will be introduced to regulate the charities sector and to introduce governance standards to protect against abuse of charitable status or fraud. The General Scheme for the Charities Regulation Bill 2006 has been published and the Bill is being given priority for drafting.

Government accepts that support will be required for charities to meet their obligations in the new regulatory environment and, in bringing in this new regulation, the Government commits that additional resources to assist the sector in this transition will be made available.

The modalities of this support will be decided following consultation with the C&V sector after the legislation has been approved by the Oireachtas.

### **Policy on Volunteering**

The Government will continue to develop policies on volunteering arising from the package of measures initiated in February 2005. A key principle underlying the Government's approach is that volunteering finds meaning and expression at a local level and that supports and funding should seek, as far as possible, to recognise this reality. The Government remains committed to further developing policy to support volunteering, drawing on the experience in delivering these measures and informed by the recommendations of the Task Force on Active Citizenship.

### **Funding the Community & Voluntary Sector**

In the context of implementing this agreement based on a ten-year strategy and focused on delivering the outcomes envisaged in the life-cycle framework in the areas of income, service provision and innovation/participation/activation, the Government acknowledges that the CV Sector has a central role to play in delivering the outcomes envisaged.

Significant funding is currently provided to support both the activities of the sector and to develop the capacity and infrastructure within the sector. This includes a wide range of programmes and measures with an annual cost of over €300m through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, as well as programmes in a range of other Departments.

The Government is committed to appropriately resourcing the sector into the future as part of this agreement. The Government remains committed to reviewing the funding mechanisms for the C & V sector, to identify areas of overlap or gaps. The Government also remains committed to the White Paper principle of providing multi-annual statutory funding.

The Sector's important role in service provision will continue to be funded appropriately where it is delivering services on behalf of the State. This will be reflected through an increase in funding as part of the ongoing expansion in overall expenditure on service delivery in the course of the agreement, subject to the budgetary parameters of paragraph XX.

In addition to this increase as part of ongoing service expansion, the Government will provide the following specific additional supports to the sector:

- There will also be increased investment in the Community Services Programme of €30m by 2009.
- Increased funding of €5m per annum to support volunteering.
- Increased funding of €10m per annum to support the C&V Sector, including the costs arising from contributing to evidence based policy making, over and above normal activities and programmes.

### **Promoting Social Finance**

Building, in a significant way, on the commitments made in Sustaining Progress and in the Programme for Government, the further development of Social Finance will be supported.

Social Finance applies financial instruments to the task of combating social exclusion through the provision of repayable finance to community focused enterprises at all stages of development including start-up. Social Finance will complement the range of measures in place to promote and assist community infrastructure and local development.

This development will include examining the conditions for the development of Social Investment as a practical option for charities, private individuals and socially responsible businesses to invest capital in the social sector through social finance providers.

It is also agreed to examine ways in which the positive experience in Ireland with social finance may be able to be applied in an international development context.

In the next three years based on best international practice and having regard to the Lisbon Agenda, the Government will:

- Implement the Government's Social Finance Initiative announced in Budget 2006. This includes the establishment of a social investment vehicle that will essentially perform the role of a wholesale supplier of social finance funding.
- Engage with and support existing providers, agencies and established networks of social finance providers and any new providers emerging from the sector.
- In conjunction with relevant interests, examine ways to progress the investment of capital in social finance providers by charities, private individuals and businesses.

### **Promoting Philanthropy and Philanthropic Activity**

The Government recognises the valuable work being carried out by organisations which promote philanthropy in Ireland and will continue to explore ways to facilitate philanthropic work, strengthen and deepen a culture of philanthropy in Ireland, and maximise the contribution of philanthropy to the common good.

## **Chapter 4 Implementation Arrangements**

The parties recognise that making progress towards the long-term goals of the Agreement will require a capability to adapt flexibly to required institutional and service delivery changes at both national and local level, learning from the insights provided by the lifecycle framework and evidence about effectiveness of different interventions in terms of outcomes. It requires an ongoing commitment to reform and modernisation in the public service (see Section 28 in Part II) and development of effective networks across public, voluntary and private sectors.

The parties agree to work together on the basis set out in the chapter to make progress towards their shared goals.

### **The Role of Social Partnership and Protocol for Engagement**

The social partnership process can be best understood as a set of relationships based on the pursuit of common goals for Irish society, trust and a problem solving approach. The ten-year framework agreement provides a stable context within which those relationships between Government and the Social Partners can evolve.

Government has ultimate responsibility for decision making, within the framework of democratic accountability. However, in recognition of the special relationship that encompasses social partnership, Government, and Departments on its behalf, commit to consulting with the social partners on policy proposals and the design of implementation arrangements. While not all policy issues covered by this ten-year framework agreement are necessarily agreed with the social partners they do provide a reference for engagement in the relevant areas. In this context, Government is committed to involving the social partners in the development of policy through:

Effective consultation in a spirit of good governance on the basis that Government Departments and organisations under their aegis will provide a meaningful opportunity for social partners to input into the shaping of appropriate relevant policy issues and the design of implementation arrangements, where appropriate.

Government Departments will manage the consultation process effectively, by giving sufficient notice, information and appropriate process for engagement, consistent with the overall requirements of effective governance.

As part of these good governance arrangements the social partners also commit to engaging constructively with Government Departments and recognise the need for the Government to deal with urgent matters in a timely manner.

### **Institutions of Social Partnership**

The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) provides the overarching institutional framework to support the process of social partnership. It will also explore how the expertise developed during the process of social dialogue in Ireland could be promoted on an international basis.

The three distinct bodies, the NESD, the NESF and the NCPP come together to operate within the NESDO:

- 1 The NESD will continue to provide analyses and reports on strategic issues relating to the efficient development of the economy and the achievement of social justice, and the

development of strategic frameworks for the conduct of relations and negotiation. In particular the NESF will undertake work on finalising their study on the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier child income supports.

- 2 The **NESF** will continue to analyse, monitor and evaluate relevant programmes and policies in the area of social inclusion. A particular focus will be on evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies and service delivery, and their integration at different stages of the lifecycle. This analysis will in turn contribute to the review of progress under the agreement.
- 3 The **NCPP** will continue to support and facilitate organisational change and innovation based on partnership, in order to bring about improved performance and mutual gains, and to contribute to national competitiveness.

### **Mechanisms for Implementation**

The Steering Group representing Government and each of the Social Partner Pillars will be reconvened to take overall responsibility for the management of the implementation of the ten-year framework agreement as it applies to the wider non-pay issues. The Steering Group will engage in high-level analysis and focus on these areas where it might add value. This includes “spot-light” issues which have a longer term focus but which require further work to be done in the first period of the ten-year framework agreement.

The Steering Group will periodically review progress in implementing and further developing the national framework instruments including, in particular, the NSS and the NDP. The Group will also be supported in its work by sub mechanisms already in place or to be established at sectoral level, such as the Housing Forum

### **Developing the Lifecycle Approach**

The lifecycle approach adopted in this agreement offers the potential of a more streamlined, outcomes-focused approach to monitoring and reporting on progress within social partnership across key national strategies such as the NAPinclusion and NDP 2007-13. It is also envisaged that the next NAPinclusion would also be based around the lifecycle framework. It will also be necessary to ensure an appropriate gender dimension, through linkage to the forthcoming National Women’s Strategy. This approach will also facilitate communication of progress under these strategies to the wider public.

This streamlined approach will consist of:

- 1 A single reporting mechanism through an annual Social Inclusion Report to monitor and review progress at each stage of the Lifecycle in the context of this agreement, the forthcoming NAP inclusion and, where appropriate, social inclusion aspects of the NDP(2007-2013). All social partners will be consulted in this process.
- 2 This process will be co-ordinated by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI). This will include drawing together relevant structures and reports at each stage of the lifecycle, as well as other relevant national strategies.
- 3 The Report will be presented to the Steering Group which will have an ongoing oversight role in relation to implementation of the lifecycle framework, providing an opportunity for engagement between the social partners in relation to progress under NAPinclusion, NDP and other relevant strategies within the lifecycle framework.

- 4 The annual Social Inclusion Forum organised by NESF will continue to serve as a structure for wider consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues
- 5 The OSI will review the role and effectiveness of the Combat Poverty Agency's programmes aimed at facilitating the participation of the community and voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty in the policy-making process. This review will examine the role and effectiveness of the programmes, in the context of the social partnership process and supports made available by other departments and agencies, with a view to maximizing participation and minimising overlaps.

### **Data/Information**

The availability of appropriate data over time is the basic building block of monitoring and the lack of appropriate indicators or data is a barrier to evaluating progress towards the achievement of the outcomes contained in this ten-year framework agreement.

The National Statistics Strategy 2003 – 2008 provides the strategic framework in which the statistical system is being developed to support evidence based policy making. The ten-year framework agreement will build on the progress that is being made in developing statistical frameworks at national level and data strategies at Departmental level.

The focus for the next phase of development of the statistical system during this agreement will be on the extensive use of unique identifiers linking data relating to specific users of services so as to reduce the administrative burden and compliance costs. The development of data strategies at Departmental level will be extended to include organisations under their aegis and data strategies at local level under the auspices of the County/City Development Board.

The parties note the particular difficulty in relation to measuring and setting targets for income poverty due to the relative newness of the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Nevertheless the parties agree that it is important to set real and achievable targets and agree that the approach to effective poverty measurement will be reviewed in the light of the timing difficulties in relation to EU-SILC and as part of the wider examination of data availability in the lifecycle framework referred to above.

The Office for Social Inclusion will carry this work forward as part of their responsibility for data and technical supports necessary for developing, monitoring and evaluating the NAPinclusion and social inclusion measures in other national strategies. This will include a specific focus on developing the type of data required to underpin the lifecycle approach. The Technical Advisory Group for OSI will be expanded to include technical experts from the social partner pillars.

### **Integrating Delivery at Local level**

Delivery of the ambitious ten year objectives in the agreement will require a more intensive level of co-operation among agencies operating at local level and by Departments and agencies at national level.

The framework of the County and City Development Boards (CDBs) enables partnership and collaboration across statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sector at local level. The CDB structure will be developed and strengthened to ensure that it can operate effectively as a vehicle for supporting a more integrated approach to service delivery at local level. In addition, the pilot social inclusion programme established under the PPF will now

be placed on a permanent footing and the programme will be extended to half of all county/city local authorities by end 2008. The C & V Sector's participation in local social partnership structures will be resourced appropriately.

Social Inclusion Monitoring (SIM) groups, representative of local public agencies and local development groups (Area Partnerships, Community Development Programmes) have been established by each CDB to improve co-ordination of social inclusion activities at local level. The work of the SIM groups, including implementation at local level of the commitments contained in this Agreement where appropriate, will be prioritised by the CDBs and supported by relevant Government Departments and national agencies.

### **Monitoring and Review Arrangements**

A meeting of all the parties to this ten-year framework agreement with the political process, chaired by the Taoiseach will take place annually.

Quarterly plenary meetings of the four social partner pillars, chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach will be held to review, monitor and report on overall progress in the implementation of the ten-year framework agreement.

A formal review will take place during 2008. This will provide an opportunity to take stock of outcomes achieved in relation to the overall goals and to consider any opportunities arising to refocus and reprioritise.