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CORI JUSTICE

Policy Briefing

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Monitoring Social Partnership

Government's current target on illiteracy undermines a central commitment of the National Agreement *Towards 2016*. The target is contained in the Government's *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* and states that by 2016: *the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy will be reduced to between 10-15% by 2016 (restricted literacy being defined as Level 1 on the International Adult Literacy Survey scale, or equivalent).*

The *Towards 2016* agreement strongly emphasises the fact that economic and social development are complementary; two sides of the one coin. It recognises that a good economy is required to ensure good social development. But it also recognises that good social policies are required if economic development is to be sustained.

For example, if Ireland's economic and social situation is to improve, Ireland's labour force must be up-skilled and educated to play a full part in such development.

If the government's target on illiteracy is achieved (and targets are not always reached) then 10-15% of Ireland's labour force will be illiterate in 2016. This would have a very negative effect on Ireland's economic development. It would also produce a situation marked by high unemployment levels, high poverty rates and substantial social exclusion.

This is totally unacceptable in a society which, for the first time in its history, has the resources to tackle these problems effectively and comprehensively.

The target on illiteracy should be revised downwards dramatically and the necessary resources committed to ensuring that the revised target is met.

In this edition of *Policy Briefing* CORI Justice publishes its first review of progress in implementing the national agreement *Towards 2016*. The situation is mixed. Some commitments have been honoured most notably the raising of the lowest social welfare rate for a single person to 30% of gross average industrial

earnings in Budget 2007. The commitments on primary care units, on social housing and on third world aid are among others that have been progressed satisfactorily. These are substantial commitments and have involved major additional expenditure.

But there is much that is not maintaining the pace required to honour commitments. The Carers' Strategy, child poverty and childcare and the development of shadow national accounts are just a few examples.

In this report we provide an assessment of progress on implementation of almost 100 key commitments contained in the national agreement on a wide range of issues.

Two further points need to be emphasised. Firstly, all national plans, strategies and agreements should be fully integrated and not be working at cross purposes.

Secondly, a more comprehensive monitoring and review process is required. Otherwise the commitments made are not likely to be honoured on time.

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Policy Briefing is a regular publication issued by CORI Justice. It addresses a wide range of current policy issues from the perspective of those who are poor and/or socially excluded. Comments, observations and suggestions on this briefing are welcome.

Background to Towards 2016

A central guiding element of the *Towards 2016* national agreement was the adoption of the lifecycle framework, as set out by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in its report *The Developmental Welfare State* (2005).

Chart 1 presents the core structure of the model NESC presented. It comprises three interrelated areas: services, income supports and participation/activist measures.

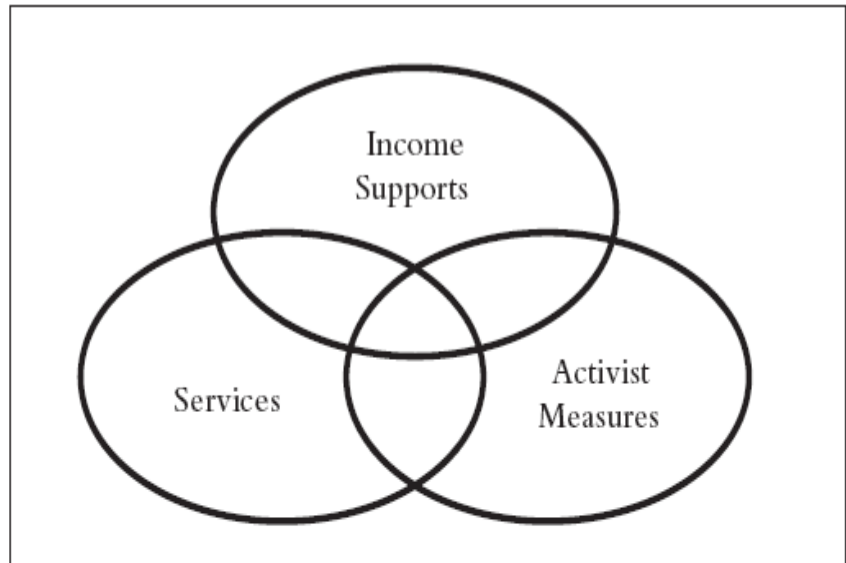
In building the developmental welfare state NESC has argued that Irish society should take a 'life-cycle' approach. This approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery, by assessing the risks facing him/her, and the supports available to him/her to address those risks, at key stages in his/her life.

As table 1 shows, such an approach would focus on identifying the needs of children, young adults, people of working age, older people and people challenged in their personal autonomy such as those in care. The council has suggested that for each group we should focus on securing an effective combination of income supports, services and social innovations.

CORI Justice believes that successfully implementing this approach will underscore each of these groups ability to play a real and sustained role in Irish society and thereby play an important role in tacking social exclusion.

This approach provides each sector involved with key challenges if the best options are to be taken and if the approach is to be successfully developed as a template for policy.

Chart 1: The Core Structure of the Developmental Welfare State



Services	Income Supports	Activist Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Education • Health • Eldercare • Housing • Transport • Employment services • Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressive child income support • Working age income for participation • Minimum pension guarantee • Capped tax expenditures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inclusion • Area-based strategies • Particular community/group projects • Emerging new needs • Novel approaches

Source: NESC, 2005: 144, 156.

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Table 1: NESC Life-cycle approach to delivering the Developmental Welfare State

Who?	What?	How?	
0-17yrs 18-29yrs 30-64yrs 65+ yrs People challenged in their personal autonomy	Integration of services, income support and activist measures	Governance and leadership	Standards and rights

Source: NESC, 2005:147

Social Welfare Payments: Target Reached & The Future

Over recent years there has been major progress on benchmarking social welfare payments. As we detail in table 2 below, Budget 2007 delivered on the *Towards 2016* commitment to benchmark the minimum social welfare rate at 30 per cent of Gross Average Industrial Earnings (GAIE); equivalent to €185.50 in 2007.

CORI Justice warmly welcomed the achievement of this benchmark. It has been a key element of the policy programme CORI Justice has outlined over recent years. We are confident that its implementation will lead to

further reductions in poverty rates, complementing those already achieved and detailed earlier.

An important element of this commitment was to acknowledge that the years from 2002-2007 marked a period of 'catch-up' for those in receipt of welfare payments. Now that this income gap has been bridged, the increases necessary to keep social welfare payments at a level equivalent to 30 per cent of GAIE become much smaller.

Looking to the future, it is important to note that the national agreement

states that "the value of the rates will be maintained at this level over the course of the agreement". Reflecting this commitment table 3 outlines the increases from Budget 2008 (delivered in December 2007) onwards to 2010 to maintain the link with 30 per cent of GAIE. These increases are calculated using ESRI projections of increases in average industrial earnings and suggest an average annual increase of €10.10 over these three years. Reflecting the current budgetary process these increases are calculated, and revised, for a period of three years.

Table 2: Benchmarking Social Welfare: Reaching the NAPS Target, 2004-2007

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Min. SW. payment in €s	134.80	148.80	165.80	185.80
€amount increase each year	-	+14.00	+17.00	+20.00
Delivered		✓	✓	✓

Table 3: Future Increases in Minimum Social Welfare Payments, 2008-2010

	2007	2008	2009	2010
30% of GAIE updated	185.50	199.00	206.50	216.00
€amount increase each year	-	+13.20	+7.50	+9.50

Primary Care - on schedule

Primary Care has been recognised as one of the cornerstones of the health system. This was given recognition by the publication of a strategy *Primary Care Healthcare – A New Direction* in 2001. Between 90 and 95 per cent of the population are treated by the primary care system.

Towards 2016 commits government to engage in ongoing investment to ensure integrated, accessible services for people within their own community with a target of 500 by 2011.

The national agreement also commits to developing, as a priority, out-of-hours GP services with a view ultimately to having those services available to the whole population. Achieving these targets and thereby further developing this area of Healthcare must remain a key priority in the years to come.

CORI Justice welcomes the funding announced as part of Budget 2007 which allocated €25m to fund the roll out of 100 primary care teams in 2007. Achieving the targets committed in *Towards 2016* and thereby further developing this area of healthcare must remain a key priority in the years to come.

ODA Interim -Target

A welcome commitment in *Towards 2016* reiterates the Government's *White Paper on Irish Aid* pledge that Ireland "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% of GNP in 2007".

Budget 2007 allocated €13m, equivalent to 0.5 per cent of GNP – reaching the interim target set by the Government. This increase is welcome and reflects a serious effort to deliver on Ireland's international commitments in this area. Over recent years Ireland's overseas aid budget has grown substantially from almost €70m (0.18% of GNP) in 1993 to €45m in 2005 (0.4% of GNP).

Throughout the remainder of the national agreements it is important that Government stay focused on reaching 0.7 per cent of GNP by 2012 and subsequently maintaining that level of ODA. Not only would its achievement be a major success for government, and an important element in the delivery of promises made in the national agreement, but it would also be of significance internationally. It must next deliver on a second interim target of 0.6 per cent by 2010.

Social Housing: to date targets are being met

At the end of 2004 the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) published a major report on housing. Entitled *Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy* the report spans over 230 pages and provides guidelines for the future direction of policy in this area.

A central conclusion of the NESC housing report is that the supply of social housing will have to rise dramatically if the needs of Irish society are to be addressed in the years ahead. The main recommendation of the council on the issue of social housing calls on Government to “create an expanded and more flexible stock of social housing - adding in the order of

73,000 permanent social housing units to bring the stock to 200,000 dwellings by 2012 - in a manner that is consistent with other public investment needs and sound public finances”.

The figure of 200,000 social housing units was calculated based on the projected increases in the Irish population over that period and in the context of limited responses to existing social housing needs (e.g. homelessness, community based accommodation for disabled and older persons etc).

The national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* extended the timeframe for reaching this target by one year - to 2013 - to bring it into line with the

National Development Plan (NDP). To ensure this commitment was credible the agreement made a commitment on social housing that the total number of new commencements/acquisitions in the period 2007-2009 would be 27,000 units.

The allocation in Budget 2007 was sufficient to cover the cost of that commitment in the current year.

There are further commitments in the agreement to assist the voluntary and co-operative sector to enable it to meet its full potential in this area.

Progress is reported but only time will tell if it is sufficient to meet the commitments contained in *Towards 2016*.

Shadow Accounts

Our present national accounts miss fundamentals such as environmental sustainability. Their emphasis is on GNP/GDP as scorecards of wealth and progress. These measures more or less ignore the environment, and completely ignore unpaid work. Only money transactions are tracked. Some governments have picked up on these issues, especially in the environmental area. They have begun to develop “satellite” or “shadow” national accounts, which include items not traditionally measured. *Towards 2016* committed the Irish government to examine the application of satellite accounts in the area of environmental sustainability. This development, which CORI Justice warmly welcomed, was scheduled to occur during 2007 but to date progress has been slow.

Childcare & Child Poverty

There continues to be major problems in Ireland with child poverty and childcare. There are constant claims that not enough is being done by Government on either front. *Towards 2016* contains a commitment to examine both these issues. To address this issue in an integrated manner CORI Justice has proposed that Government introduce a refundable tax credit available for every child irrespective of the employment status of their parents. The vast majority of people would add the tax credit to their already-existing tax credits thus reducing their tax payment by the amount of the child credit. Only those on social welfare or in very low-paid employment would claim the payment directly. The level at which the payment could be set would depend on the resources available.

Social Finance

Proposals for supporting the further development of social finance in Ireland are included in *Towards 2016*. As the organisation which originally proposed that social finance be included in national agreements CORI Justice welcomed the recent establishment of the Social Finance Foundation by Government. We also welcome their commitment to work to ensure that there is sufficient finance to sustain the long-term viability of this approach.

CORI Justice believes that the development of social finance is very important. Organisations providing social finance, such as Clann Credo, have received substantial support from a wide range of religious congregations since its establishment more than ten years ago. This support will continue and increase.

New C&V Strategy Needed

The national agreement recognises that “particular challenges arise in relation to the role of the Community and Voluntary (C+V) sector” if it is to play its full role in delivering the commitments contained in *Towards 2016*. Budget 2007 has delivered on the rather limited funding commitments for the sector contained in the agreement.

However, if the C+V sector is to play the full role envisaged for it in the national agreement a clear strategy for the sector needs to be articulated. The strategy should include the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the sector set out in the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity. It should, among other things, also include an outline of the pathways to up-scaling and up-skilling the sector to meet its full potential.

NAPinclusion: A missed opportunity

Among the commitments flagged in *Towards 2016* was the delivery of a new *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion)* running from 2007-2016. This plan was published in February 2007.

Subsequently, CORI Justice provided a review and critique of the plan in our March 2007 *Policy Briefing on Poverty* (available on our website www.cori.ie/justice).

This Action Plan contains a number of positive initiatives that are welcome such as the benchmarking of the lowest social welfare rates, the tackling of social housing problems and the provision of 500 primary care teams.

However the Plan completely fails to address the ‘working poor’ which is one of the major challenges facing Ireland if social exclusion is to be addressed effectively.

The growth in jobs over recent years has been dramatic and many have benefited from the rapid rise in the number of jobs available. However, it is important to realise that having a job is not, of itself, a guarantee that one lives in a poverty-free household. 7% of those at work are living at risk of poverty. This means that just over 138,000 people in employment are at risk of poverty according to the latest CSO statistics.

The sustained commitment in recent budgets to keep those in the minimum wage out of the tax net marks a welcome move in this direction. Similarly, attempts to increase awareness among low income employed families of their entitlement to the Family Income Supplement (FIS) are helpful.

However, the most effective mechanism available using the present system to address the problem of the ‘working poor’ would be to make tax credits refundable.

Despite the fact that Ireland’s social services in areas such as healthcare and education are below the EU average and despite the fact that infrastructure such as public transport is also below the norm expected in EU countries with a comparable level of income, none of these problems is addressed adequately

in the new Action Plan.

Overall CORI Justice believes that the Plan lacks ambition. Given the extraordinary economic growth of the past decade and given the numbers at risk of poverty and the deficits in so-

cial services and social infrastructure that are causing social exclusion for so many people across the country, more ambitious targets and goals would have been expected.

If Ireland cannot tackle poverty and social exclusion in the present economic circumstances it will never do so. We are disappointed that more challenging targets and timeframes were not included in this Plan.

Progress is being made on reducing poverty but the poverty rate is still too high. Ireland should

set a target of reducing the risk of poverty to the EU average rate (16%) by 2011 and reducing that further by 2016.

If Ireland cannot tackle poverty and social exclusion in the present economic circumstances it will never do so.

the government’s literacy target is illogical, un-ambitious and suggests a complete lack of interest in seriously addressing this problem

Unacceptable Literacy Target

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (*NAPinclusion*) is very unambitious. Despite the fact that more than 18% of the population are at risk of poverty the *global poverty target* fails to address this issue.

Among the most unambitious of targets is that which has been set for literacy. The *NAPinclusion* document states that “the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy will be reduced to between 10%-15% by 2016, from the level of 25% found in 1997” where “restricted literacy” is defined as level 1 on the International Adult Literacy Scale. People at this level of literacy are considered to possess “very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information

printed on the package” (OECD).

As table 4 shows, in numerical terms this implies that the aim of government policy is to have at best “only” 317,000 adults who are effectively (or functionally) illiterate in Ireland by 2016.

The question needs to be asked, how can policy aim to be so unambitious? How will these people with literacy problems function effectively in the economy and society that is emerging in Ireland? How can they get meaningful jobs?

In reality achieving this target could only be interpreted as substantial and sustained failure. CORI Justice believes that the government’s literacy target is illogical, un-ambitious and suggests a complete lack of interest in seriously addressing this problem.

Table 4: Government Literacy Target, Ireland 2016

Adult Population (under 65yrs) in 2016	3,176,700
10% “restricted literacy” target	317,670
15% “restricted literacy” target	476,505

Source: CSO *Population and Labour Force Projections, 2006-2036* (2004:27)

Structural Change Required to Ensure Implementation

The national agreement *Towards 2016* recognises that “implementation of the lifecycle approach poses a significant challenge to Government and to all other stakeholders”.

It goes on to state 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”.

In the agreement Government commits itself to involving the social partners in

the development of policy through effective consultation and giving sufficient notice, information and appropriate processes for engagement.

On the other hand social partners commit themselves to engaging constructively with Government Departments and recognise the need for government to deal with urgent matters quickly.

To date there has been insufficient progress on developing the mechanisms to meet these commitments.

Traditionally policy has been developed in single-issue 'silos' working along parallel lines on these issues e.g. health-care, education, labour market, transport, housing, etc.

The *Towards 2016* agreement is intended to build an integrated approach, recognising that all of these issues are inter-connected and impact on each other. The agreement highlighted the importance of inter-connectedness when it adopted a life-cycle approach to social policy and when it acknowledged the complementarity of economic and social policy.

CORI Justice believes that new initiatives are required if the complementarity is to go beyond mere rhetoric. We hope that government can move to implement these reforms and allow a more adequate policy making process to emerge – one that reflects the intentions set-out in *Towards 2016*.

A Lot Still To Be Delivered

The shared overall goal for this new ten-year framework agreement covering the period 2006-2015 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.

The agreement identifies the key foundations as:

- 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.

The *Towards 2016* agreement set out what needed to be done to reach this destination. While some progress has been made, many areas are lagging behind or have not got going.

Overall, CORI Justice believes that a great deal remains to be done if the commitments made in *Towards 2016* are to be delivered. This *Policy Briefing* identifies the progress, or otherwise, on almost one hundred of these commitments.

The gaps, problems and deficiencies, we have highlighted should be addressed immediately.

T2016 on the Web

If you wish to access a copy of *Towards 2016* it can be found at the following website: www.taoiseach.gov.ie and there click on the link for *Towards 2016* (on the right hand side of the webpage).

A copy of this national agreement, all of the *Towards 2016* review documents issues by CORI Justice and all other related documents can be found at a special section of the CORI Justice website. To access this go to: www.corijustice.ie and then click on the link for Social Partnership - on the right hand side of the page.

CORI Justice - Monitoring *Towards 2016*

The National Agreement, *Towards 2016*, marked an important development in the Irish policy formation process. As suggested by CORI Justice, among others, government moved to develop policies and strategies over a 10 year period. Such a duration is necessary for the successful development of complex new policies aimed at bringing Ireland's infrastructure and social provision up to a comparable level with that of our fellow EU countries.

As a signatory to that agreement, CORI Justice takes seriously the need to achieve progress on the goals and intentions signed-off on in *Towards 2016*. As part of that process, CORI Justice has committed itself to invest a substantial amount of time and resources each year into monitoring the progress of the agreement. We intend to publish on an annual basis an edition of this document and through it will continue to monitor, and evaluate delivery, on the commitments made.

Income

PROGRESS

On Minimum Social Welfare rates

- The lowest social welfare rate for a single person will be benchmarked at 30% of gross average industrial income (GIAE) in 2007. The value of the rates will be maintained at this level over the course of the agreement.
- **Achieved in Budget 2007**

On children

- 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.
- **Position maintained in Budget 2007**
- 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.
- **Review in progress**

On pensions/income supports for older people

- 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.
- **Consultations completed. Draft Green Paper on pensions has been completed and is being considered by Government.**
- Enhancement of social welfare pensions over the period, having regards 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.
- **Target met in Budget 2007. The new Government Programme envisages social welfare pensions increasing to €300 per week by 2012**
- To increase the level of qualified adult allowance for pensioner spouses to the level of the state non-contributory pension.
- **Reached 86.5% in Budget 2007. Commitment repeated in Programme for Government.**
- 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.
- **Issue not addressed. Awaiting the publication of the Green Paper on Pensions.**

On people with disabilities

- 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.
- **No progress on this commitment. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to publish a review of the Cost of Disability payment.**

On poverty indicators

- 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. The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) 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.
- **The Technical Advisory Group is being re-activated. The Office for Social Inclusion has sought members as agreed. The C+V Pillar will be represented by Seán Healy (CORI Justice)**

On upskilling

- 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.
 - Providing additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education.
 - 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.
- **Little progress made on these commitments. The Traveller Education Strategy was launched in November 2006. Unacceptable illiteracy targets set in NAPInclusion (cf. story on p.1).**
 - **Little progress made. VECs have been asked to provide 3,000 places overall. In 2007 a family literacy project will be piloted in seven areas**
 - **No Progress**
 - **No Progress**

On access to employment

- Applying the National Employment Action Plan referral process earlier than the current six months.
 - Extending the National Employment Action Plan referral process to other groups such as lone parents and those with disabilities, with due regards to the special needs of those groups.
- **Now activated after 3 months for all age groups.**
 - **This is being examined by the interdepartmental group responsible for the NEAP.**

On voluntary activity

- 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.
- **An additional € million provided in Budget 2007 to support volunteering. The Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship recommended that government should fund one Volunteer Bureau in each local authority area. The number of these has been increased from 6 to 12.**

On people with disabilities

- 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.
 - 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.
- **No Progress**
 - **No Progress**

Work continued

PROGRESS

On migrants

- 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.
 - The Government has agreed that the Employment Permits Bill will be enacted at the earliest possible date and that economic migration policy will ensure the following: that all workers will be allowed to apply for and reapply for their own permit; that there will be appropriate consultation with the social partners in determining included and excluded categories of staff/skills for eligibility for work permits; that there are adequate safeguards to protect workers' rights in relation to the application for employment permits by: employers inside and outside of the State; employment agencies; and in respect of intra-corporate transfers; that the employment of non-EEA students is subject to an application for employment permits; that employment permit applications are not approved for wages below the REA/ERO rate or the National Minimum Wage, which ever is appropriate; that employment permit holders may transfer to another employment in cases of unfair treatment; and that spouses of employment permit holders who are granted residence in Ireland may be granted an employment permit.
- **A Minister of State has recently been appointed with special responsibility for integration policy. A review of existing integration policy has been completed.**
 - **This legislation has been implemented.**

Public Services

On transport

- There will be a doubling of the cash funding available to the Rural Transport Initiative (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.
 - The Public Transport Partnership Forum will continue to provide a means for consultation with the Social Partners on matters relating to public transport.
- **€9 million was provided in Budget 2007 compared to €5.1 million in Budget 2006.**
 - **This commitment is being honoured.**

On telecommunications

- Continue to explore technical options to address the requirements of people living in underserved areas, and remote rural areas.
- **No progress reported.**

On sport and culture

- 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.
 - 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 (LSP) network and the associated roll-out of the Buntús programme for primary schools and pre-schools through the LSP network.
 - Continue to endeavour to make arts more accessible to all including the support of programmes in socially deprived.
- **The total allocation for sports increased by 30% in Budget 2007.**
 - **A new programme - 'Buntús Start' is being implemented.**
 - **Irish Sports Council budget increased by 30%. The ISC has created a new Participation Unit focusing on increased participation.**
 - **No progress.**

On Regulation

- 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.
- **The Better Regulation Unit conducted a public consultation on Regulatory Appeals. A summary of submissions received to be published.**

Housing and Accommodation

PROGRESS

On social housing

- The total number of new commencements/acquisitions in the period 2007-2009 will be 27,000 units.
 - To further assist the voluntary and co-operative sector 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. Units/sites sufficient to supply some 3,000 dwellings will be identified and made available over the period 2007-2009.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- **Budget 2007 provided sufficient resources for 2007.**
 - **Local authorities have been requested to identify sites for this purpose and to report progress to the Department – so far over 2,000 potential sites have been identified by authorities.**
 - **An Action Programme on Private Rented Accommodation Standards is being implemented.**
 - **Progress is being made towards this target but detail unclear.**

On homelessness

- The Government's Integrated and Preventative Homeless Strategies will be amalgamated and updated taking on board the recommendations of the recent independent review of the strategies.
 - The revised strategies will have as an underlying objective the elimination of such homelessness by 2010.
 - The involvement of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector will be strengthened through the establishment of a National Homelessness Consultative Committee including representatives of the C & V Pillar under the aegis of the Housing Forum.
- **Work on this commitment is underway.**
 - **This commitment is the agreed outcome.**
 - **This Committee has been established and met twice.**

On people with disabilities

- A National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities will be developed in order to support the provision of tailored housing and housing support to people with disabilities. This will be progressed through the establishment of a National Group under the aegis of the Housing Forum.
- **Group has been established.**

On Travellers

- Implementation of the Local Authority Traveller accommodation programmes.
- **This is being progressed.**

Healthcare

On primary care

- 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.
 - Further developing, as a priority, out-of-hours GP services with a view ultimately to having those services available to the whole population.
- **These targets are being met.**
 - **This is being progressed.**

On mental health

- Delivering one child and adolescent community mental health team (CMHT) per 100,000 of the population by 2008 and two CMHTs per 100,000 of the population by 2013.
- **Funding for an additional 8 teams was included in Budget 2007. On schedule.**

Healthcare continued

PROGRESS

On consultation with the Community and Voluntary Pillar

- 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.
- **The structure has been established and meetings are taking place as agreed.**

On suicide

- Implementation of the National Strategy for Action of Suicide Prevention, 2005-2014.
- **An additional €1.85 million was allocated in 2007 to meet this commitment. The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) launched the Mental Health Awareness and Attitudes Survey in April 2007. An interim target has been set for a 10% reduction in suicide to be achieved by 2010.**

On palliative care

- Further developing palliative care throughout Ireland, with particular reference to the Baseline Study on the provision of Hospice/Specialist Palliative Care Services.
- **An additional €5 million allocated in Budget 2007. A Working Group on Children's Palliative Care was established by the Department in April 2007 to develop policy in the area.**

On lifestyle

- 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.
- **A Healthy Food For All initiative has been established. A Healthy Eating Initiative was also launched to make the Food Dude programme available to all primary schools. A sum of €4 million was provided in the Budget 2007**
- Clarify and simplify eligibility and entitlements to health services in line with the goals of the National Health strategy
- **No meaningful progress has been made on this.**
- A National Carers' Strategy will be developed by end-2007.
- **No meaningful progress has been made on this.**

Education

- The number of children per classroom teacher at primary level will be reduced to 28:1 in 2006/2007 and 27:1 in 2007/2008 and will continue to improve as a result, in particular, of the application of resources in respect of special needs pupils.
- **The staffing schedule for 2007/2008 reflects this commitment.**
- There will be an extra 550 language support teachers by 2009 and the current limit of two additional teachers per school will be reformed.
- **200 of these teachers were funded in Budget 2007.**
- An additional 100 posts in total will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009.
- **Funding for 15 of these posts was provided in Budget 2007.**
- Development of special educational needs services in the framework of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act.
- **The Special Education Appeals Board has been established. A report on implementation has been developed and is being considered by the Dept.**

Education continued

PROGRESS

- Formulating a National Skills Strategy which will put in place a strategic framework for the implementation of a skills and training strategy into medium term.
- **No progress reported.**

On literacy

- Adult Literacy will be prioritised. Having regard to 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.
- 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.
- A Family Literacy project will also be put in place under the DEIS initiative.
- **No progress.**
- **VECs have been asked to provide 3,000 places overall.**
- **In 2007 a family literacy project will be piloted in seven areas**

On access

- A targeted fund will be put in place to alleviate the fees in public institutions for part-time courses at third level by employees who have not previously pursued a third level qualification.
- Providing additional supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students to enhance access to further and higher education.
- **A proposal is being finalised by the Department of Education and Science.**
- **No progress was made on these commitments.**

Migration and Interculturalism

- 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.
- Racism in the workplace will be proactively addressed in the context of the Anti Racism Workplace Week in keeping with best international practice in this area.
- See also commitments on migrant workers (above).
- **Little progress. A Minister of State for integration policy has been appointed.**
- **Little progress. A review of existing integration policy has been completed.**
- **No progress.**
- **This commitment is being honoured.**
- **This commitment is being honoured.**

Participation

On active citizenship and voter participation, the agreement states:

- 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 as part of a strong civic culture.
- **In March 2007, the Task Force reported. Government accepted its recommendations, in principle, and agreed to establish an Office of Active Citizenship to work with relevant stakeholders in implementing the recommendations over a 3-year period. In addition, an Implementation Steering Group will be established to oversee the work of the Office.**

Participation continued

PROGRESS

- 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.
- **No progress.**

On volunteering, the agreement states:

- 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 Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has increased the number of Volunteer Bureaux from six to twelve.**
- 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.
- **This is in progress.**
- Increased funding of €5m per annum to support volunteering.
- **This was done in Budget 2007**

On funding the Community and Voluntary Sector

- 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.
- **Progress being made but not on the scale required.**
- 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.
- **Funding has increased in some areas but an integrated, overall strategy is required.**
- Additional support for the Community Services Programme of + €30m by 2009.
- **An additional €10 million was provided in Budget 2007.**
- 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.
- **An extra €4 million has been allocated in 2007 to the Scheme for Local Community & Voluntary Groups. A scheme seeking applications for funding from National Organisations in the C & V sector was advertised in May 2007. Decisions are expected in October 2007.**
- Implement the Social Finance Initiative by developing a social investment vehicle, engaging with and supporting existing providers and examining ways to progress investment of capital in Social Finance providers by charities, private individuals and businesses.
- **The Social Finance Foundation has been established with a seed capital of €25 million. It is reviewing applications from social lending organisations.**

Sustainability

On satellite national accounts

- Examination of the feasibility of the application of satellite accounts in the area of environmental sustainability (2007).
- **The means of progressing this commitment are currently being considered.**

On strategies to be published and implemented

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation paper on the review of the National Climate Change Strategy, entitled <i>Ireland's Pathway to Kyoto Compliance</i>, was published in July 2006.
 • A revised National Climate Change Strategy was published in April 2007. The Strategy details the measures by which Ireland will meet its 2008-2012 commitments, shows how these measures position us for the post-2012 period, and identifies areas in which further measures are being researched and developed to enable us to meet our 2020 commitments.
 • No new initiatives reported.
 • Access to Information on the Environment Regulations (S.I. No. 133 of 2007), transposed under EU Directive 2001/18/EC, became effective on 1 May 2007.
 • No progress reported.
 • The new Programme for Government states that a carbon tax will be introduced during the lifetime of the Government.
 • Environmental considerations are being incorporated into areas such as the environmental sub-programmes contained in many of the programmes of the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013.
 • This commitment is being progressed. |
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On COMHAR

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the role of COMHAR in the ongoing process of policy development in the context of environmental sustainability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMHAR is to become part of the National Economic and Social Development Office. |
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Rural Development

PROGRESS

On strategy

- 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-operation option, particularly where incorporation is a condition of funding for applicants.
- In the context of the preparation of the next National Development Plan (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.
- **The funding available for the delivery of LEADER-type activities under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 will almost treble from €150m for 2000-06 to €425.4m for the 2007-13 period.**
- **A chapter on the challenges in developing the rural economy are set out in a dedicated chapter in the new National Development Plan which was published at the end of January 2007.**

On the National Spatial Strategy (NSS)

- 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.
- **Cf next item.**
- **The NDP included the creation of a competitively based Gateway Innovation Fund (€300 million over the period 2008-2010) to support distinctive and innovative projects at Gateway level.**
- **No progress reported.**
- **No progress reported.**

On rural transport

- There will be a doubling of the cash funding available to the Rural Transport Initiative (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 Public Transport Partnership Forum will continue to provide a means for consultation with the Social Partners on matters relating to public transport.
- **Budget 2007 allocated €9 million for the Rural Transport Programme in 2007.**
- **This commitment is being honoured.**

On bio-energy

- Government will put in place high-level co-ordinated arrangements, to deliver a cohesive policy approach, across 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.
- **The Bioenergy Action Plan for Ireland has been published. It sets targets for the deployment of bioenergy.**

The Developing World

On overseas development aid

- 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% of GNP in 2007.
- **This commitment is being honoured.**

On HIV/AIDS

- The Government is committed to spending a significant proportion of the expanding ODA budget on the fight against HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases.
- **This commitment is being honoured.**

Resources and Economic Outlook

Ireland's economy continues to perform well above the EU average. Sustained economic growth coupled with very significant job creation has transformed the country. Most significantly, unemployment has fallen to low levels and the era of forced emigration has ended.

In 2007 the Department of Finance expects Ireland to achieve a GDP growth rate of around 5% and to create an extra 72,000 jobs. Looking to the future, the ESRI has projected an average GNP growth rate of 4.4% for the period 2008-2012.

The public finances also remain in good shape. On a day-to-day basis the exchequer continues to collect more taxation revenue than it is spending in the current account. Over the next 3 years the Department of Finance expects the state to record current account surpluses averaging €0.06 billion annually. When the large levels of

expenditure on Ireland's capital investment programme is taken into account the government is likely to record small overall budget deficits over this and the next two budgetary years.

All commentators, national and international, expect the economy to slow down over the next few years. As Ireland adjusts to a slower, and more sustainable, economic growth level a number of economic challenges arise.

Fiscal policies must evolve so that it is understood as acceptable that the nation borrows to fund capital investments. We must also realise that even with a slowdown, the current resources available to government are significant and that a shift to normal levels of economic growth is not a reason by itself to reduce, or restrict, commitments in *Towards 2016* to enhance our underdeveloped infrastructural and social provision.

Ireland's Economic Position, 2007

Employment	2,095,400
Unemployment	98,800 (4.5%)
Inflation	4.8%
Real GDP growth 2007*	4.8%
GDP growth 2008*	4.4%
GDP growth 2008-12*	4.4% (average)
Current Budget Surplus, 2007*	Circa € billion
Current Budget Surplus, 2007-2009 (average)*	€b per annum
Capital Investment	Aprox 5% GNP
Poverty rate (% of pop)	18.5%
Population, 2006 Census	4,239,848
Population, 2011*	4,505,000
Population, 2016*	4,854,000

Source: From various Government, CSO and ESRI reports. * = projection

Other CORI Justice Publications

The following documents are available for purchase from the CORI Justice Office:

- **Addressing Inequality** (CORI Justice annual socio-economic review - 2007)
- **Policy Briefing on Poverty**
- **Policy Briefing on Environment**
- **Policy Briefing on Rural Development**
- **Policy Briefing on Monitoring Social Partnership**

You may also download these documents, and many more, for free on our website.

- **Social Policy in Ireland - Principles, Practice and Problems** published by Liffey Press in conjunction with CORI Justice, is also available at €27.95.

We're on the web
www.cori.ie/justice

CORI Justice publishes regular briefings on a wide range of public policy issues. CORI Justice's core areas of work are: public policy; spirituality; enabling and empowering; and communication.

CORI Justice has been a recognised social partner within the Community and Voluntary Pillar of social partnership since 1996.

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