

# **IRELAND'S NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION (2010)**

## **Introduction**

### **1. National Context for combating poverty and social exclusion**

#### **1.1 The challenges and the national strategy against poverty**

##### **1.1.1 *The challenges to be met***

The financial and economic crisis in Ireland coupled with the corresponding unfavourable international context means that the Irish economy is projected to contract by 8% of GNP in 2009 and by 2.8% of GNP in 2010. This is resulting in a steep rise in unemployment which is expected to reach 12 per cent by end 2009, up from an average of 4.5 per cent in recent years.

There is also a crisis in the public finances, mainly due to a severe reduction in revenue as a result of the contraction in the economy. This has led to significant tax increases, severe expenditure cuts, and a major increase in the public sector borrowing requirement. Further such measures will be required in the coming years. These place major constraints on the extent to which progress can be made in reducing poverty and social exclusion in the short to medium term.

The major overriding challenge to be met now is to halt the rise in unemployment, particularly long term unemployment, and then to progressively reduce it. Fewer unemployed will lead to a reduction in poverty levels and more resources for income support and services for those who cannot work. In addition to economic and employment measures, this challenge will be met in part by social protection through "active" measures that facilitate and support the employment participation of those of working age, as well as providing appropriate income support and access to other services.

A high proportion of children who experience poverty grow up in low income households where the parents are either not in employment or in low wage employment. Measures to increase participation in quality jobs will make a major contribution to reducing child poverty. Specially targeted supports for disadvantaged children are also being further developed, especially in education.

Other priority challenges are the social protection of older people, especially those living alone, integration of immigrants, ethnic minorities and travellers, urban and rural disadvantage, homelessness and indebtedness.

##### **1.1.2 National Strategy Against Poverty**

In the period since 1997 Ireland has developed and implemented a strategic approach to reducing poverty and social exclusion. This has included full participation in the EU Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for social inclusion. The main strategies that currently apply are the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016, and the National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection & Social Inclusion 2008-2010. (NSSPI).

The assumptions on which these strategies are based, however, will have to be adapted to take account of the worsening economic and employment situation. The social inclusion goals in the strategies remain, but it is likely that the pace at which they can be achieved may have to be slower than originally envisaged.

### **1.2 The administrative structure for EU Year**

The National Implementation Body (NIB) is composed jointly of the Office for Social Inclusion in the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency which is under the aegis of that Department. The two bodies will be integrated from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2009 to form a new Division in the Department of Social and Family Affairs, but will continue in that form as the NIB. A National Advisory Body with representatives of all the main stakeholders advises the NIB on all aspects of the programme for the year and its implementation.

## **2. The National Programme and Communications Strategy**

### **2.1 Activities of the 2010 European Year**

The challenges to be met and the strategies referred to under section 1 above have guided the choice of the main themes in the National Programme. The structure of the programme also takes account of the life cycle approach –children, people of working age, older people and, people with disabilities, communities - on which the framework for key elements of these strategies is based. It is envisaged that provision will be made in a number of events for the exchange of experience, expertise and good practice with other countries and jurisdictions.

The broad structure of the programme involves:

- main cross cutting themes: projects to include a combination of regional seminars and National Conferences, with one International Conference;
- specific themes: to be addressed in once off Seminars/Roundtables;
- locally based activities: these will take mainly place during specially designated “Social Inclusion Weeks” in May and October.
- Unfunded events: various stakeholders will be invited to organize events during the year on poverty related themes.

There may have to be some changes to the programme or individual events when the detailed arrangements are being finalised, but the aim is to keep any such changes to a minimum. The following are the main events being planned.

#### **2.1.1 Cross Cutting Themes**

The following cross cutting themes will reflect the priorities for social inclusion set down in the report for the EU on National Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (October, 2008) and the criteria outlined above:

##### ***Child poverty***

One of the main priority goals is to ensure that every child grows up in a household with access to sufficient resources, supports and services, to nurture and care for the child, foster the child’s development and full and equal participation in society.

### *Specific Supports for Children*

This part of this project will focus mainly on policies and programmes that are specifically directed at children. These will include pre-school and early education, especially in disadvantaged areas, links between school, home and community, and access to play, recreational and cultural activities

### *Reconciling work and family life*

Participation in employment can have a major impact on parents' capacity to provide good quality parenting and support for their children. This part of the project will focus on the supports parents need to reconcile work and family life, including affordable child care.

### **Access to quality work and learning opportunities**

The current economic crisis has made unemployment the main challenge to be met in reducing poverty and social exclusion. However, even before the crisis disproportionate numbers in certain categories of the working age population were largely excluded by circumstances from the labour market or were predominantly among the "working poor". These included lone parents, parents of larger families, people with disabilities and people living in areas of urban and rural disadvantage.

This project will examine how best barriers to employment participation for all categories can be removed, including those that may exist within the social protection system. The other focus will be on how more effective "active" supports can be provided, especially for those most removed from the labour market or vulnerable to becoming long term unemployed.

### **Access to services**

The provision of access to services of good quality makes a major contribution to the prevention, reduction and ultimate elimination of poverty and social exclusion. Experience has shown that devoting a higher proportion of resources to essential services achieves better outcomes for vulnerable groups, than an over reliance on income support. Services mainly include education, training, employment supports, health, care, housing, transport. Access to services will be addressed in the context of other projects – child poverty, reconciling work and family life, access to quality work and learning opportunities (see above) and in relation to people with disabilities, immigrants and areas of urban and rural disadvantage( see below). The main focus of this project, therefore, will be on services for older people, especially those living alone.

### **People with Disabilities**

This project will have a dual focus:

- improving access to employment through the removal of barriers and the creation of appropriate incentives, which will mirror the general project on this theme
- improving access to services

having regard to the range of physical and mental disabilities and age groups.

### **International Conference - Dublin**

Theme "*Making real progress after 2010*" - organized by European Anti-Poverty Network; participants: European and National stakeholders.

#### **2.1.2 Specific Themes**

There will be series of supplementary events under this heading relating to specific marginalised groups and areas, and on technical themes relating to the processes for

monitoring and evaluating progress on reducing poverty and social exclusion. These will mainly take the form of Seminars/Roundtables. These will also reflect the “communities” dimension of the life cycle approach and include projects on:

- Urban disadvantage
- Rural disadvantage
- Migration and ethnic minorities
- Travellers
- Homelessness

Events on technical themes related to monitoring progress on meeting goals and targets, on evaluating outcomes and on research will include the following:

- Poverty impact assessment
- Measuring poverty
- Applying indicators and availability of data.
- Research

### **2.1.3 Social Inclusion Weeks**

The main focus of these weeks will be on measures being taken at local level. A focus for the social inclusion week in May will be on the nature and characteristics of poverty and social exclusion in a local area, on the groups that are most vulnerable in that area, and on the measures being taken to promote social inclusion.

The second social inclusion week in October will focus on active citizenship and on how this can be directed towards promoting greater social inclusion. This will include focusing on how better outcomes can be achieved through greater integration of policies and their implementation, within local government, between national and local levels, with the community and voluntary sectors, and with other stakeholders.

Arrangements will also be made to schedule certain events such as Conferences and seminars, including those on technical issues, during those weeks. The programme for the week will also include appropriate sporting and cultural events.

### **2.1.4 Non-funded events**

Relevant organisations will be encouraged to organise events that demonstrate both their support for social inclusion and the specific contribution they are making to its achievement. These include employers’ organisations, trade unions, the self employed, sporting and cultural organisations and faith communities. These events will be listed on the national programme and will be facilitated in using the logo for the year and with other appropriate support.

**2.1.5 Alignment of planned activities with the objectives and principles identified for European Year 2010.**

*Recognition of rights*

The recognition of the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty will be an integral part of each of the planned events, as appropriate. The opportunity will be taken, in particular, to raise awareness of the social rights provided for in international instruments to which Ireland is a party. These include:

European Union: regulations on social security for migrant workers; directives on equal treatment for men and women;

Council of Europe: Revised Social Charter and, in particular, Article 30, the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion; European Code for Social Security;

UN: Convention on the Rights of the Child; International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, and relevant ILO Conventions. .

The recognition of rights will be put in the context of correcting stereotypes of people in poverty and of the central importance of providing support to enable them become more self-reliant. Pursuing this objective will also inform media coverage, information events and cultural programmes.

*Shared Responsibility and participation*

A key overall objective of the programme in its planning, organization and implementation is to promote shared responsibility, participation and engagement among all stakeholders. A key element of each Conference, Seminar, Roundtable is the sharing of good practice involving local, regional and national levels and between Government administrators and other stakeholders. There will be a special emphasis on getting people back to work in the projects on active inclusion and on reconciling work and family life. Business, trade unions and other stakeholders will be invited to host unfunded events on these themes.

*Cohesion*

A key objective of the national programme and each specific event, including the two meetings of the Social Inclusion Fora, is to promote the effective participation of all relevant actors, and particularly those who hitherto may not have been fully involved in the consultation processes. At a time of severe economic difficulties, the opportunity will also be taken in each event to boost the visibility of the measures being taken at national and EU levels to promote social cohesion.

*Commitment and Concrete Action.*

In pursuit of this objective emphasis will be placed on the social rights that Ireland recognises through its ratification and compliance with the various international instruments referred to above and including the commitment to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and the second United Nations decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008 -2017). These will be marked on the UN Day on Poverty on 17<sup>th</sup> October and in observing the social inclusion dimensions of other appropriate commemorative days including

- 20th February UN World Day of Social Justice
- 08<sup>th</sup> March International Day for Women
- 17<sup>th</sup> March St. Patrick's Day – National Holiday in Ireland
- 15<sup>th</sup> May International Day for Families

## **2.2 The Communication strategy including the opening event, website and national campaign**

Provision for effective communication of the themes for the year, the events and the outcomes will be built into each aspect of the full programme. This will include special emphasis on communicating the EU objectives and guiding principles for the Year. Specific communication initiatives and activities will include:

- **Launch:** this is scheduled for late January/early February after the launch of the Year at EU level in Brussels and will be specifically geared to generating wide publicity on the purpose and themes for the year and on the programme of events; it will take the form of a special meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum to include presentations on achievements to date in reducing poverty, the key challenges to be faced in the coming years, especially in the context of the economic crises; the calendar of key activities and a call for country wide support for the Year; speakers at the launch will include the Minister and the Ambassadors chosen (see below);
- an event for the media, broadcast and print, national and local, is being organised for November (2009), taking account of the programme and outcome of the Media Event being organised by the EU Commission for 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009 in Brussels;
- a dedicated section of the website of the Office for Social Inclusion, to be formally launched at the Media event, will be devoted to providing detailed information on the Year's events, activities, and outcomes and with links to other relevant websites at local, national and EU levels; the web will be regularly updated throughout the year;
- each project will be required to include in its project plan the arrangements being made for communications to relevant stakeholders and the media on details of the subject being covered, the event itself and its outcome; assistance with communications will be provided by the NIB as part of its coordinating role in supporting the various projects for the Year; This will include making the logo for the Year available in a number of languages for use widely by all sectors involved in promoting events allied to the Year's objectives.
- **Ambassadors:** the NIB is giving consideration to inviting well known personalities to be associated with the year which would heighten knowledge and interest in the events and themes;

In addition to its co-ordinating role the NIB will initiate a number of communication actions which may include the following:

- A series of school and community based activities will be organised to heighten awareness among young people on the realities and causes of poverty and on how to promote social inclusion. These will include schools, and institutions such as Libraries, and, where appropriate, community based organisations, and sporting and cultural bodies;
- A National Journalism Award on Poverty and Social Exclusion will be organised – the theme will be on the experience of poverty today;
- There will be discussions with the National Broadcasting Authority (RTE) on possibilities for appropriate broadcasts during the year on poverty and social exclusion.

### **2.3 Gender mainstreaming**

Each project and event will be required from the outset to ensure that the dimensions of poverty and social exclusion experienced by women and men are reflected in all aspects of planning and implementation of plans and this will be laid down in the criteria for approval of projects. Every effort will also be made to achieve an appropriate gender balance in the bodies organising and administering projects and events.

### **2.4 Accessibility of the Actions**

The organisers will be expected to take into account as the budget allows and in accordance with the principle of proportionately, the needs of people with disabilities. This will apply, in particular, to access to buildings, and within buildings to meeting rooms, dining facilities and sanitary facilities. The NIB will seek advice on accessibility from the appropriate authorities with responsibility for services for people with disabilities

Organisers will also be expected, as far as possible, to facilitate the involvement in the year's events of people experiencing poverty, in consultation with organisations with expertise in this area.

The choice of cities/towns for events is designed to maximize accessibility countrywide. They will include Dublin (East), Waterford (South West), Cork (South), Tullamore (Midlands/West), Sligo (North West) and Dundalk (North East).

## **3. Consultation of Civil Society and Stakeholders**

### **3.1 Stakeholders consulted**

People experiencing poverty and the community based organisations that work with them, NGOs, trade union representation, statutory bodies, government departments, independent funders, European Commission and the general public were all consulted through various mechanisms described in 3.2 below

### **3.2 The consultation process**

3.2.1 The NIB's consultation process comprised the following elements:

- Establishment of a National Advisory Committee comprised of representatives of government departments, NGOs, trade unions, employer and farming bodies, independent funders, European Commission and statutory bodies. This Committee will stand for 2009, 2010 and 2011. It has already met twice to advise on the national programme. It will advise on all aspects of the programme and in particular on the detail of the various projects and on membership of the project committees.
- The funding of the European Anti Poverty Network (Ireland) to undertake, on behalf of the NIB, three regional workshops in Cork, Dublin and Galway on the EU Year. The key objective of the workshops was to facilitate the participation of people who experience poverty and social exclusion and their organisations in the development of the EU Year. Ninety participants attended the three meetings. The majority were people directly affected by the issues of poverty and social exclusion. A presentation and report on the workshops were made to the NIB by the EAPN.

- NIB hosted a targeted consultation in eight workshops with community and voluntary groups within the life cycle framework who work with children, people of working age, older people, carers, migrants, Travellers, people with disabilities and communities. There will be further bilateral consultations on specific themes.
- NIB has consulted with the Management Advisory Board and the Policy Committee of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, Inter-Departmental Senior Officials Group, chaired by the Taoiseach's (Prime Minister's) Department, the Board of the Combat Poverty Agency, the Local Government Anti-Poverty Network. These consultations will continue and will be supplemented with bilateral meetings with Government Departments and Agencies at both national and local levels on specific themes.

### **3.2.2. Outcome and Follow Up**

The views of the stakeholders are being fully taken up in drawing up this national programme and they will be involved, as appropriate, in planning and organising specific events and in many cases as the main participants in the events. They will be represented at the Social Inclusion Forum for the launch and closing events for the Year. It is envisaged that the reports and the outcome of the Year will have a major influence on the future development of the strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion and their implementation and, in particular, on the strategies for social protection and social exclusion to be included in the EU Report for 2011 to 2014. It is also envisaged that full account will be taken of this consultation process in further developing the structures for consultation with and participation of stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty, in the strategies for social inclusion and their implementation.

## **4. Arrangements for Implementation**

Implementation of the themed projects will involve an integrated approach coordinated by the NIB. Project committees composed of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders will be formed to prepare proposals in the period June to October, 2009. The proposal will cover content and structure, timetable, expenditure, arrangements for reports on outcomes, venues, location, gender mainstreaming and accessibility. There will be an emphasis in structuring the programmes on Conferences and seminar themes on identifying:

- what works - good practice,
- areas for improvement (weaknesses or shortcomings) in policy and service delivery, and on
- scope for integration and priority areas for action in the coming years.

A strategy in relation to communications for all relevant aspects of the event will be required.

The social inclusion weeks will be organised primarily at Local Authority level, with the support of the NIB, involving collaboration with other stakeholders, especially with the community and voluntary sector.

Relevant organisations will be invited to organise unfunded events. To be eligible to participate in the National Programme, the initiatives must take place in 2010, be related to one or more of the European Year's objectives and be in line with the objectives of the National Strategy on Social Inclusion.

#### 4.1 Call for proposals, award criteria, selection procedures etc

The services of third parties will be engaged, as appropriate, for Conference organization, catering, communications, including media liaison, website design, publications and their dissemination. In all such situations, calls for proposals will be issued. The NIB will ensure that equitable and transparent procurement and grant award procedures are applied. It will also ensure that these procedures are non-discriminatory, exclude any conflict of interests, and, especially in the case of expending EU monies, are fully in accordance with the relevant European Communities' Financial Regulation provisions.

#### 4.2 Indicative Timetable

2009- Month	Activity
29 <sup>th</sup> October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Media event, Brussels</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign off on detailed National Programme</li> <li>• Finalise Irish web presence</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for submission of proposals to fund activities under the programme</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory roundtable with key media</li> </ul>
December 2009/January 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify acceptance of proposals</li> </ul>
<b>2010</b>	
21 <sup>st</sup> January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Launch in Madrid</li> </ul>
End January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irish Programme launch at special meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum in Dublin</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First cross cutting regional roundtables and National Conference</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First seminar/roundtable on Specific Theme circa UN World Day of Social Justice (20<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Event on Poverty Impact Assessment</li> </ul>
(End) February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Conference "<i>Making real progress after 2010</i>" organised by EAPN</li> </ul>
March 8 <sup>th</sup> International Women's Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event with focus on aspects of social inclusion for women</li> </ul>
March 17 <sup>th</sup> St. Patrick's Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event on working for social inclusion and a more socially cohesive society</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second seminar/roundtable on Special Theme</li> <li>• Second crosscutting roundtables</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparatory work with schools and local authorities re art</li> </ul>
May Social Inclusion Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminar/Roundtables on Specific Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3<sup>rd</sup> Rural Disadvantage</li> <li>- 4<sup>th</sup> Urban Disadvantage</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Annual Young Social Innovators Exhibition)</li> <li>• Locally organised activities</li> <li>• (Announcement of National Journalism Award on Poverty and Social Exclusion)</li> <li>• Third Crosscutting Roundtables</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Crosscutting National Conference, child/family theme, circa International Day for families (15<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical event on Poverty - Measurement, applying indicators and availability of data</li> <li>• Third Cross cutting National Conference.</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fourth Cross cutting Roundtables</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> seminar/roundtable on Special Theme</li> </ul>
October-Social inclusion Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally organised activities with focus on 17<sup>th</sup> October – UN Day on Poverty</li> <li>• Fourth National Conference on Cross Cutting theme</li> <li>• Art exhibitions with local authorities</li> <li>• Art for all week with County Arts Officers</li> <li>• Announcement of winners of National Journalism Award</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Inclusion Forum as final Closing event in Ireland</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Closing event</li> </ul>
<p>Note: Plans are being made to have appropriate sports and cultural events during the course of the year the details of which have to be finalised.</p>	

## 5. Indicative Budget

### Budget for EU year on Combating Poverty & Social Inclusion

- **Introductory roundtable for media (information on year)** **€2,000**
- **Social Inclusion Forum** **€40,000**
  - 2 Meetings of the Social Inclusion Forum
    - ( $€40,000 * 2 = €80,000 / 2 = €40,000$  NESF fund 50%)
- **Conferences, Seminars etc** **€205,000**
  - 4 Cross Cutting Themes Events
    - 4 national conferences
    - 20 - 24 regional roundtable seminars
  - International conference organised by EAPN

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 5 seminars on specific themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (note: 8 seminars in total the cost of 3 technical events on PIA, poverty measurement &amp; applying indicators will be met from the Admin Budget of new Division)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Comunications</b></li> </ul>	<b>€35,000</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Website for year ( linked to OSI site)</li> <li>○ DVD on Poverty Challenges in Ireland</li> <li>○ Competition prizes</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>2 Social Inclusion Weeks – series of events May &amp; Oct</b></li> </ul>	<b>€300,000</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Including grant scheme</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Contingency ( miscellaneous expenditure)</b></li> </ul>	<b>€18,000</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Evaluation</b></li> </ul>	<b>€60,000</b>
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>€660,000</u></b>

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

A number of process are in place or will be put in place to monitor and evaluate the National Programme as follows;

- The National Implementing Body : This Body, in addition to coordinating at national level the programme of events for the year, will as part of its remit monitor and evaluate the operation of the programme as the year progresses
- The National Advisory Committee : This Committee comprising a broad range of stakeholders including the social partners has been established to advise on the EU year programme and to support and facilitate engagement of organisations with the Programme. It is also intended that it will advise on the implementation of the Programme, clarify appropriate outcomes for the activities of the National Programme and advise on appropriate evaluation processes to assess the extent to which they have been achieved and their future potential.
- Independent evaluation: It is intended that there will an independent evaluation undertaken on 2011 on the implementation of the national programme against expected outcomes.



