

Second Meeting of the NAPS Social Inclusion Forum

26th January 2005 • Royal Hospital Kilmainham

Conference Report

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Foreword from the Chairperson, Dr. Maureen Gaffney

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) Social Inclusion Forum, which was established by the Government in 2002, is of particular importance in providing an opportunity for those at local level who are not directly represented in the social partnership process to be consulted. The goals of this process are to enable them:

- to put forward their views and experiences on key policies and implementation issues relating to the NAPS;
- to identify barriers and constraints to progress and recommendations on how best these can best be tackled; and
- to provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.

The NAPS Forum is a unique gathering in the EU context. Mr. Jérôme Vignon, the European Commission representative, commented in his address at the meeting, that Ireland is at the forefront in bringing together those who represent people experiencing poverty to input their views into the policy-making process and, in this respect, provides an extremely worthwhile and important example to the rest of the European Union.

The present document is a summary record of the second meeting of this Forum that was held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on 26th January last. The focus of this meeting was on vulnerable groups who face high risks of poverty – older people, children and young people, people with disabilities, minority groups and women.

The meeting also marked the beginning of a consultation process that the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Séamus Brennan TD, and his Department are now engaged in over the coming months, with those experiencing poverty and

those who work with them. The purpose of these consultations is to feed into the evaluation of the current National Action Plan (NAPs/inclusion), due to be completed as part of our EU obligations by the middle of this year, as well as into the preparation of Ireland's next Action Plan that will cover the period 2006-2009.

This report will be submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, which is chaired by the Taoiseach, and all Government Ministers; and to the other institutions that support the NAPS, namely the Senior Officials Group, the Office for Social Inclusion, the Social Inclusion Units in Government Departments and the Social Inclusion Consultation Group. The report is also being sent to Members of the Oireachtas, the European Commission and to all those who attended the Forum meeting.

There was a capacity attendance of nearly 300 people at the meeting. Many people who had intended to be there could not be accommodated. I am especially pleased to be able to say that from the feedback we got, the meeting was regarded as very positive indeed.

On this occasion, the series of capacity-building regional meetings that were held prior to the Forum meeting – which were run by the Community Platform and funded by the Combat Poverty Agency – enhanced the proceedings and I would hope that this will form the basis for further meetings of the Forum in the future.

I would like to avail of this opportunity to thank all the speakers who addressed us at the meeting, to those who assisted in the workshops (through either chairing, making presentations or acting as rapporteurs) and to the staff in the NESF Secretariat, the Office for Social Inclusion, the Combat Poverty Agency and the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and lastly to Ms. Carmel Corrigan for her valuable assistance and advice in compiling this report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maureen Gaffney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Maureen Gaffney
Chairperson
NAPS Social Inclusion Forum
National Economic and Social Forum

Introduction and Executive Summary

- 1.1 ● The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) underwent an extensive review in 2001, resulting in the launch of the revised NAPS document, *Building an Inclusive Society* by the Government in 2002. In addition to setting new targets, this revised strategy included measures to address the need of specific vulnerable groups including children and young people, women, older people, Travellers, people with disabilities, and migrants and members of minority groups.
- 1.2 ● The revised NAPS also established new institutional structures and arrangements to support the strategy. The Social Inclusion Forum is part of these new structures and will be convened annually by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF). The Social Inclusion Forum is also a key element of the Government's commitment to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the groups that represent them, in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- 1.3 ● Following from a commitment arising from the European Councils in Lisbon and Feira in 2000, all EU Member States are required to submit three-year National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/inclusion) as part of the European 10-year Social Inclusion Strategy. The current NAPs/inclusion¹ covers the period from 2003 to 2005. The present Social Inclusion Forum meeting provided an opportunity, therefore, to feed into the evaluation of the NAPs/inclusion (this has to be submitted to the EU Commission by the middle of this year) and also enabled the Forum to highlight issues for the next NAPs/inclusion document which will cover the years 2006 – 2009.
- 1.4 ● More specifically, the purpose of the Social Inclusion Forum, which was held on 26th January 2005², was to provide organisations and individuals that are not involved in the social partnership process with the opportunity to:
- input their views on key policies and implementation issues;
 - identify barriers and constraints to progress and how best these can be tackled; and
 - provide suggestions and proposals for new developments and more effective policies in the future.

¹ These are being produced at regular intervals by all the EU States; Ireland's Plan draws heavily on the Government's revised NAPS document as well as the current social partnership agreement, *Sustaining Progress*..

² A copy of the Programme for the meeting is contained in Appendix 1.

- 1.5 ● This report provides an overview account of the Forum meeting. It includes a summary of the papers that were presented by guest speakers at the Plenary Sessions, as well as inputs from the speakers and respondents in the five parallel Workshops. It also provides a summary of the discussions that occurred in roundtables, workshops and plenary sessions. A copy of the papers and presentations that were given at the Forum can be obtained from the NESF Secretariat, 16 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, E-mail: info@nesf.ie or from the NESF website at: www.nesf.ie.
- 1.6 ● The structure of the report is as follows:
- Section II provides a summary of the paper presented by **Mr. Jérôme Vignon, Director, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission**. In outlining developments at EU level, Mr. Vignon paid tribute to the uniqueness of the NAPS Forum, its timeliness from the European perspective and its example for the rest of the EU in engaging all the main stakeholders in the anti-poverty strategy; he identified a number of key lessons from the first five years of the EU's social inclusion process (the so-called 'Open Method of Co-ordination') and the seven policy priorities for the Member States' Action Plans; he congratulated Ireland on the quality of its Action Plan ('the Commission considers it to be one of the strongest plans we read') and concluded by pinpointing some areas for improvement such as including targets for reducing relative poverty as well as consistent poverty, tackling income inequalities and addressing infrastructure deficits and public services;
 - Section III summarises the presentations by **Professor Brian Nolan of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)**:
 - Professor Nolan's presentation highlighted the key messages from the figures just released in the new EU-SILC (Ireland is the first to have done so) measurement of relative income and consistent poverty and the position of vulnerable groups (basically, he considered that the new data do not contradict the picture we had previously about poverty trends and vulnerable groups); but he suggested a tiered approach now to setting poverty reduction targets, as this would be more effective for policy purposes; he also called for more generous social welfare payments.

- Section IV outlines developments in promoting social inclusion in Ireland. It summarises presentations given by **Mr. Gerry Mangan, Director of the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)**, and **Mr. Robin Hanan, Co-ordinator of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN, Ireland)**:
 - Mr. Mangan highlighted the need for a strategic and integrated approach to fighting poverty and exclusion, because of the complexities of the issues and the need to take into account economic, political and social factors; the recent comprehensive Annual Report of his Office, which will be up-dated every 6-months, provides a means to check progress and he went on to outline some of the work of the OSI in co-ordinating and facilitating the development and implementation of the NAPS and NAPS/inclusion, in developing data and indicators and ensuring that all stakeholders are consulted;
 - Mr. Hanan summarised some of the achievements of the NAPS and NAPS/inclusion in Ireland and highlighted the many challenges that remain to be tackled such as ensuring that resources are available to meet targets, consistent and reliable resourcing for community groups – the cut-back in Community Workers Co-op (CWC) funding undermined confidence in government support for the sector, and schemes like Community Employment, access to services, particularly in rural areas, tackling educational disadvantage, the integration of ethnic minorities, poverty-proofing and barriers to taking up employment;
- In the morning Session, delegates at the NAPS Forum were asked to discuss a number of issues in roundtable format; these related to the previous presentations, their experience of NAPS/inclusion, challenges remaining and how these could be met, and the identification of any other issues of concern; Section V provides a summary of these discussions and of the brief Question and Answer Session with the morning’s speakers.
- Section VI contains a summary of the presentations and discussions that took place in five parallel Workshops; each Workshop addressed issues relating to a specific target group and theme and the suggestions on addressing issues of concern are summarised in Box A beneath.

Box A

Suggestions from the Workshops on Target Group Issues that need to be Addressed

Older People – Care and Services in the Community

- Recognise the importance of services for older people and provide resources for these.
- Facilitate the participation of older people in society and decision-making.
- Fully recognise the contribution older people have made and continue to make.
- Need for integrated, seamless services for older people to overcome present inequity in the coverage and access to services.
- Broaden the NAPS targets to reflect a broader definition of poverty that recognises exclusion.

Children & Young People – Educational Disadvantage

- Complete the review of educational disadvantage programmes.
- Review the meaning and resourcing of schools designated as disadvantaged.
- Increase the emphasis placed on early childhood education.
- Review the NAPS targets and clarify their meaning.
- Improve current and devise new data collection strategies.

People with Disabilities – Access to Education, Training and Employment

- Consider introducing a portable ‘Cost of Disability’ payment which people would carry with them into education, training or employment.
- Increase and improve pre-employment and workplace supports.
- Employers should introduce job retention supports for people who acquire a disability at work.
- Ensure all employers’ facilities have adequate access for people with disabilities.
- Increase inter-agency co-operation to deliver appropriate supports and services.
- Need for policy-makers to listen more to people with disabilities.

Minority Groups – Integration Strategies

- Address issues that are not currently named in NAPS or NAPS/inclusion, including the specific needs of the deaf community, the issue of Direct Provision for asylum seekers and refugees, and the habitual residency rule for migrant workers.
- Increase the attention paid to migrant workers and address the lack of progress on the proposed integration strategy.
- Increase resources available to address the needs of minority groups.
- Address the needs of minority groups from a rights perspective.
- Include minority groups in all integration policies and from the perspective of inclusion not assimilation.

Women – Decision-making & Participation

- Ensure that there are linkages between NAPS and the forthcoming National Women's Strategy.
- Include a target for women and decision-making in the NAPS.
- Strengthen the commitment to and legislative basis of quotas and introduce sanctions for not attaining these.
- Ensure that women's organisations are represented in social partnership.
- Introduce measures to combat negative attitudes to women's involvement in local and national politics and representative structures.
- Improve the mainstreaming of learning from local women's projects.
- Support men's groups to address their own issues rather than asking women's groups to do this for them.

—Section VII summarises the comments made at the final Plenary Session by a panel of speakers and also some further issues that were raised by delegates. This section also provides a summary of the closing address made by the **Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mr. Séamus Brennan, T.D.**; the more notable points made by the Minister were:

- the importance he attached to community and voluntary groups, and that the views and ideas from the Conference will be a very valuable contribution to policy-making;
- his commitment to eliminating poverty by targeted and focused action, in this regard, he expressed his determination to introduce a second tier child payment that will be targeted at the most vulnerable;
- his acceptance of the need for a joined-up Government strategy, given the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, making the transition from welfare to work and from welfare to education as seamless as possible; and
- lastly, the need to bring methodological debates on measuring poverty to a close and his hope that a consistent and comparable measure can be agreed at EU level.

1.8 ● Finally, a number of cross-over horizontal policy issues were identified by the Workshops and these are outlined in Box B below.



DELEGATES AT THE NAPS SOCIAL INCLUSION FORUM

Box B Horizontal Issues Identified by the Workshops

Issues at National and Local Level

National

- Political commitment needs to be strengthened.
- Increase inter-departmental co-operation and integrated policies.
- Improve and implement policy proofing for poverty, equality etc.
- Consider the adoption of a rights and / or equality approach.
- Increase funding for the NAPS and make it more flexible.

Local

- Make local government structures more responsible for the implementation of policies and strategies. Devise local and regional strategies for data collection.
- Consult more with people at local and regional level.
- Provide increased resources for implementation at local level and the mainstreaming of local initiatives.

Poverty Measurement, Targets and Indicators

- Clarify poverty measures and broaden the concept of poverty.
- Devise new indicators of deprivation.
- Consider the use of an equality framework.
- Devise realistic and challenging targets, including targets for specific vulnerable groups and service delivery – at national local and regional level.
- Involve people in the design of targets and indicators.
- Increase monitoring and accountability for reaching targets.
- Make disaggregated data and analysis of data readily available.
- Appoint a Minister for Older People.
- Address child poverty and childcare.
- Develop family-friendly policies.



The European Context

- 2.1 ● In opening his presentation, **Mr. Jérôme Vignon, Director, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission** highlighted both the uniqueness and timeliness of the Social Inclusion Forum. Nowhere else in the EU do representatives of the Government and state agencies, the social partners, the breadth of NGOs and those representing people experiencing poverty meet to discuss social inclusion issues. This is worthwhile and an important example to give to the rest of the European Union.
- 2.2 ● Mr. Vignon stressed that 2005 is likely to prove decisive in the development of the EU's social inclusion process and the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). During this year there will be an important review of the strategy as it reaches its mid-term point, involving a wide ranging evaluation of the implementation of the social inclusion process and related social protection processes on pensions and healthcare. This evaluation will ultimately lead to revised objectives and new ways of working being agreed with the Member States at the Spring European Council in 2006. It is then likely that Member States will be asked to produce new 3-year plans from 2006 that will significantly contribute to the eradication of poverty.
- 2.3 ● How effectively the National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/inclusion) have been implemented remains a key question. Events such as the Social Inclusion Forum will help to answer this question for the Irish Government and feed into the wider assessment of the EU social inclusion process.
- 2.4 ● Mr. Vignon stressed the positive role that Ireland has played and continues to play in providing support and leadership in relation to social inclusion issues at European level. This Irish contribution is particularly obvious in the debate over a new constitution for the Union, in the work of the Social Protection Committee, in the exchange of learning and good practice on social inclusion between Member States, in assisting many of the new Member States in developing their first national action plans by sharing the Irish experience with them, and in highlighting innovative issues and process such as mainstreaming, poverty-proofing and the development of comparable indicators of poverty and social inclusion.

- 2.5 ● He then went on to identify a number of key lessons that have emerged from the first five years of the OMC. The first of these is that the OMC works. Member States have shown a clear political commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion. New ways of mobilising and consulting with stakeholders have been developed, a clear framework for reviewing and strengthening Member States' policies has been put in place, and the Spring European Council is expected to reiterate the importance of contributing significantly to the eradication of poverty.
- 2.6 ● Despite this progress, poverty remains a key challenge, with 15% of the EU population (more than 68 million) at risk of poverty in 2002³. Member States have difficulty in translating the identification of key problems into more effective policies and action on the ground. At European level, the mainstreaming of social inclusion objectives across all EU policies needs to be strengthened, the exchange of learning and best practice between Member States must be expanded and the structural funds should be further exploited to promote social inclusion, particularly in the context of the future budgetary perspective for 2007-2013.
- 2.7 ● While challenges clearly remain, the EU's social inclusion process has facilitated a better understanding and clearer identification of the issues to be addressed. Drawing on the national action plans, Mr. Vignon identified seven key policy priorities to be addressed in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- 2.8 ● The first two of these go hand-in-hand: the need to increase employment and to modernise and strengthen social protection systems. While employment is the most important priority in tackling poverty and social exclusion, strong social protection systems are also vital. The EU Commission intends to issue a Communication on the integration of those most excluded from the labour market, and to consult with social partners, NGOs, and representatives of the Government on the impact of measures to promote the integration of those most excluded from the labour market.
- 2.9 ● The second group of policy priorities relates to key services. These are housing, access to good quality education and health and long-term care services. Social services of general interest in the internal market will be the subject of another Commission Communication.

³ Based on 2002 figures, the proportion of the population at risk of poverty ranges from 10% or less in the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Slovenia to 20% or more in Ireland, the Slovak Republic, Greece and Portugal.

- 2.10 ● The final two policy priorities relate to societal changes. The first is child poverty which is particularly high in Ireland. While not a new issue, it is being exacerbated by changes that increase the fragility of families and the growth in lone parent families which have a very high risk of poverty. Children living in lone-parent households show the highest consistent poverty rate at 32% for any group. The second priority is addressing discrimination and the integration of ethnic minorities and migrants. Again, this is a pressing issue in Ireland.
- 2.11 ● Mr. Vignon highlighted that the second Irish NAPs/inclusion had represented a significant improvement on the first. It included a very good analysis of the issues and a balanced and broad-ranging strategic approach. While it was one of the few that contained poverty reduction targets, it would have been strengthened if it had included a target for reducing relative poverty as well as consistent poverty.
- 2.12 ● In closing his presentation, Mr. Vignon also stressed that he was interested in hearing delegates' views on how successfully Ireland's National Action Plan had been implemented and, in particular, what was being done to address the very high levels of income inequality here that contributed to our comparatively high numbers at risk of relative poverty. Also of interest, and a key component of the Ireland's NAPs/inclusion, are efforts to address significant deficits in infrastructure and public services so as to ensure access for all to resources, rights, goods and services, the revised institutional changes for co-ordinating and mainstreaming anti-poverty measures in the political process, and the roll-out of the social inclusion process to the local level.



L-R PROFESSOR BRIAN NOLAN, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, DR. MAUREEN GAFFNEY, NESF AND MR. JEROME VIGNON, EUROPEAN COMMISSION AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL KILMAINHAM



Poverty in Ireland — Figures from the EU-SILC

- 3.1 ● In presenting new figures on poverty in Ireland⁴, Professor Brian Nolan of the Economic and Social Research Institute focused on the messages to be drawn from the figures and emphasised the levels of and trends in poverty, the most vulnerable groups in need of policy intervention and the implications for target setting. The importance of these figures in the European context, in enabling us to see how we are doing compared to our EU partners, was also highlighted. Member States are committed to learning from each other by monitoring progress.
- 3.2 ● From 1994 to 2001 the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey was the main source of statistical data on poverty in the EU. The Living in Ireland Survey (LIIS) was the domestic aspect of the ECHP and was the principal source of Irish poverty statistics between 1994 and 2001. This survey was used to determine the overall poverty reduction targets set in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and Ireland's NAPs/inclusion.
- 3.3 ● Professor Nolan mentioned how the ECHP and the LIIS have now been replaced by the new EU-SILC survey, which was conducted in this country by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The EU-SILC represents a new way of gathering data on key indicators on poverty and social inclusion that is going to be rolled out across the Member States of the Union on a harmonised basis over the next year or two. The CSO have been able to produce results from this survey remarkably quickly and Ireland is the first EU Member State to have done so.
- 3.4 ● One of the most commonly used figures in the EU context is the at-risk of poverty measure, more commonly known in Ireland as relative income poverty. The EU-SILC survey in Ireland shows that relative income poverty at the 60% line was 23% in late 2003⁵. This is in line with previous figures from the LIIS which showed that this measure had increased substantially between 1994 and 2001.

4. The EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), the CSO, 24th January 2005.

5. This figure is often referred to as At-Risk of Poverty. Here it refers to the numbers falling below the income thresholds set at 60% of the mid-point or median of the income distribution.

- 3.5 ● Professor Nolan emphasised, however, that relative income poverty on its own is not a particularly robust poverty indicator. While this captures a household's risk of poverty, it is not all we need to know about a household to know whether it would be considered to be poor by Irish society today. In addition, it is desirable to capture changes in real living standards over time, which relative income poverty does not.
- 3.6 ● On the other hand, consistent poverty seeks to get behind these figures and combines relative income poverty and deprivation using a number of non-monetary indicators. Consistent poverty declined from 15% in 1994 to about 4 or 5% in 2001 according to the LIIS. It was on the basis of this specific measure and this measured trend, that the Government set a target for reducing consistent poverty to below 2% or, if possible, to be eliminated in the course of the NAPS i.e. by 2007. The CSO in the latest EU-SILC survey has used the original consistent poverty deprivation indicators and has now found that 9% or 10% of its sample were both on low income and registered basic deprivation (rather than the 4% or 5% figure from the LIIS). However, Professor Nolan highlighted that these two sets of figures are not comparable for methodological reasons and it is not valid to draw conclusions between the two; changes in the working of key questions, differences in sampling procedures, and the difference between a panel survey and a new cross-section could all be contributing.
- 3.7 ● He then went on to say that the groups identified as being particularly vulnerable are the same in both the LIIS and the new EU-SILC. These are the unemployed, who have a consistent poverty rate three times higher than the average; those affected by illness or disability; children; and those who are in rented rather than owner-occupied housing. In work that the ESRI is completing for the Office for Social Inclusion covering the period from 1994 to 2001, many of these groups both started the period of Ireland's economic boom with high deprivation levels and have continued to fall further behind. The position of children, although worse than average, improved substantially over that period, while older people, although facing particularly high income poverty rates, registered lower deprivation levels and saw quite substantial improvements in deprivation levels over the period. These trends have important implications for the design of policy.
- 3.8 ● Professor Nolan went on to state that one of the key issues to arise in the light of the new survey is target setting. Ireland's core target in terms of overall poverty reduction is in terms of a measure of consistent poverty that was set in a particular context and in the light of a particular set of statistics. Given that both of these have now changed, this target needs to be re-examined.

- 3.9 ● In this regard, Professor Nolan espoused the view that a different approach to target setting needs to be introduced. This should be more encompassing and involve setting tiered targets. It would have the following three tiers:
- In the first instance, targets that address improvements in living standards and declines in absolute deprivation levels should be set for those towards the bottom levels of our society.
 - Second, targets based on bringing about declines over time in consistent poverty are required. These should involve amended measures of deprivation over time to reflect changes in expectations and living standards in our society.
 - Third, medium to long-term targets for the reduction of relative income poverty should be set. These should take into account the importance of social protection levels, social welfare levels and structures and the need to find a way of increasing the relative generosity of those payments without damaging competitiveness and economic growth.
- 3.10 ● In conclusion, Professor Nolan again drew attention to the new 2003 EU-SILC survey in Ireland which will now provide the new baseline poverty figures against which progress will be measured. The CSO is already carrying out the survey for 2004. Although the consistent poverty measures are not comparable with those in the LIIS, the key trends, vulnerable groups and underlying causal processes that produce vulnerability identified in the LIIS, have been reinforced rather than undermined. How targets are set should be a clear priority for the next six months to a year.

IV

Promoting Social Inclusion in Ireland

- 4.1 ● **Mr. Gerry Mangan, Director, Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)** provided an overview of the next steps that his Office is engaged, in the words of the Lisbon Agenda, to “make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty”. This is being pursued at national level through the NAPS, which is closely aligned with the social partnership process under the current national agreement, *Sustaining Progress*. These national processes are progressively being aligned with the EU OMC.
- 4.2 ● Consultation is a key element in achieving social inclusion. Many of the delegates at the Social Inclusion Forum are involved with those experiencing poverty and exclusion. This provides for a unique perspective on the causes of poverty and exclusion, the extent to which Government policies and programmes are effectively addressing these realities, further action that needs to be taken and the extra resources that need to be allocated.
- 4.3 ● The findings from these consultations will feed into the evaluation of the current NAPs/inclusion due to be completed later this year. They will also feed into preparation for the development of the next plan that will apply from 2006 to 2009. Also, the comprehensive annual report prepared by the OSI on the implementation of the national action plan, which, it is intended, will be updated on a 6-monthly basis, provides a means by which to check Ireland’s progress in achieving social inclusion.
- 4.4 ● Mr. Mangan stressed that a strategic approach is necessary because of the complex nature of poverty and exclusion. Economic, political and social factors need to be taken into account if the strategy is to be effective and sustainable.

- 4.5 ● First, economic sustainability is essential and this places constraints on the resources for social inclusion purposes. A strong, growing economy creates and maintains the jobs and the resources that can lift many out of poverty and improve living standards generally. However, we need to bear in mind that much social investment yields significant economic returns in terms of a more skilled, healthy, and productive workforce, and a stable and cohesive society. It reduces dependency amongst those in the working age groups, and contributes to breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty and dependency.
- 4.6 ● Understanding the inter-relatedness of these issues, he recalled, has led to an emphasis at EU level on the Policy Triangle, that is, the greater integration of economic, employment and social policies. Two economic questions need to be asked in relation to social policy development. The first is: Can we afford to pursue this policy and programme given the potential economic impact of financing it? The second is: Can we afford **not** to pursue this policy and programme given the social, economic and often employment implications of not doing so?
- 4.7 ● Second, an anti-poverty strategy also needs to be politically sustainable, that is, to have both popular support and the support of key interests. This support is more likely to be forthcoming when the reality and causes of poverty and exclusion are clearly understood, when major investments in policies and programmes are, and are seen to be, effective, when the benefits these bring to society as a whole are demonstrated, and when it is clearly perceived that those being assisted recognise that they have obligations to use the support provided to them to best effect and not to abuse the system.
- 4.8 ● Third, the strategy also needs to be socially sustainable. In order to achieve greater social cohesion, we must provide support as equitably as possible across the various vulnerable groups in society, taking account of their varying needs. Social sustainability also requires achieving the right mix of supports and services. International research shows that better outcomes are achieved when a good proportion of overall resources is devoted to support services that help people achieve greater self-sufficiency and a better overall quality of life.
- 4.9 ● In addition to co-ordinating the development and monitoring of the national action plans, the OSI is also involved in developing data and indicators to help determine what outcomes we want to achieve across the various policy areas, and how best to measure progress in achieving them. The OSI is also involved in developing poverty-proofing and has a co-ordinating role in ensuring that poverty and social exclusion related research is policy driven and designed to provide evidence-based findings that can directly contribute to policy development. In an international context, the OSI is keen to learn from other countries facing similar challenges.

- 4.10 ● Finally, Mr. Mangan drew attention to the role of the OSI in ensuring that all key stakeholders are consulted and kept informed of the realities of poverty and social exclusion, the progress being made in tackling it, what remains to be done and what the priorities are. Reflecting this approach, Mr. Mangan stressed that the OSI cannot undertake all of its functions alone and will continue to work closely with relevant Government departments, Government agencies and especially the Combat Poverty Agency, the social partners, the community and voluntary sector, the EU, other international organisations, and not least, with people experiencing poverty and those working with them.
- 4.11 ● **Mr. Robin Hanan, EAPN, Ireland**, drew attention to the fact that we are now seven years into the ten-year NAPS and nearly half-way through the ten-year European Union Social Inclusion Strategy. He then drew on his experience of linking anti-poverty groups to the NAPs/inclusion in Ireland and across the EU, and in particular on some of the ideas from a series of seminars run by the Community Platform across the country in January, that were funded by the Combat Poverty Agency. These brought together about 250 people, either working on the ground against poverty or else directly experiencing poverty themselves.
- 4.12 ● In addressing the issue of poverty levels, Mr. Hanan stressed that no figure can describe the reality of living in poverty, and that there are many forms of social exclusion which do not come from lack of money alone. Nevertheless, the poverty figures show a stark picture. Ireland is now the second richest country in the EU, after Luxembourg, and one of the richest countries in the World. There is now no doubt but that we can afford to eradicate poverty. The question is: are we going to and how?
- 4.13 ● Despite this, Ireland has the highest 'relative' income poverty in the EU, which means living on less than €182 a week. Mr. Hanan described the new figure for consistent poverty as truly shocking as it shows that the starting point is a lot higher now than previously thought.
- 4.14 ● In addressing the achievements of the NAPS and the NAPs/inclusion, Mr. Hanan highlighted that they have brought about the development of clearer strategies and information. They have kept a policy and political focus on poverty, often in a harsh political climate. The political commitment by the Taoiseach and his Prime Ministerial counterparts across the EU is very important. It has also resulted in strong co-ordination mechanisms, including the Cabinet Committee led by the Taoiseach. The leadership roles of the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency have also been important, not only formally but informally, as have the new social inclusion units in national and local government.
- 4.15 ● The NAPs/inclusion allows for international comparison and a mechanism for learning from approaches to fighting poverty across the EU, particularly through the peer review process and the Joint Inclusion Report.

- 4.16 ● Mr. Hanan stated that the commitment to participation by people experiencing poverty, as well as the involvement of all ‘actors’ such as community groups, local and national government and social partners is important, even if it has still to be fully realised. Equally the commitment to social rights, even if weak in reality, is important.
- 4.17 ● In addressing the challenges that remain, the EU Joint Inclusion Report identifies a number of issues for Ireland. These include ensuring that the resources to meet the targets are available. Ireland still has the highest rate of relative poverty in the EU and some of the worst access to services for poor people. This dates back to decades of conscious decisions about investment in services for the poorest, welfare rates and tax. To reverse this, we need to make hard decisions on taxation to fund the strategy.
- 4.18 ● The need for consistent and reliable resourcing for the voice of people experiencing poverty and community organisations working closely with them also needs to be addressed. Frequent changes in funding for community groups, the stop-start decisions on FÁS schemes, the recent decision to discontinue funding to the Community Workers Co-op for no clearly stated reason, has undermined confidence in Government support for a strong community sector.
- 4.19 ● Mr. Hanan referred to some of the other challenges for Ireland listed in the EU Joint Inclusion Report, including access to services, particularly in rural areas, tackling educational disadvantage to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty, the integration of ethnic minorities, a greater focus on income and gender inequality.
- 4.20 ● Mr. Hanan identified some other priorities for action. Poverty-proofing needs to be taken more seriously at the highest levels of Government. It is one of the most important initiatives in the NAPS and is widely quoted as a good example across Europe. Progress at national and local government level has been made, but there are many areas, such as the Budget, where it still has little impact. The system could usefully be more open and accountable, with closer scrutiny by the Oireachtas and the media.
- 4.21 ● One of the weaknesses of the NAPs/inclusion across the EU is the belief that employment will solve poverty. Jobs are very important, but not at any price, as low-paid and poorly protected jobs increase poverty. Already, a large proportion of people living in poverty in the EU have a job.
- 4.22 ● Nonetheless, barriers to taking up employment must be addressed. Barriers to taking up work that face people with disabilities, the bar on asylum seekers working at all, and the poverty-traps caused by cut-off points for services and benefits all need to be addressed. To do so is an investment in our economy and our society.

- 4.23 ● People affected by policies now want to participate in bringing about change. Many people are tired of being consulted without seeing results and a lot of what needs to happen has been identified. People now need to see the commitment to change, and to be involved in working out how to deliver it.
- 4.24 ● Mr. Hanan stressed that anti-poverty strategies need to be much better known to the public. At the very least, people should know that our Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. has agreed to 'make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty' by 2010. This should be as well known as, for example, the common agricultural strategy or monetary union. It also needs the same commitment and energy.
- 4.25 ● He concluded by urging delegates to use the NAPs Social Inclusion Forum to discuss how to work towards making a decisive impact on eliminating poverty and how to ensure that our colleagues and the general public are mobilised to move the fight against poverty to centre-stage, in the same way as was done for unemployment in the 1980s. No-one wants to come back in five years to say that the eradication of poverty was a good idea, but we did not really try.

V

Roundtable Discussions and the Morning Plenary Session

- 5.1 ● Following the earlier presentations by Mr. Vignon and Professor Nolan, delegates then had an opportunity for short roundtable discussions with those who shared their table. These centred on the following four key questions that had been prepared in advance by the NESF Secretariat:
- What is the group’s initial response to the issues raised by the Speakers?
 - What has been their experience of the NAPS over the past two years?
 - Has the group any suggestions or proposals for the NAPs/inclusion going forward?
 - Has the group any further points to make, particularly in relation to the topics that were to be discussed later on by the five Workshops?
- 5.2 ● In general, the response to what had been said by both Mr. Vignon and Professor Nolan was positive. They were largely viewed as enthusiastic and committed supporters of anti-poverty policy measures, and also helpful in comparing Ireland’s performance with that of our EU partners.
- 5.3 ● However, most of the issues raised were related to the EU SILC and the picture of poverty it has presented. There was considerable connection between delegates’ experiences of NAPs/inclusion and their suggestions for moving forward and these are summarised in Box C below.

Box C Summary of Roundtable Discussions

Experience of the NAPs/inclusion | Suggestions or proposals for moving the NAPs/inclusion forward

Measurement of Poverty

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data are confusing ■ Measures are too narrow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide greater clarity ■ Include discrimination, racism and potentially an equality framework |
|---|---|

Targets and Indicators

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Targets were unrealistic ■ Deprivation indicators need to be re-examined ■ No philosophical or political debate ■ Too little emphasis on relative income poverty ■ Does not include the delivery of services ■ Targets needed for local areas as well as at national level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devise new and challenging targets ■ Devise new deprivation indicators ■ Devise indicators that capture the multi-vulnerabilities experienced by many people ■ Involve people in poverty and their representatives in the design of indicators ■ Devise a new relative income poverty target ■ Devise targets for specific target groups ■ Put in place mechanisms for monitoring targets and consider sanctions for those who do not achieve them ■ Analysis of what the target means, the policies to attain them and why changes are made should be provided ■ More detailed and disaggregated data should be available |
|---|--|

Targets Groups

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Target groups such as Travellers and the homeless are not included in surveys ■ Many target groups in need of greater attention, e.g., older people, people with disabilities, the working poor, migrant workers etc. ■ NAPs/inclusion has failed many target groups ■ No planning for people who may be vulnerable in the future | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop data collection strategies for vulnerable groups excluded from household surveys ■ Devise targets for specific target groups ■ Appoint a Minister for Older People ■ Develop family-friendly policies ■ Maintain employment programmes ■ Find a way to address child poverty and the issue of childcare |
|--|--|

Experience of the NAPs/inclusion	Suggestions or proposals for moving the NAPs/inclusion forward
National Level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall lack of implementation ■ Little political commitment to the anti-poverty agenda ■ Little co-ordination of policies or joined-up Government ■ No additional funding made available to implement the NAPs/inclusion ■ No accountability for meeting or changing targets ■ No focus on services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure political commitment that ensures the process is embedded within Government structures ■ Increase inter-departmental co-operation and flexibility of funding ■ Make additional resources available for implementation of the NAPs/inclusion ■ Put in place transparent methods of accountability ■ Improve policy-proofing ■ Provide continuous funding for anti-poverty programmes, initiatives and agencies ■ Develop more integrated policies, particularly in relation to social protection ■ Consider the adoption of a rights approach or an equality framework
Local Level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Main weakness is no connection with local levels ■ No responsibility in local government agencies for implementation of NAPs/inclusion and lack of clarity around their social inclusion staff functions ■ No evidence of local impact ■ No local or regional targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase implementation responsibility of local government structures ■ Provide increased resources to deliver on the strategy ■ Devise local and regional targets, indicators and data strategies ■ Mainstream successful local initiatives ■ Provide for local and regional consultations

- 5.4 ● The final question put forward at the roundtable discussions (see paragraph 5.1 above), opened up the discussions to broader concerns. Some of these that had not been raised previously included: poverty traps and disincentives to employment, the need for eldercare supports, the need to build solidarity and trust between groups, the lack of understanding among decision-makers that have never experienced poverty or social exclusion, the need for positive results to be highlighted to encourage people, the lack of clear communication channels between the EU, the national and the local level, the need to balance and co-ordinate economic, employment and social policies, drug abuse, and the need for responses to educational disadvantage that are of a larger scale and more effectively co-ordinated.
- 5.5 ● Following the presentations by Mr. Mangan and Mr. Hanan, a short Question & Answer Session took place. Three key issues, which are outlined beneath, were raised at this Session.
- 5.6 ● Mr. Vignon was asked to provide some clarity in relation to a Communication from the Commission regarding **social protection**. In response, he stated that, based on a Council of Minister's Resolution in 1992, the Communication would be informed by an examination of the extent to which minimum income schemes across Europe are still adequate in the context of the development of active labour market policies. This will be based on consultation with the social partners. Depending on the outcome of this consultation the Commission might, in 2006 or 2007, issue a draft Directive on minimum income provisions in relation to active labour market policies.
- 5.7 ● The second issue raised was the importance of **developing statutory and civil institutions** that have the capacity and the resources to deliver on social policy commitments. On the statutory side, the proper resourcing of Government Departments and the OSI in particular was raised. While some delegates felt that these were very under-resourced to undertake the task of addressing poverty and social exclusion, this was not shared by all members of the panel.

- 5.8 ● The potential need to develop statutory institutions was also raised. More specifically, it was recommended that in the proposed six monthly updates on the OSI Annual Report, there should be a specific section on the evolution of institutions and how these are demonstrating their willingness and capacity to take on the social inclusion agenda. On developing a strong civil society, issues were raised by delegates in relation to the lack of certainty surrounding the funding of organisations that may be critical of policies. The recent and sudden withdrawal of funding from the Community Workers Co-operative was cited as a clear example of this. Mr. Vignon indicated that institutional structures and supports, both at national and local levels and also involvement by civil society, will be key issues to be included in the ongoing evaluation launched by the Social Protection Committee of the social inclusion process. It is anticipated that this will be available in October 2005.
- 5.9 ● Finally, two other issues were raised at this Session. The first of these related to **the rights and needs of unmarried and separated fathers** and the negative impacts that lack of access to their children has. These issues will be taken up certainly in the context of the family strategy. The second was concerned with the issue of **endorsement** in respect of the local family resource centres by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the need for monitoring the development and resourcing of these centres.



A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION GROUP

VI

Key Target Groups of the NAPS: Meetings of the Workshops

- 6.1 ● Following the earlier Plenary Session, participants then broke out into separate and parallel Workshops to consider the five key target groups that are identified in the NAPS. Each Workshop had an assigned chair, presenters, respondents and a rapporteur who prepared summary notes (these are outlined beneath) of the discussions in each case.

Workshop 1: Older People

Theme: Care Services in the Community

Chairperson Dr. Éamon O'Shea, UCD

Presenters Mr. David Wolfe, Department of Health and Children
Ms. Mary Nally, Summerhill Active Retirement Group
Mr. Robin Webster, Age Action Ireland

Rapporteur Mr. David Silke, NESF

- 6.2 ● **Mr. David Wolfe, Department of Health and Children (DHC)** outlined current policy in relation to the delivery of services for older people. With the establishment of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in January 2005, the DHC is responsible for policy development while the HSE is responsible for funding and delivery. Services are delivered through the HSE's 32 Local Health Offices, voluntary organisations or the private sector. Services include:
- long-term care – for those who have become so dependent that they require a level of care which domiciliary and community supports cannot provide;
 - day care – provided in day centres and day hospitals, this offers older people an opportunity to socialise with people of their own age, can help to support carers and also help to identify health and other problems at an early stage; and
 - home care supports – such as home help which is targeted at those with high to medium dependency; a Home Care Grant scheme to enable eligible older people to buy in care services is being piloted with a view to the development of a national scheme.

- 6.3** ● **Ms. Mary Nally of Summerhill Active Retirement Group** outlined how it aims to provide information to older people to have a positive impact on their lives, to provide mutual support to older people, to listen to and represent their views, to encourage and support life-long learning and community service, to dispel myths and stereotypes, to link with other organisations and to value older people's contribution. The Group established and operates the Senior Help Line which involves over 300 volunteers (aged between 50 and 90 years of age) and provides a confidential non-directive service. The service was recently evaluated by Dr Éamon O'Shea of the National University of Ireland, Galway.
- 6.4** ● The challenges faced by the Summerhill Retirement Group are mainly resource-based, such as the need for new accommodation and the development of their transport service to reach more isolated older people. It is important for the Group that it demonstrates the value and impact of its activities and the social dividend arising to communities. Consultation with members was central to the Group's ethos, and she stressed that older people needed the power to make their own choices. Hearing what older people want is central to the Group, which also called for the more active involvement of older people in decision-making.
- 6.5** ● **Mr. Robin Webster of Age Action Ireland** stated that when the NAPS was first developed, older people were not included as a specific target group. While he welcomed their subsequent inclusion, he argued that the targets were too narrow. For example, he argued that the target that 'by the end of 2007, adequate heating systems will be available in all local authority rented dwellings providing for older people' should really be focused on adequate housing quality for older people.
- 6.6** ● Mr. Webster highlighted the valuable contribution older people continue to make to society, for example, through the voluntary services they provide, the importance of recognising the diversity of older people and the need to take a life-course view. Adequate resources should be made available for the excellent work undertaken by voluntary groups such as the Summerhill Active Retirement Group. He argued that discrimination against older people should be recognised and that attitudes underpinning policy development that see older people as 'a burden' should be changed.

Discussion: In the discussion following these presentations, the following emerged as key policy themes:

- 6.7 ● **Resources:** Social inclusion for older people is about more than just income. Access to quality services (care, health promotion, transport, etc.) is also very important. It was argued that resources should not be a problem in our current economic climate. Mainstream funding is essential, as at present, voluntary groups spend a lot of time applying for funding. The lack of investment in community services was highlighted, as was the need to define dignity and independence as it relates to older people. Inequity in the coverage of and access to services was also raised as an issue that needed to be addressed. Information was also felt to be lacking on what was working well.
- 6.8 ● The need for **integrated, seamless services** was stressed. It was recommended that the Inter-Departmental Group on the Needs of Older People should have more secretariat and research staff and that political will was needed to advance the work of that Group. The point was made that while the focus of discussion is often on the spending priorities of the DHC, a lot of these decisions are largely dictated by the funding allocation decisions taken by the Department of Finance.
- 6.9 ● **Participation:** Exclusion for many older people is about isolation and the lack of involvement in decision-making. There is a need to recognise the contribution of older people, to facilitate and empower them regarding their life choices and to allow them to achieve their full potential. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of profile of older people's issues in Government Departments. It was agreed that, even with the establishment of the HSE, the DHC should continue to meet with voluntary groups representing the interests of older people to inform policy development. It was argued that older people's votes could amount to a strong political voice. It was proposed that the time restriction on the Free Travel Pass was problematic, particularly regarding access to medical appointments, and that this restriction should be removed. The point was also made that older people cannot be socially included if they feel unsafe in their own homes.
- 6.10 ● **Recognising the Role of Older People:** The contribution of older people in society is often not recognised as fully as it should be. Many examples were given in the Workshop of the voluntary contribution made by older people. Some surprise was voiced that older people were not identified as a group vulnerable to consistent poverty in the Irish EU – SILC survey while others felt that it was difficult to measure older people's social exclusion. It was pointed out that older people play many different roles – parents, grandparents, etc. and do not always see themselves as an 'older person'. Also, they are not a homogenous group and that links need to be made with other groups with similar needs. It was argued that the contribution of older women who had spent a lifetime caring for others was not adequately acknowledged in the welfare system and the National Plan for Women was awaited.

- 6.11 ● **NAPS Targets:** It was also felt that the NAPS targets in relation to older people were too narrow and needed to be broadened out. The exact nature of what these broader targets should be was not discussed in detail, due to time pressures, but other suggestions raised included: individual needs-based community-centred care packages as a right, a target which would incorporate the social element of ageing and one which would see more vulnerable older people being cared for in a community setting.
- 6.12 ● **Changed Mindset:** The need to change the mindset about ageing was an overarching point made in the Workshop. It was emphasised by a number of contributors that ageing does not equate to dependency and it was suggested that a change of terminology from ‘care’ to ‘support’ would be a positive move. It was also generally agreed that policy implementation is now needed to improve the situation of many older people.

Workshop 2: Children and Young People

Theme: Educational Disadvantage

Chairperson Ms. Jill Matthews, National Economic and Social Council

Presenters Mr. Jim O Donovan, Department of Education and Science
Ms. Catherine Durkin, Blanchardstown Area Partnership
Ms. Alex Cahill, Youthreach Coolock

Rapporteur Mr. Sarah Craig, NESF

- 6.13 ● **Mr. Jim O’ Donovan, Department of Education and Science (DES)** addressed the key targets that have been set under the revised NAPS, the NAPS/inclusion and the areas relating to educational disadvantage under the Tackling Educational Disadvantage, Migration and Interculturalism and Ending Child Poverty Special Initiatives under *Sustaining Progress*. The Department has, over the last year, tried to focus actions in the areas identified in these Special Initiatives and to draw together the strands from the NAPS and NAPS/inclusion.
- 6.14 ● The main education policy issues at present are
- Early education
 - Improving literacy and numeracy standards
 - Cohesion and integration in tackling educational disadvantage
 - Prevention of early school leaving/improving attainment
 - Smooth transition from school to work
 - Integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities
 - Strengthening gender mainstreaming
 - Special needs education
 - Access to lifelong learning for vulnerable groups.

- 6.15 ● The main cross-cutting institutional issues to be addressed are:
- Improving baseline data
 - Effective targeting, monitoring and evaluation
 - Inter-departmental/agency leadership and co-operation
 - Integrated action at national, regional and local level
 - New and innovative models of best practice
 - Timelines for delivery.
- 6.16 ● One key challenge is drawing the various strands together into a cohesive whole and in doing so to ensure that those who are most excluded are part of the process. This has enormous implications for the organisational capacity to deliver on education generally. A major review of educational disadvantage programmes is underway in the DES and its findings will have major implications for their development.
- 6.17 ● In response to this policy perspective **Ms. Catherine Durkin, Blanchardstown Area Partnership**, highlighted a number of key concerns that exist. The first relates to the unrealistic nature of the education targets and particularly that of increasing the retention rate of those who complete upper second level or equivalent to 90% by 2006. At local and regional level insufficient work has been done to achieve the targets. Concrete analysis of how to address the targets at local, regional and national level is needed.
- 6.18 ● Greater levels of analysis of education issues are needed. For example, there is no information about those who do not transfer from Primary to Post-Primary school. There is no Primary Pupil Database (although this was promised) so we cannot track those who drop out. Also, there is a need to consider what the retention rate means – for example, those who go on to do Apprenticeships after Junior Certificate are not counted in the retention rates.
- 6.19 ● The link between part-time work and early school leaving needs to be addressed. Research by the Dublin Employment Pact and by the ESRI has shown high levels of part-time working. Retention rates would be improved if this were tackled.
- 6.20 ● Finally, Ms. Durkin noted the important role of early childhood care and education but stressed that it needs to be integrated with the range of other education services.

- 6.21 ● **Ms. Alex Cahill, Youthreach, Coolock**, provided a local perspective and set out a case study of a 15 year old girl in the Coolock area. She described the range of problems that beset the girl and her family and how difficult it was for her to continue in education. Without substantial ongoing supports, she and her younger siblings would not have remained in the education system. The range of supports needed included counselling for sexual abuse, family support, learning support and parenting. A broad range of agencies worked together at a local level to assist the family and the girl is now preparing to take exams in the summer.

DISCUSSION *The main issues raised in the discussion were as follows:*

- 6.22 ● In relation to the **NAPS targets**, there is little data to check progress on the targets that have been set and no analysis of why the targets have not been achieved. Timelines for the achievement of the targets need to be investigated. In addition, there is a need to monitor how and why people slip through the educational net and causes such as depression, anxiety and learning disabilities are still going undetected.
- 6.23 ● The **multi-dimensional nature of poverty** requires an examination of issues beyond education itself. Issues such as income poverty and homelessness need to be closely linked in with education and reflected in co-ordinated and integrated provision. The direct and indirect cost of education to families experiencing poverty also needs to be addressed.
- 6.24 ● **Early childhood care and education** is a residual part of the services that DES provides but greater investment and joint working by Government Departments on this issue is crucial. The long-term benefits of early childhood care and education need to be emphasised and early intervention should be enhanced and developed from the child's perspective rather than from the parent's.
- 6.25 ● The **family and home context** is a vital consideration. In particular, the role of parents in the education of their children is critical. There is a need for supports to help many parents overcome their fear of teachers/schooling and to help their children. The Home-School-Community Liaison service is effective and is developing awareness of the need for support for parents.
- 6.26 ● The issue of **resources and lack of integrated provision** was raised. At local community level, there is concern about the meaning of the designated disadvantaged status that schools are given and, in particular that this does not always translate into the necessary additional resources. It was suggested that the resources dedicated to the current range of educational disadvantage programmes should be reassigned to a local team to quantify and to address local needs. A more integrated and cohesive approach is needed at the level of schools. The lack of interaction between schools and services such as Youthreach in rural areas was highlighted. In these areas tailored services as well as targeting and greater monitoring of the resources that are there to ensure more effective usage are needed.

- 6.27 ● Progress on the **review of programmes for educational disadvantage** is very slow. A commitment to this review was given in the last National Agreement but has still not been delivered. Also, there has been little involvement of the local community in the review.
- 6.28 ● A five year plan is being developed for **Traveller education** but there is still a lack of recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group. Traveller-proofing of the range of services that are delivered in schools is necessary and the whole-school evaluation process should include anti-racist policies for schools.
- 6.29 ● Schools should be encouraged to develop a **library service**. A recent library initiative has been set up but only 11 post-primary schools benefit.

Work Shop 3: People with Disabilities

Theme: Access to Education, Training and Employment

Chairperson Mr. Sexton Cahill, IBEC/ICTU Workway Initiative

Presenters Mr. David Barry, Department of Enterprise,
Trade and Employment
Ms. Mary Keogh, Forum of People with Disabilities
Ms. Shira Mehlman, Employment Services FÁS

Rapporteur Mr. Gerard Walker, NESF

- 6.30 ● **Mr. David Barry of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)** provided the policy perspective, which set the context for the discussion. The DETE is one of three Government Departments⁶ with responsibility for policy development and funding of work-related services for people with disabilities. The focus of the DETE policy is on ensuring that people with disabilities can access the labour market, as employment is seen as the best means for people with disabilities to participate fully in social, cultural and economic life. The core of the DETE's policy for supporting people with disabilities involves three strands:
- developing the skills of people with disabilities to help them access employment;
 - stimulating awareness among employers of the contribution which people with disabilities can make to their businesses and encouraging companies to more actively consider recruiting people with disabilities; and
 - providing employment supports for people with disabilities and also for employers.

⁶ The other two key Departments are Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs.

- 6.31 ● FÁS is due to undertake a review of services for people with disabilities this year. Despite the current range of provision, it is recognised that these services are not making a significant enough impact. A new Full-Time Supported Employment Scheme that will provide incentives for both employees and employers is being introduced on a three-year pilot basis. People will be able to retain their secondary benefits while on this scheme. FÁS are to develop detailed guidelines for this new scheme. Mr. Barry highlighted the importance of the current National Agreement, *Sustaining Progress*, in progressing policy in relation to the training and employment needs of people with disabilities. It is hoped that the new agreement, to be negotiated at the end of 2005, will provide an opportunity to further advance the disability agenda.
- 6.32 ● In addition, the Disability Bill currently being progressed through the Oireachtas, will provide legislation to underpin the mainstreaming of provision for people with disabilities. Under this legislation, six key departments, including DETE, will be obliged to prepare sectoral plans regarding service provision for disabled people.
- 6.33 ● **Ms. Mary Keogh, Forum of People with Disabilities** highlighted a number of key concerns such as:
- Many disabled people are still not able to access employment and many experience difficulties at the interview stage. Anti-discrimination legislation may help in this area.
 - There are many challenges to mainstreaming provision for disabled people. For example, one key challenge relates to cost, as it can cost approximately €12,500 per head for a place in a mainstreaming training setting, compared to €24,000 for a place in a specialist training setting.
 - There is a low level of awareness of disability that results in many people with disabilities experiencing exclusion. Consideration should be given to an annual ‘Disability Awareness’ week.
 - The need to move from the type of employment schemes and programmes offered by FÁS and the DETE to encouraging the participation of disabled people in open employment. This would include taking account of the individual’s transportation and personal assistant needs.
 - An interface between the many agencies which provide supports for disabled people is essential to support the progress of individuals.

- 6.34 ● **Ms. Shira Mehlman, FÁS** provided examples of how FÁS promotes and mainstreams local initiatives. The first of these is a new integrated pilot initiative in the Midlands Region. It involves FÁS, the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and the Midlands Health Board. It is aimed at young people aged 16–25 years who are in receipt of Disability Allowance, who comprise 25% of the current cohort on Disability Allowance in the region. The pilot involves an integrated approach to the delivery of employment support and services. Participation is voluntary and people will have full restoration of their allowances if their training or job placement does not work out.
- 6.35 ● The Workways Initiative was highlighted as an example of inter-agency co-operation. This pilot initiative has brought together disabled people, employers, unions and other groups representing the interests of disabled people in local networks to improve employment opportunities for disabled people. A template is being developed as a tool to be used by disabled people and service providers to address issues such as job search activities, interview skills, how to gain experience in real employment situations through work experience and interview practice. Workways is also disseminating IBEC's and ICTU's employment guidelines to private sector employers and developing and promoting a one-stop information and employer's website.
- 6.36 ● Ms. Mehlman emphasised the need for a national strategy to set common goals, objectives and targets and to ensure access and standards, but this should be adaptable to local conditions based on local knowledge. This approach requires local and national agencies to work in an integrated and co-ordinated manner. Champions within the State infrastructure need to be identified early on in the process and brought on board.
- 6.37 ● Also, local initiatives should learn from national programmes and from other local initiatives. There is a need to join up initiatives at local level and provide individuals with a seamless service within a locality. The lessons from pilot initiatives should be mainstreamed. However, this is a change process that takes a long time.

DISCUSSION *The main points raised in the discussion were as follows:*

- 6.38 ● Many people with disabilities are not ready for employment and a lot of 'hand holding' and **pre-employment supports** are required, particularly in relation to helping the transition of a young person from school into employment. It was further pointed out that over 80% of people with intellectual disabilities are in sheltered employment.

- 6.39 ● There is a need for greater **in-work** supports. At present there is little on-going support or awareness of what people with disabilities need when in employment. There is a need for coaching / mentoring and peer group support and all employers' facilities should have adequate access for people with disabilities. It was highlighted that 80% of people acquired their disability and in light of this there is a need for employers to introduce retention measures for people who acquire a disability while at work. It was suggested that the area of job retention for all people with disabilities is an area where FÁS should be more proactive.
- 6.40 ● A portable '**Cost of Disability**' payment which people would carry with them into education, training or employment was suggested as a means to encourage people to move into work. However, there is much resistance among policy-makers to this because it is perceived as a double payment and goes against the tendency of Departments to see programmes as stand alone. It was mentioned that a working group has been set up to look into the idea of a Cost of Disability payment.
- 6.41 ● The issue of **integrated supports at local level** was also raised. For example the areas of training, education, housing, health and transport supports have to be linked together. Better structures, expertise and engagement in the public service are required if the appropriate supports and services are to be delivered. In response to this point, it was stated that within the new Disability Bill there will be an onus on all Departments to make connections and achieve 'joined-up' Government.
- 6.42 ● There is a need to think about **how pilots should be designed to improve the mainstreaming of learning**. Also, how such pilots will be independently assessed must be considered.
- 6.43 ● It was recognised that **current State provision was not achieving a breakthrough**. Also, the new FÁS Full-Time Supported Employment Scheme was criticised on the basis that full-time employment is not a feasible option for many disabled people. It was suggested that FÁS was not yet specialised enough to fully look after the needs of people with disabilities. There is a clear need for FÁS and other policy-makers to listen more to people with disabilities.
- 6.44 ● In relation to NAPS, it was stated that **NAPS employment targets** are not carried through in the Employment Action Plan.

Workshop: 4 Minority Groups

Theme: Strategies for Integration

Chairperson Mr. Niall Crowley, CEO, Equality Authority

Presenters Ms. Margaret Kelly, Department of Education and Science
 Ms. Catriona O'Brien, Department of Education and Science
 Mr. Martin Collins, Irish Travellers Movement
 Ms. Sinead Carr, South Tipperary County Council

Rapporteur Ms. Julie Smyth, Combat Poverty Agency

6.45 ● **Ms Margaret Kelly, DES** outlined current educational provision and how it relates to minority ethnic groups at primary and post primary levels. She also described other provision, targeted and mainstream, such as the VEC adult literacy services and the Back to Education Initiative. She outlined some existing research in the area and other specific supports that are currently available for minority ethnic groups. **Ms Catriona O'Brien, DES** focused on Travellers as an identified vulnerable group in NAPs/inclusion. She described the Traveller Education Strategy, the working groups set up and the public submissions received. She highlighted that inclusion is a core principle and a major theme for the new strategy which will encompass the integration of Travellers into mainstream provision at all levels of the education system and the delivery of educational provision in a way that accepts and validates the identity of all Traveller learners.

6.46 ● **Mr Martin Collins of the Irish Traveller Movement** stressed the importance of using the term inclusion alongside the term integration. Minority ethnic groups should not have to assimilate but that institutions should adapt to accommodate diversity. He stressed the following:

- An intercultural curriculum should be an integral part of all educational provision.
- The need for consistency across policy-makers to ensure that one departmental policy does not contradict another's.
- The importance of the resourced participation of groups experiencing inequality and social exclusion in policy-making, implementation and monitoring.
- Minority ethnic groups should not be seen solely as consumers of public provision but that they could also be deliverers of publicly- funded programmes. He suggested the use of positive action measures to encourage more members of ethnic minority groups into mainstream service provision, for example, Travellers becoming Gardai.
- Poverty should not be seen solely in economic terms. There is a need to consider the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty and acknowledge that racism can contribute to poverty.

- 6.47 ● Focusing on local implementation issues, **Ms. Sinead Carr, Director of Services for Housing and Social Policy in South Tipperary County Council** described the issues faced at a local level in implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme. She stressed the complexity of issues at play in a local context in attempting to meet the identified Traveller accommodation targets and outlined some of the provisions of the South Tipperary “Integrated Interagency Traveller Accommodation Output Plan 2004 – 2007”, which emphasises that all actors, including Travellers, have responsibilities in meeting Traveller accommodation needs. She described the specific difficulties of implementing policy, including the difficult decisions that have to be made for effective policy implementation. She highlighted that these decisions are different to those that are made during the policy-making process as they have real and tangible impacts on people’s lives.

DISCUSSION *The following issues were raised in the workshop discussions:*

- 6.48 ● There is a need for a **problem-solving approach** rather than a focus on minority groups themselves. Also, successful policy implementation requires the **participation** of groups affected.
- 6.49 ● There are a number of **issues identified within the NAPS framework** but there has not been much progress, for example, migrant workers, integration policies, homeless people. In addition, there are a number of core challenges remaining such as the establishment of a rights-based approach, the ability to access rights and the enforcement of rights, protecting the critical voice and an inclusive approach to integration.
- 6.50 ● **Minority groups are made up of very diverse people** with diverse needs arising from the reasons why they are poor and their experience of poverty. Nonetheless, there are many parallels between them and they share many of the same problems that could be resolved by the same policies.
- 6.51 ● **The needs of specific communities** are not adequately addressed. Included here are the **deaf community**, which has specific cultural, educational and language needs. In relation to **migrant workers** lack of access to health and social welfare services and to third level education for their children were all noted. Direct provision for **asylum seekers** was raised as a specific cause of poverty for this group. Direct provision pays €19 per week per adult and this figure has remained unchanged since its introduction in 1999. The rights and protection of migrant workers and asylum seekers were named as core challenges and the absence of a legislative framework to protect certain minority groups was noted.
- 6.52 ● **Negative perceptions** of minority groups are often unfounded and fuel fears within communities. Sometimes a lack of progress on the implementation of policy is due to this misinformation and fear.

- 6.53 ● An **institutional capacity to accommodate diversity** is needed for the effective implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Strategy. It was proposed that, in the short-term, there is need for the establishment of an Independent Traveller Housing Committee, a model which is used in Northern Ireland.
- 6.54 ● **Implementation issues at a local level** are complex and require complex solutions. Discrimination and the effects of discrimination such as misinformation or unfounded perceptions is a key barrier to local implementation. The participation of all players is critical to the successful implementation of the NAPS targets at local level. In order to achieve this different models of participation during policy implementation compared to policy formation are needed.
- 6.55 ● A clear recognition of the **distinct roles and responsibilities** of the State and community and voluntary sector are key dimensions to implementation. The community and voluntary sector should be able to have a critical voice and this has been undermined by the withdrawal of funding for the Community Workers Co-operative.

Workshop 5: Women

Theme: Decision-making and Participation

Chairperson Dr. Yvonne Galligan, Queens University, Belfast

Presenters Mr. John O Callaghan, Department of Justice,
Equality and Law Reform

Ms. Rachael Doyle, National Women's Council of Ireland

Ms. Emma-Jane Hoey, National Women's Council of Ireland

Rapporteur Ms Carol O'Sullivan, Equality Authority

- 6.56 ● **Mr. John O'Callaghan, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**, presented an overview of the current position of women in the public sector, the civil service and the private sector. *Sustaining Progress* and the Programme for Government are committed to a target of having women comprise 40% of the members of State Boards. This target has been reached in global terms by the Government Departments. Within the civil service all departmental strategy statements must provide for gender equality and progress on targets has been made. Nonetheless, it remains that only one-fifth of T.D.s and the Cabinet are women and only 34% of Assistant Principals and 20% of Principal Officers are women. Despite some progress in the private sector, it appears that the glass ceiling still applies to many women. He drew attention to the National Women's Strategy, which will be completed this year, and which will contain a chapter on decision-making. Each area of the Strategy, including this chapter, will have measures, objectives, strategies, interim and final targets and indicators. Implementation will be robustly monitored and supported by local strategies.

- 6.57 ● Ms Rachel Doyle, National Women’s Council of Women, (NWCI) stated that a discussion on women’s participation in decision-making must be based on the notion of rights, inclusion and transparency. She highlighted that participation means that women are closely involved in the processes that affect their lives, be they economic, social, cultural or political. If women are not supported to participate in decision-making structures, then the interests of women will not be represented.
- 6.58 ● To achieve greater participation of women in decision-making structures, the NWCI wants the Government to undertake the following:
- Introduce mechanisms, including statutory quotas that ensure balanced representation of the diversity of women and men in all decision-making structures.
 - Introduce legislation ensuring that appointments to public bodies are gender balanced.
 - Gender proof all policies and programmes to assess their impact on women and men.
 - Introduce positive actions to support the representatives of all women and in particular women from marginalised communities in public life.
 - Provide multi-annual funding to help women’s groups better participate in decision-making.
 - Ensure that the forthcoming National Women’s Strategy contains commitments, actions and resources to address the under-representation of women in all their diversity, in decision-making structures.
 - Establish a publicly-funded childcare system to begin to address the serious shortfall in high costs of childcare places in Ireland.

DISCUSSION *The following issues arose in the workshop discussion:*

- 6.59 ● One of the key issues raised is the absence of women’s organisations in the social partnership process.
- 6.60 ● A wide range of barriers were identified to women’s participation in decision-making. Income inadequacy, family and caring responsibilities were cited, as was the lack of supports for women who wished to enter politics at both local and national level. The pervasiveness of attitudes among men which see all women as a homogenous group with no diversity, and women involved in local government as “whiners” about equality were also cited. Despite this, women were being asked to take on men’s issues more and more. Participants felt that there is a need to examine the barriers to women’s participation in decision-making, to have more gender disaggregated statistics that will show the inequalities that exist and to raise awareness among policy-makers and service providers of these barriers.

- 6.61 ● The issues of **targets and quotas** were discussed. The lack of a target for women in decision-making in the NAPS as well as what some participants saw as the preoccupation with targets was raised. With regard to quotas, many participants saw these as more appropriate than targets, although it was also suggested that a debate on the efficiency of these as a means of promoting equality and on legislation on quotas is needed. The lack of sanctions for agencies who do not meet the quotas for women's participation were also raised.
- 6.62 ● Acknowledging **women's diversity** arose as a major theme. Women in different situations and with varying experiences need to be targeted to ensure a range of perspectives are incorporated into initiatives to improve decision-making.
- 6.63 ● The need for a **long-term, integrated strategy** was highlighted, and the need for the forthcoming Women's Strategy and the NAPS to be linked was stressed. On a broader level, the need to integrate social and economic policy to achieve greater equality and social cohesion was highlighted, as was the need to develop principles for creating a more equal society. In this regard, the need for secure, multi-annual funding for women's groups and the Equality for Women Measure was emphasised.
- 6.64 ● The difference between **power and decision-making** was raised and it was suggested that power and influence can be exercised outside the political structures.
- 6.65 ● Although large numbers of women are involved in local groups, this does not **progress to political representation**. On the other hand, there is evidence that men tend to move from community involvement to representational politics. The reasons for this and measures to address these are needed.
- 6.66 ● Although Government commitments to gender and equality proofing are being progressed, the view that **Government has consistently failed women** with regard to well-worn issues such as employment and childcare was clearly expressed. There has been little change in the provision of resources for addressing women's issues and a low level of resources is now being provided for mainstreaming pilot projects that involve women.

VII

Final Plenary Session

- 7.1 ● The final Plenary Session was opened by **Ms. Helen Johnston, Director, Combat Poverty Agency**, who acknowledged the presence of people attending the Forum from the EU, particularly the delegates from the other States who are participating with us in the Mainstreaming Social Inclusion project (Northern Ireland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Norway, France and Hungary), people with direct experience of living poverty, the social partners and the State sector at both national and local levels.
- 7.2 ● In recognising the difficulty for people experiencing poverty to participate in an event such as this, Ms. Johnston welcomed the regional consultation seminars that had been organised by the Community Platform in preparation for the present meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum. This involved meetings with those who are marginalised to try and identify the issues they wished to raise.
- 7.3 ● She also acknowledged the very important role of non-governmental organisations in this and expressed disappointment, therefore, that the Government has decided to discontinue funding for the Community Workers Co-operative under the National Anti-Poverty Network Programme.
- 7.4 ● Ms. Johnston then highlighted the following four key points that arose from the morning's Plenary Session:
- poverty is still a big challenge in Ireland;
 - learn from what others are doing and use this to provide stronger social support systems to complement Ireland's strong economic growth;
 - statistical measurement, monitoring and evaluation is important but needs to be supplemented by people's experience of poverty; the Social Inclusion Forum is particularly important in that it provides an opportunity to hear that experience; and
 - good plans and policy statements are necessary; ultimately, however, it is how they are implemented that makes a difference in the lives of those experiencing or at-risk of poverty.

- 7.5 ● In providing a summary of the Workshop discussions, Ms. Johnston began by pointing out a number of common issues that arose at each meeting:
- **Homelessness:** this is a severe form of poverty that had not been explicitly addressed at the Forum. The diversity of people who are homeless needs to be recognised, the causes of their homelessness identified and also account needs to be taken that homelessness determines access to other services such as education; homeless people are not included in poverty surveys, because they are undertaken on a household basis; this should be addressed in the NAPS data strategy.
 - **The voice of people experiencing poverty:** the importance of protecting and supporting the voice of those people, particularly through organisations who support and facilitate that voice emerged as a shared theme; specific mention was made of the discontinuation in the Community Workers Co-operative funding as a National Anti-Poverty Network, but the issue was also seen as wider than this and important for participative democracy; and
 - **Targets:** delegates share the view that the NAPS targets should be re-assessed and should be more realistic and comprehensive. Progress towards meeting the targets needs to be monitored and if these are not being met, the reasons need to be identified and addressed; this information should be publicly available.
- 7.6 ● Ms. Johnston then went on to provide some summary feedback from each of the Workshops. This provided an overview of the more detailed accounts that are included in the previous Section of this report and, in the interest of brevity, is not repeated here.
- 7.7 ● Some additional points on the key target groups were raised from the floor. In relation to older people, the importance of seeing them as a distinct group, with distinct needs was stressed, as was the need to challenge the belief that older people tend to be dismissed by society.
- 7.8 ● Two issues were raised in relation to educational disadvantage. The first related to how parents, and particularly those experiencing poverty, can be supported to make a greater contribution to their child's education. The second issue suggested was the introduction of a means-tested children's wage to encourage children experiencing poverty to stay in school.

- 7.9 ● A number of issues were raised from the floor with regard to minority groups. One of these highlighted was that much of the policy and decisions being made in relation to minority groups are arising in the context of social partnership, an arena where the voice of these groups is not represented. It was suggested that the NAPS and NAPs/inclusion is a more natural location for these issues. The habitual residency rule was also cited as creating specific hardships for migrant workers. The circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees were highlighted, including the difficulty of living on direct provision, as well as the importance of being involved in a community and in events such as the Social Inclusion Forum. With regard to inclusion, it was stressed that cultural diversity should become a key part of policies and practices to ensure minority groups are included but not assimilated. Finally, the need to recognise unmarried and separated fathers as a specific minority group was raised.
- 7.10 ● Another issue raised with regard to women was that of debt and lack of access to credit for lone parents, in particular, and also for social welfare recipients more generally. The importance of this issue needs to be acknowledged in social inclusion policies and be brought into the next National Action Plan.

Panel Discussion

- 7.11 ● At this stage of the Plenary Session, the podium was enlarged to include the following representatives as a Panel grouping:
- Ms. Paula Carey, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU);
 - Ms. Maria Cronin, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC);
 - Mr. Hugh Frazer, European Commission; and
 - Mr. Séamus Brennan T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs.
- 7.12 ● In providing some feedback on issues raised and gaps highlighted throughout the day, **Ms. Paula Carey (ICTU)** referred to both the cross-over and distinctness of the NAPS and the social partnership process. In relation to older people, she stressed that while progress has been made on income support, there is now a clear need to address the issue of services. This is being progressed through the Special Initiative on Care under *Sustaining Progress*. With regard to educational disadvantage, Ms. Carey indicated that the review of the disadvantaged programmes is imminent and that the issue of young people leaving school to take up employment needs to be addressed. In relation to people with disabilities and access to employment, Ms. Carey reinforced the need for integrated services at both the pre-employment and employment stages. Finally, she made the point that ICTU represents women on a wide range of issues in social partnership.

- 7.13** ● **Ms. Maria Cronin (IBEC)** highlighted the need for very specific and targeted policies to tackle the increasingly complex issues involved in this area, and the key role that access to education, training and employment has to play in meeting these challenges. In this context, identifying ways to contribute to combating educational disadvantage (IBEC published a policy paper on education last year), and to recognising the contribution older people have made and can continue to make are important to IBEC. In addition, Ms. Cronin again emphasised the need for pre-employment supports for people with disabilities, and also raised some issues facing employers in recruiting people with disabilities. With regard to women, Ms. Cronin supported the idea of linking the NAPS and the forthcoming National Women’s Strategy. Finally, she stressed the role of business people in encouraging young people to stay on in school and also the need for a long-term immigration policy and that IBEC recognised the enormous contribution migrant workers have made, and can continue to make to our prosperity.
- 7.14** ● **Mr. Hugh Frazer, European Commission**, stated how impressed the European Commission was by the Social Inclusion Forum and of our consultative processes more broadly. He stressed, however, that consultation needs to be ongoing and properly resourced. With regard to targets, no one target will ever suffice in measuring poverty and social inclusion. A number of targets that represent the multi-dimensionality of poverty and exclusion are necessary. Also reflecting the complexities involved, Mr. Frazer expressed the view that to try to achieve integration across all areas and groups at the same time is impossible. What is needed are policies and strategies that address the integration of specific groups or



L-R MR. HUGH FRAZER, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, MR. ROBIN HANNON, EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK, MS. MARIA CRONIN, IRISH BUSINESS AND EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION, MR. SEÁN Ó HÉIGEARTAIGH, NESF, DR. MAUREEN GAFFNEY, NESF, MR. SEAMUS BRENNAN, T.D., MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS, MR. GERRY MANGAN, OFFICE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION, MS. PAULA CAREY, IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS, MS. HELEN JOHNSTON, COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY AT THE FINAL PLENARY SESSION

issues. How this is achieved at local level is particularly challenging. He acknowledged the very real progress that has been made in Ireland since the World Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, but also noted that Ireland lags behind other EU Member States in a range of areas. He pointed to the importance of valuing equality and that of Irish political leadership, as was evident during our EU Presidency last year, in seeking to ensure a balanced approach to policy-making at European level.

- 7.15 ● **Mr. Robin Hanan, EAPN** supported many of the issues identified in the workshops. In particular, the importance of moving from policy to delivery, the need to revisit some of the NAPS targets, access to quality services, and the importance of participation by those whose lives are most affected in the design of policies.
- 7.16 ● **Mr. Gerry Mangan, OSI**, referred to the changing nature of the various target groups and the need to continually adapt, develop and modernise policies in response to these changes. In addition, he emphasised the need for a mix of policies that goes beyond income support in addressing the complex needs of people.
- 7.17 ● **Mr. Séamus Brennan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs** provided the closing address. In this he highlighted the importance of community and voluntary groups in giving a voice to the marginalised and the excluded in society. The views and ideas that emerge from the Social Inclusion Forum will be a very valuable contribution to the development of policies which are designed to tackle poverty and social exclusion and to Ireland's next NAPs/inclusion as we head towards 2006.



MR SEAMUS BRENNAN, T.D., MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS AT THE FINAL PLENARY SESSION

- 7.18 ● Minister Brennan expressed his determination and commitment to eliminate poverty through targeted and focussed action. He pointed to recent Budget increases in social welfare payments (by three times the rate of inflation) as evidence of progress, but stressed that more needs to be done. Recognising the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, he agreed that Government strategy has to include actions in relation to employment, social welfare, education, health, housing, equality etc. This requires joined-up Government, and he expressed his commitment to proceed on this basis. He added that the taxpayer deserves to be mentioned as one-third of all public spending now goes on social welfare.
- 7.19 ● The importance of employment in the fight against poverty was highlighted by the Minister. In this regard, he stressed that one of the major challenges is to make the transition from welfare to work and from welfare to education as seamless as possible.
- 7.20 ● With regard to measuring poverty, the Minister expressed the view that methodological debates must be brought to a close and a consistent, regular, comparable measure of poverty levels arrived at across the EU.
- 7.21 ● Whatever the measure, the Minister stated that we must take heed of the message, which is that we need to do more, and we need to make sure that resources go to where they are most needed. In focusing resources at the most excluded, he expressed his determination to introduce a second tier child payment which will be targeted at the most vulnerable children.
- 7.22 ● Finally, the Minister acknowledged the good work of the many organisations represented at the Social Inclusion Forum and thanked them for coming and he considered the Conference to have been a very good one.
- 7.23 ● **Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chairperson**, thanked all of those involved in the organisation of the Social Inclusion Forum, including the Secretariat of the NESF, the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion as well as those who acted as chairs, speakers and respondents in the Workshops. She also thanked the delegates for their participation.

Annexes

Annex I Conference Programme

- 9.00** Arrival of Participants and Guests – Registration with tea / coffee
- 9.30** Morning Plenary:
 Introductory Remarks by the Forum’s Chairperson, Dr. Maureen Gaffney.
 Address by the Minister for Social & Family Affairs,
 Mr. Séamus Brennan T.D.
 EU Dimension: Presentation by Mr. Jérôme Vignon, Director, DG
 Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission.
 Presentation by Professor Brian Nolan, ESRI.
- 10.25** Roundtable Discussion.
- 11.00** Coffee Break.
- 11.15** Presentation by Mr. Gerry Mangan, Director, Office for Social Inclusion,
 Department of Social and Family Affairs.
 Presentation by Mr. Robin Hanan, Director, European
 Anti-Poverty Network (Ireland).
- 11.45** Questions and Open discussions.
- 12.15** Meeting of Working Groups on;
 — Older People: care services in the community
 — Children and Young People: educational disadvantage
 — People with Disabilities: access to employment
 — Minority Groups: strategies for integration
 — Women: decision-making and participation
- 1.30** Break for Lunch.
- 2.45** Continuation of Working Groups.

Final Plenary

- 4.00** Feedback from the Workshops – overview presentation,
 Ms. Helen Johnston, Director, Combat Poverty Agency (CPA).
- 4.15** Panel discussion including Minister, European Commission,
 Employer and Trade Union representatives, EAPN, CPA.
- 5.15** Concluding Remarks by the Forum’s Chairperson, Dr. Maureen Gaffney.

Annex II Attendance List

Organisation	Full Name
	Ms Rosalie Anderson Ms Bríd Connolly Ms Carmel Corrigan Ms Eileen Dillord Ms Francesca Lundstrom Ms Theresa McGovern Ms Barbara Walsh
Acorn Empowerment Group Ballymun	Mr Brendan Core
ADM	Mr Aiden Lloyd
ADM	Ms Bernie McDonnell
ADM	Ms Siobhán O'Dowd
ADM	Ms Sinead Pentony
ADM	Mr Toby Wolfe
Afghan Community of Ireland	Nasraddin Saljuq
Age Action	Ms Anne Coyle
Age Action	Ms Tess Kane
Age Action	Ms Elizabeth Shanley
Age Action Ireland Ltd	Mr David Stratton
Age Action Ireland Ltd	Mr Robin Webster
An Chomhairle Leabharlanna	Ms Norma McDermott
ATD Fourth World	Mr Stuart Williams
ATD Fourth World	Ms Isabelle Williams
Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland) Ltd	Mr Brian Kearney-Grieve
Athlone Anti-Poverty Network	Mr Hubert Rooney
Athlone Community Services	Mr Cyril Dully
Ballyfermot Partnership	Ms Tara Deacy
Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force	Ms Marie Lawless
Ballymun Partnership	Mr Declan Dunne
Bray Partnership	Mr Davin Roche
Bray Partnership	Ms Kate Whalley
Cairde	Ms Tanya Sanders
Candle Community Trust	Ms Catherine Ashe
Cathaoirleach	Mr James Deegan
Cavan County Development Board	Ms Fidelma O'Hanlon

Cavan Services to the Unemployed Committee Ltd / Cavan Community IT Skills Project	Ms Kathleen Donohoe
Central Statistics Office	Mr Gerry Brady
Central Statistics Office	Mr Gerry O'Hanlon
Central Statistics Office	Ms Gillian Roche
Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education	Mr Thomas Walsh
Clare Resource Centre	Mr Michael Neylon
Clondalkin Higher Education Access Project	Mr Brian Fleming
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Elaine Byrne
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Ceri Goddard
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Maria Gorman
Combat Poverty Agency	Mr Rod Hick
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Elaine Houlihan
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Helen Johnston
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Fidelma Joyce
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Izabela Litewska
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Joanne Mulholland
Combat Poverty Agency	Mr Kevin P O'Kelly
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Janice Ransom
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Juile Smyth
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Liz Sullivan
Combat Poverty Agency	Mr Jim Walsh
Combat Poverty Agency	Ms Rhonda Willis
Community Platform	Ms Sharon Keane
CORI Justice Commission	Fr. Seán Healy
CORI Justice Commission	Sr Brigid Reynolds
Cork INOU	Mr Con Murphy
County Monaghan Partnership	Mr Peter McArdle
Crosscare	Ms Anna Dangerfield
Department of Education and Science	Ms Catriona O'Brien
Department of Education and Science	Mr Tom Healy
Department of Education and Science	Ms Margaret Kelly
Department of Education and Science	Mr Jim O'Donovan
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mr David Barry
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mr Brendan O'Leary
Department of Finance	Mr Dermot Quigley
Department of Finance	Ms Denise Tully
Department of Health and Children	Ms Anna May Harkin

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Ms Paula Connolly
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Mr John O'Callaghan
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Mr Seamus Sisk
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Minister Seamus Brennan, T.D.
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Ms Carmel Fields
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Ms Paula Lyons
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Ms Elaine Soffe
Office for Social Inclusion*	Mr Colin Byrne
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Darren Malone
Office for Social Inclusion	Ms Cathy Barron
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Ciaran Diamond
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Peter Duffy
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Gerry Mangan
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Eamonn Moran
Office for Social Inclusion	Ms Ann Murphy
Office for Social Inclusion	Mr Lorcan O'Malley
Office for Social Inclusion	Ms Orlaigh Quinn
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government	Ms Mary O'Donoghue
Department of the Taoiseach	Ms Eileen Kehoe
Department of the Taoiseach	Mr Andrew Nugent
Directorate for Health and Social Affairs (Norway)	Olaf Tvede
Disability Federation of Ireland	Ms Maria Fox
Disability Federation of Ireland	Ms Joanne McCarthy
Donegal Local Development Company	Ms Susan Kierce-Marsh
Doras Luímní	Ms Eileen McGlynn
Doras Luímní	Ms Ann Skully
Drogheda Early Intervention & Integration Programme	Ms Ellen Harrison
Drogheda Northside Community Partnership (DNCP)	Miss Angela O'Brien
EAPN Hungarian Network	Zsombor Farkas
EAPN Ireland	Robin Hanon
Economic and Social Research Institute	Professor Brian Nolan
Education Working Group, DEP	Ms Catherine Durkin
Ennis Community Development Project	Ms Deirdre Toomey
Equality Authority	Mr Niall Crowley
Equality Authority	Mr Laurence Bond

* Department of Social and Family Affairs

Equality Authority	Ms Carol Sullivan
European Commission	Mr Eoin O'Seaghda
European Commission	Mr Hugh Frazer
European Commission	Mr Jérôme Vignon
FÁS	Ms Shira Mehlman
Federation of Irish Societies	Ms Eithne Rynne
Finglas Cabra Partnership	Ms Pauline Hazel
Finglas Cabra Partnership	Mr Paul Rogers
Finglas Cabra Partnership	Ms Cathy Reinhardt
Forum of People with Disabilities	Ms Mary Keogh
Galway County Council	Mr Kieran Coyne
Galway Filipino Community	Redato Suico
Galway Simon Community	Mr Andy Bourne
Galway Traveller Support Group	Ms Patsy Sweeney
Galway Travellers Community Development Project	Ms Margaret O'Riada
Get Ahead Club	Mr Trevor Sweetman
Health Services Executive	Mr Frank Mills
Health Services Executive	Ms Hilary Scanlan
IBEC	Ms Catherine Maguire
IBEC	Ms Maria Cronin
IBEC/ITCU Workway Project	Mr Sexton Cahill
ICMSA	Mr Michael Doody
IDRH Consultants	Didier Giroud
Immigrant Council of Ireland	Ms Denise Charlton
Immigrant Council of Ireland	Ms Nusha Yonkova
Institute of Public Health in Ireland	Dr Helen McAvoy
Irish Association of Older People	Ms Shiela Simmons
Irish Congress of Trade Union Centres	Ms Patricia Shortt
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Ms Paula Carey
Irish Deaf Society	Ms Elaine Grehan
Irish Deaf Society	Mr Kevin Stanley
Irish Senior Citizens Parliament	Ms Mairead Hayes
Irish Wheelchair Association	Ms Bronagh Lee
Irish Wheelchair Association	Ms Marie Lynch
Kildare County Council	Mr Desmond Page
Kilkenny County Council	Ms Lyndsey Butler
Le Cheile – CDP	Mr Maurice McConville

Local Government Management Services Board	Mr John Conway
Longmeadows Pitch & Putt Co	Mr Billy Mangan
Louth County Council	Mr Gerard Murphy
Markiewicz Community Centre	Ms Theresa McGouran
Meitheal Mhaigheo	Ms Anne Finn
Merchants Quay Ireland	Ms Niamh Randall
Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	Ms Helen Lowry
Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	Ms Olga Dubyna
Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	Ms Siobhan O'Donoghue
Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	Ms Lyndsey Butler
Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland	Mr Maricel Merloiu
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Czech Republic)	Zuzana Zajarosova
Ministry of Social Security, Family and Children (Portugal)	Alda M Goncalves
Ministry of Social Security, Family and Children (Portugal)	Gisela M Matos
Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)	Mr Michael Culloty
Moyross Residents Forum	Mr Sean Flanagan
Moyross Residents Forum	Mrs Tracy McElligott
Moyross Residents Forum	Mrs Theresa Meehan
National Children's Office	Ms Muriel Cleary
National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks	Ms Elva O'Callaghan
National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism	Ms Jennifer Wallace
National Council on Ageing and Older People	Mr Bob Carroll
National Disability Authority	Ms Eithne Fitzgerald
National Women's Council of Ireland	Miss Claire Dunne
National Women's Council of Ireland	Ms Rachel Doyle
National Women's Council of Ireland	Ms Orla O'Connor
National Youth Council of Ireland	Ms Marie-Claire McAleer
NEPCO	Ilona Cvrtnikova
NESC	Ms Jill Matthews
NESDO	Ms Sheila Clarke
NESDO	Ms Catherine O'Brien
NESDO	Ms Tegan O'Dowd

NESF	Ms Paula Hennelly
NESF	Ms Sarah Craig
NESF	Dr Maureen Gaffney
NESF	Mr Seán Ó h-Éigeartaigh
NESF	Mr David Silke
NESF	Mr Gerard Walker
New Ross Intercultural Group	Ms Catherine Mahord
New Ross Intercultural Group	Solange Mantho
New Ross Intercultural Group	Ms Amanda Wickremer
NUI Galway	Dr Eamon O'Shea
OAK Partnership	Mr Pat Leogue
Office for the First and Deputy First Minister (Northern Ireland)	Mr Gerry Mulligan
Older Women's Network	Ms Angela Coleman
Older Women's Network	Ms Betty McElwaine
Older Women's Network	Ms Louise Richardson
OPEN	Ms Frances Byrne
OPEN	Ms Naomi Feely
Our Lady of Lourdes Action Centre	Ms Caroline Clarke
PACE	Ms Irene O'Reilly
Pavee Point	Mr Martin Collins
Pavee Point	Ms Brid O'Brien
PLANET - The Partnership Network	Mr Brian Carty
Rath Mhuire Resource Centre	Ms Maeve Brady
Ringsend Action Project Ltd.	Ms Claire Casey
Ringsend Action Project Ltd.	Ms Aileen Foran
Schizophrenia Ireland/Lucia Foundation	Mr John Saunders
School of Politics and International Studies, Queen's University Belfast	Dr Yvonne Gallagan
Simon Communities of Ireland	Ms Noeleen Hartigan
SIPTU	Ms Rosheen Callender
Society of St Vincent de Paul	Ms Audry Deane
South Tipperary County Council	Ms Sinead Carr
South West Cavan CDP Ltd	Ms Hazel Leahy
Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly	Ms Derville Killian
Summerhill Active Retirement Group	Ms Mary Nally
TRUST	Ms Alice Leahy
Tullamore Town Council	Mr Paddy Rowland
Tullamore Traveller Movement	Ms Cristina Hurson

University College Cork	Mr Joe Finnerty
University of Limerick	Mr Chris McInerney
Unmarried and Separated Fathers of Ireland	Mr Ray Kelly
Unmarried Fathers of Ireland	Mr Donnacha Murphy
Vincentian Partnership for Justice	Sr Bernadette MacMahon
Waterford City Council	Ms Lisa Grant
Wexford Area Partnership	Ms Fiona English
Wicklow County Council	Ms Patricia Reilly
Women Education for Transformation (WEFT)	Ms Iris Lyle
Women's Action Group	Ms Mary-Claire Wallace
Women's Health Council	Ms Geraldine Luddy
Youthreach	Ms Alex Cahill

Annex III Summary Report from Regional Seminars

This Appendix summarises the main conclusions from the three one-day seminars that were organised by the Community Platform and took place in Galway, Cork and Dublin. These were designed to support participation by those who had direct experience of living in poverty and also to discuss priority issues for them to bring to the meeting on 26th January of the NAPS Social Inclusion Forum.

1. Older People – Care Services in the Community

Changes in the last 7 years

On the positive side, increases in pensions and medical cards for the over 70s. On the negative side, a loss of community spirit in many parts of country has led to greater isolation of older people.

What does the Government need to do?

More action regarding:

- Pension adequacy, particularly for women who remained in the home.
- Service provision, including transport, sheltered housing, day care, respite and home help.
- Greater supports for family carers.
- Improving standards of care in both public and private settings.
- Extending breast check to over 65s.
- Information services for older people and awareness about their rights.
- Social services (the majority of older people are fit and well), including education and leisure facilities.
- Tackling age discrimination, e.g. in relation to insurance.
- Greater engagement with older people, including older immigrants.

2. Children and Young People – Educational Disadvantage

Changes in the last 7 years

Positive moves include the introduction of the Applied Leaving Certificate and of many more “informal” interventions such as Breakfast Clubs, After-Schools Activities, and Homework Clubs. The current system for designating schools as disadvantaged is too limited and needs to be more transparent. The introduction of Early Start has been proved to be very successful but is limited to just 40 schools.

The Children's Ombudsman Office is also welcome but needs to be properly resourced. The Transition Year is proving very positive in disadvantaged areas. The introduction of the Education Welfare Act has both pros and cons. Adult education provision is good for new people arriving in the country.

What does the Government need to do?

- More attention to the scope and choice in the curriculum. Differences in class culture and ethnic culture are poorly catered for and there is little mainstream provision for people with disabilities or special needs.
- Eradication of streaming.
- Universal provision of public pre-school services and affordable and accessible childcare.
- Parents, communities and young people ought to be treated as equal partners in education.
- Funding to the Primary School system should be increased.
- The NAPS target for Early School Leaving should be increased to 100% completing the senior cycle by 2010.
- The Early Start Programme should be expanded to cover all disadvantaged communities and the age limit of 3 and 4 years should be increased to include 5 year olds.
- Mainstream the Breaking the Cycle Programme.
- Schools in areas of disadvantage or with significant numbers of pupils at risk of disadvantage should be granted additional resources.
- Integrated approaches involving schools, youth services and community organisations should be encouraged and resourced.

Child poverty needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The following points were raised.

- Child benefits commitments to be met and revision of cut-off.
- Restoration of child benefit for the children of asylum seekers, abolition of direct provision.
- Increase Child Dependant Allowance.
- Medical cards provided for all children under 18 years.
- Recognise work undertaken in the home and give an allowance towards this.
- Extended period of proper-waged maternity and paternity leave and of paid parental leave.
- A shift in focus on the needs of children within the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme and not just on getting women into work.
- Address housing shortages and unsuitable housing conditions.

3. People with Disabilities – Access to Employment

Changes in the last 7 years

There were a number of vague commitments in the NAPS, but not many specifics. Equality legislation has had very little direct impact. There were more accessible buses but accessible public transport wasn't available in all areas. Building regulations had improved but most social and affordable housing is 'duplex' without access to upstairs.

What does the Government need to do?

Funding

- Grants to small employers to adapt workplaces.
- Personal Assistants for people in the workplace.
- Services that meet the needs of people with disabilities particularly transport especially buses
- Awareness training
- For employers (potential of disabled employees), the public and in the schools.

4. Women – Decision-making and Participation

Changes in the last 7 years

There are no NAPS targets on women's participation and their role in decision-making. There have been improvements in childcare provision, more opportunities in education and training, more flexible working hours, child friendly policies and structures set up in local government to help greater participation by women, e.g. SPCs, CDBs etc. At a local social partnership level, women were still on the fringes of decision-making.

What does Government need to do?

- Establish quotas and mechanisms for monitoring, including an awareness campaign.
- Develop and provide supports for women to participate, including childcare, training and education, and family friendly policies.
- Establish a caucus of women within political groupings.
- Recognise the diversity of women and their needs i.e. Traveller women, refugees and asylum seekers, migrant workers, etc.
- Tackle increasing poverty, especially single women with children and older women.
- More women voting and participating in the political system.

5. Traveller Community – Strategies for Integration

Changes in the last 7 years

While there have been some positive changes exclusion stills remains a huge problem and attitudes towards Travellers have got worse. There are a number of NAPS targets for Travellers in relation to health, education and accommodation. There are no targets for employment.

What does Government need to do?

Local Government

- Independent and transparent watchdog to monitor local authorities and national targets.
- Better co-ordination between services at a local level that meet Travellers needs.
- Resourcing local authorities in dealing with Traveller accommodation, including staff training and cultural understanding.
- Employment of Travellers in service provision.

National

- Implement a cultural diversity strategy at all education levels.
- Learning from pilots with good outcomes needs to be mainstreamed, and ensure social inclusion and equality are integrated into policy development and practice.
- Anti-racism training provided at all levels for all State agencies and service providers.
- Language has to be customer friendly including documents and forms.
- Ensure Travellers and Travellers organisations are key players in moving forward on the issues affecting Travellers.
- Strategies to encourage all Travellers to stay in second level education and prioritise literacy.
- Implementation of accommodation commitments and more primary health care programmes for Travellers.
- Reduce poverty traps for Travellers, including retention of medical cards for the first five years of employment.
- Given the importance of self-employment option to Travellers a review of the accessibility and relevance of enterprise supports.

6. Asylum Seekers and Refugees – Strategies for Integration

Changes in the last 7 years

The policy of Direct Provision has taken its toll and the allowance of €19 per week is putting many in poverty. There was a tendency to have larger 'reception centres' (moving towards 700+) which creates a potential for conflict. Racism in the media and in Ireland in general towards asylum seekers and refugees is very evident.

What does Government need to do?

At Local Level

- All local development plans should commit to needs of refugees and asylum seekers and encourage them to participate in local structures, e.g. Strategic Policy Committees.
- Training for workers in statutory agencies who come into contact with ethnic minorities.
- A mediation unit.
- One stop shop for information for asylum seekers and refugees and localised access to quality legal services at all stages.

At National Level

- The system of Direct Provision needs to be abolished.
- Asylum seekers and refugees should have the right to work after a given period, for example 6 months.
- As long as Direct Provision continues, the urgent need is to:
 - Increase the allowance (has been at €19 for some years).
 - Control of standards in hostels.
 - Much higher standards (appropriate food, protection of children etc.).
- Direct funding for community organisations that work with asylum seekers.
- Include asylum seekers in Community Development Programme.
- Review policy in relation to issue of unaccompanied minors.
- Access for refugees to Third Level Education and to the Health System.
- Child benefit needs to be restored to asylum seeking and refugee families.
- A well-resourced national validation service for qualifications.

7. Migrant Workers – Strategies for Integration

Changes in the last 7 years

Very little has changed in relation to policies to help migrant workers.

What does the Government need to do?

- A coherent and planned migration policy.
- Policy should be cross-departmental and consult fully with migrants and organisations working directly with migrant workers.
- Abolishing the temporary work permit system, a review of the Habitual Residence Condition and a policy introduced on family reunification.
- Data collection and a needs assessment on access to health, education, social welfare etc.
- Automatic rights to residency after a shorter period of time.
- Literature from all government departments should be available in a range of languages.
- Access further education after a number of years, not necessarily with citizenship.
- Tight regulation of the minimum wage.
- Migrant workers should be entitled to register with FÁS and directly funded to develop their own networks and infrastructure.
- County and City Councils, through CDB's and community projects, to carry out a needs assessment of migrant workers in the locality.