



**Equality, Poverty and Social Inclusion:
The National Action Plan on Social
Inclusion**

An Equality Authority position

Foreword

The practice of open co-ordination on social inclusion policies now being implemented across the European Union offers an important opportunity to advance the equality agenda. The production of a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, as required by the European Union, is a valuable exercise where the significant interface between equality and poverty could usefully be addressed.

An equality agenda that covers the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community requires a poverty focus. Without such a focus a coherent approach to the economic, social, cultural and political forms inequality takes is not possible. At the same time an anti-poverty agenda that does not take account of difference, and the practical implications of difference in the identity, experience and situation of groups experiencing inequality will not be effective.

To date our inequality and anti-poverty agendas have suffered from some fragmentation's in the strategies designed to address these agendas. Different institutions, legislation and policy initiatives targeting poverty and inequality can contribute to this fragmentation. The potential in a more integrated approach must now be worked at. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion offers a valuable opportunity for integration and coherence. This opportunity is reinforced by European Union requirements in relation to gender mainstreaming and encouragement to take account of the wider equality agenda as set out in the non-discrimination article in the Amsterdam Treaty.

This position developed by the Equality Authority reflects this rationale. It sets out a range of ideas for inclusion in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. These are also ideas that could usefully be further developed in the current review of the National Anti Poverty Strategy. The Equality Authority is committed to supporting the appropriate incorporation of these ideas so that this equality/poverty interface can continue to be ever more be effectively addressed over the coming years.

We are grateful to Jane Pillinger who conducted the background research and consultations for this position and prepared the various drafts of this position. Her work is to the highest quality and her generosity in time and patience is much appreciated.



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Recommended text for inclusion in the National Action Plan

1. Equality proofing, indicators and data issues that cut across the action plan

Developing an equality focus to the national action plan

The action plan gives an important focus to equality /anti-discrimination measures. An important aspect of this is that the plan makes visible the intersection between poverty and social exclusion as this concerns the nine grounds covered under the equality legislation.

Equality proofing

The action plan will promote new proofing guidelines that integrate poverty and inequality perspectives and will follow-up on the provisions agreed under the PPF regarding the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy which “will also have a significant impact on equality matters, with particular reference to integrating equality proofing with other proofing systems” (PPF: point 3.12.5)

Under the national action plan a proofing framework will be piloted that integrates equality issues across the nine grounds. This will be based on the SMART model and on the experience of gender mainstreaming.

A total of *four actions* will be selected for equality proofing in the plan – one under each of the objectives agreed at Nice. An equality impact assessment will be carried out on each of the four actions during the life of the plan.

The equality impact assessment will be conducted for any proposals or policies suggested under these four actions. The Equality Authority will develop supports for this work.

The four actions will be chosen on the basis of applying the following questions to assess the relevance of the issue to equality:

- a) How does this action impact on equality (for one or more of the target groups)?
- b) Are there differences between the target group and the general population in relation to rights, resources, participation, values or norms?
- c) If yes, equality is relevant and an equality impact assessment should be carried out.

The actions chosen will be mainstreamed actions rather than actions targeted on specific groups.

Indicators and monitoring mechanisms

Additional work will be carried out on the further identification and disaggregation of data sources across the nine grounds particularly to ensure that generic indicators on poverty and social exclusion can be broken down across the nine grounds. This work will be carried out in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.

Generic indicators covering social inclusion and poverty are included in the action plan. The key themes are: income, housing, work, community, health, and learning.

In order to pilot an equality approach to generic indicators, a minimum of four generic indicators will be identified for assessment under one or more of the nine grounds. For this purpose the indicators will be considered using the following questions as a framework:

- a) Is it relevant that this indicator should be broken down to consider the effect on one or more of the grounds of discrimination covered under the equality legislation?
- b) What data source can be drawn upon for this?
- c) What are the data gaps?

The Equality Authority will conduct further research and development into the drawing up of specific equality indicators in order to measure objective and subjective progress towards equality across the nine grounds in a range of policy areas.

Targets

The action plan will develop a broad range of new targets for poverty reduction, particularly as this concerns women, older people, young people, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, lone parents and carers. These targets will be linked to indicators.

Data issues

Under the action plan more systematic methods of data collection across the nine grounds will be developed. This will facilitate better understandings of the causes of poverty and exclusion, and particularly the relationship of inequality to exclusion. It will make active use of the Action Programme on Social Inclusion to encourage co-operation regarding data

collection between member states to combat social exclusion.

The action plan will also put into place the provisions agreed under the PPF to disaggregate data through “A coordinated strategy including the relevant Government Departments, the Equality Authority and the Central Statistics Office will develop a system for the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data for women and, in relation to health, education and training, for Travellers” (PPF: point 3.12.12). Building on these commitments, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, other relevant government departments, the Equality Authority and the Central Statistics Office will prioritise the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data across the nine grounds.

The Equality Authority, in partnership with ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency will work together to develop data sources across the nine grounds. This may mean highlighting new data sources and new methods of data collection.

Empirical research identifying the links between poverty, inequality and exclusion will be developed using indicators across the nine grounds.

2. Specific equality policies/activities that can be developed under the plan

a) Objective 1 - Participation in employment and access by all to all the resources, rights, goods and services

Employment and the EQUAL Community Initiative

The experiences of the EQUAL initiative in Ireland will directly inform future action plans on social inclusion. The necessary mechanisms will be established for this to happen.

The Operational Programme for the initiative envisages a strategic approach to mainstreaming. Relevant Government Departments, public sector bodies and state agencies will actively engage with this strategy and report on progress in this regard.

The linkages between the social inclusion measures and employment measures in respect of equality across the nine grounds will be further strengthened through complementarity between the national action plan on social inclusion and the national employment action plan.

Mainstreaming equality within the public sector

Equality is an important focus to the Strategic Management Initiative's Quality Customer Service framework. Strategic commitment will be given to the need to improve service quality so that services take account of multiple and diverse needs, inequalities and discriminations, and that front-line staff are sensitive to the needs of the different groups that face discrimination.

The Equality/Diversity Support Pack, drawn up by the Quality Customer Service Working Group with support from the Equality Authority, will be widely disseminated across government departments and will provide the framework for further progress in this area.

Additional support and training measures will be introduced to raise awareness about how equality/diversity can be integrated into Quality Customer Service and the delivery of front-line services.

An accessibility checklist will be implemented to ensure that public services are accessible to all.

Equal Status Reviews and Action Plans as provided for under the Equal Status Act will be piloted and a template will be drawn up by the Equality Authority for this purpose. Under the action plan a commitment will be given for a pilot in one area of public sector provision. This pilot will inform the implementation of Equal Status Reviews and Action Plans across the public sector.

Employment in the public sector

The public sector will further develop its policies on equality/diversity and will take a lead role in the area of equality within a partnership model. Equality will be enhanced through the implementation of the gender policy and the diversity policy in public service employment, through the implementation of the 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities, through the introduction of new methods for tracking employment under the nine grounds, and the development of positive action policies in recruitment and promotion for those groups that are under-represented in employment at all levels in the public service.

Embedding equality into the workplace

In partnership with employers and trade unions the Equality Authority will conduct workplace Equality Review and Action Plans under the nine grounds. Public and private sector organisations will participate. The policy learning from these reviews will be identified and incorporated by the relevant bodies.

The outcomes of the work of the Framework Committee established under PPF to develop equal opportunities at the level of the enterprise will be disseminated across the public and private sectors. The implication of this work for the further development of institutional supports for promoting equality at the level of the enterprise will be identified and developed by the relevant bodies.

Reconciliation of work and family life/child care and care of older people

The national action plan will build on the commitments to family friendly working practices established under the PPF. Baseline data on family friendly workplaces will be collected. Targets, indicators and benchmarking will be developed on foot of this data.

A working group of the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs, the Equality Authority, and the relevant representative organisations will be set up to report on strategies for the care of older people from this labour market perspective.

Disseminating learning and good practice

New learning and good practice on equality will be widely disseminated and structures will be developed to incorporate learning from the following areas:

- Good practice in employment developed under the EQUAL initiative
- The experiences of gender mainstreaming under the National Development Plan with a view to extending the model across government departments.
- Forthcoming research to be undertaken by the Equality Studies Unit of the Equality Authority which is to be established under the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme.
- The recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Framework Committee, for example, in developing policies for older workers and recruitment across the nine grounds.

- The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Older People and the Advisory Committee on Sexual Orientation established by the Equality Authority.
- This learning will be built into future national action plans on social inclusion.

b) Objective 2: Prevent the risks of exclusion

Preventing technology exclusion

The development of e-government and IT strategies in government departments will take account of the particular needs of disabled people.

Training programmes will be targeted to meet the needs of those groups who are technology poor, most notably older people, women, people with disabilities, and minority ethnic groups including Travellers.

c) Objective 3: To help the most vulnerable

Helping the most vulnerable

Under the action plan attention will be given to the measurement of persistent poverty across the nine grounds, particularly concerning people with disabilities, older people, women, minority ethnic groups including Travellers, gay men and lesbians. This will tie into the recommendations made earlier concerning the need to develop disaggregated data across the nine grounds and indicators that can be monitored across the nine grounds.

Guidance for action to help the most vulnerable will be drawn from the recommendations of the following reports and particular attention will be given to the implementation of these recommendations:

- Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities
- National Plan for Women
- Report on the Task Force on the Travelling Community
- Outcomes of the Global Conference on Racism
- Recommendations of the Equality Authority Advisory Committee on Older People and the Equality Authority Advisory Committee on Sexual Orientation
- Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and areas that refer directly to the nine grounds

d) Objective 4: Mobilise all relevant bodies

Mainstreaming equality

Mechanisms for mainstreaming equality will be developed during the life of the plan. The working group established under PPF on equality proofing will further develop and disseminate good practice. This will include the implementation of pilot projects and the development of a single equality and poverty proofing mechanism as proposed under the Partnership 2000 report on equality proofing. One pilot will be developed to equality proof the employment action plan.

An examination will be made of the operation of the Statutory Duty placed on public bodies in Northern Ireland in the area of equality proofing and its political implications in the Republic.

County and City Development Boards will develop mechanisms for equality proofing their plans and in drawing up strategies for subsequently implementing and monitoring these plans. Models of equality impact assessment will be developed as part of the implementation of these plans.

A coordinated/integrated approach

A focus will be given to equality issues under the co-ordination instruments such as the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee particularly concerning activities that impact on equality in the employment and social policy fields.

The County and City Development Boards service coordination activities and local pilot projects on coordinated service delivery will be further developed to promote social inclusion. An evaluation of the contribution of these initiatives to equality across the nine grounds will be undertaken.

Participation of target groups

The groups representing the nine grounds under the equality legislation will participate in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

1 Introduction

The paper discusses and makes recommendations for equality issues to be integrated into the national action plan on social inclusion. It discusses the key equality issues that emanate from the plan and identifies the possibilities for integrating poverty, exclusion and inequality / discrimination through an integrated proofing framework. The paper also discusses some specific equality policies, programmes and actions that need to be included in the national action plan as they concern one or more of the grounds of discrimination covered under the equality legislation.

1.1 A new focus to equality

The European strategy against social exclusion alongside the open method of co-ordination represents a major development in the EU in placing social inclusion and the elimination of poverty in a central position in EU policy.

Equality of opportunity and measures to combat discrimination are now an essential part of EU social policy. The development of new Community actions to promote equality across a number of grounds and the increasingly important emphasis now given to mainstreaming equality means that EU and national legislation and policy-making increasingly have to take account of equality objectives and perspectives. Equality and anti-discrimination actions are closely linked to social cohesion policies, as seen from the objectives set out in the new Social Policy Agenda:

“Social cohesion, the rejection of any form of exclusion or discrimination and gender equality are all essential values of the European social model... Employment is the best protection against social exclusion. Growth should benefit all, but for this to be so, proactive measures, especially in problem districts, should be continued and stepped up to deal with the complex nature and multiple facets of exclusion and inequality”

European Social Policy Agenda, 2000

It is within this broader context that this paper will show how the European strategy against social exclusion is inextricably linked with the equality agenda, not only because the links between poverty, exclusion and inequality are now better understood, but also because the groups that are likely to experience discrimination and inequality are also those groups that are likely to experience poverty and exclusion.

The objectives of this background paper are:

- To provide an assessment of the objectives agreed at the Nice European Council and the relevance of each objective to equality and the nine grounds established under the equality legislation.
- To identify new initiatives in policy or service provision that would progress the equality agenda and that could realistically be advanced under the Irish national action plan.
- To explore effective and administratively feasible approaches to equality proofing the Irish national action plan.

As a result the paper addresses the need for an equality focus (including equality policies and objectives, and an equality proofing framework) that can be progressed under the national action plan on social inclusion. An important aspect of this strategy is that member states are required to draw up action plans on social inclusion that include national indicators and monitoring mechanisms to combat poverty and exclusion. In so doing this paper suggests ways forward for including an equality dimension in the development of indicators and monitoring mechanisms, and in turn in providing the scope for an imaginative and wide ranging approach to tackling the multiple causes of poverty and exclusion.

This fits into a wider context of an open method of co-ordination that was agreed at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 that was subsequently reinforced at the Nice European Council in December 2000. This is a major step forward for the EU in coordinating economic, cohesion and employment policies into one framework and has implications for the future development of European employment, social policy and cohesion policies. As a result, integrating and co-ordinating policy responses is an important aspect of this new agenda, which in turn has an important bearing on the national action plans, their implementation and the monitoring of progress. In developing a link between equality and anti-discrimination actions and actions that are developed to reduce poverty and exclusion, this drive to coordination by linking cohesion, employment and economic policies is particularly relevant.

1.2 The national action plans and the NAPS review

The requirement for national action plans coincides with the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the content and conclusions of which will frame the national action plan. For this reason the contents and themes of the NAPS review need to be clearly focused in the national action plan, although these may not have been fully concluded by the time the national action plan is to be submitted to the European Commission (1 June 2001). As a result this policy paper suggests a strategy for the national action plan as it concerns equalities issues, which in turn impacts on the NAPS review.

The objectives for the European strategy against social exclusion, agreed by the member states at the Nice European Council, are potentially wider in scope than those contained in NAPS. For this reason this policy paper sets these objectives in a wide context to enable equality issues to come to the fore and in order to develop the linkages between poverty, social exclusion and inequality in relation to the nine grounds under the equality legislation. Evidence suggest that not only have social divisions widened since NAPS was first written, but there are also new groups who are experiencing poverty and inequality, for example, refugees and asylum seekers. One clear implication is that the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act provide a focus for work to take place towards the ending of discrimination under the nine grounds.

1.3 Policy responses

This paper shows that there are more sophisticated understandings of the links between poverty and inequality / discrimination and particularly of how poverty relates to and impacts on the nine grounds covered in the equality legislation. This understanding makes it possible to identify more flexible policy connections and policy solutions than hitherto.

In addition to the EU's reporting requirements and policy developments in this area, there are two key areas of national policy development that provide the context for the proposals that are made in this report. First are the commitments made to equality under Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF), the National Development Plan (NDP), the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act, and obligations resulting from the implementation of EU Directives and policies on equality and anti-discrimination. Second is the framework for the review of NAPS and particularly the incorporation of certain equality issues into the review.

For Ireland, this raises a number of policy challenges regarding the coordination and integration of existing government policies, the role played by the equality legislation and initiatives to improve service provision in order to tackle exclusion, poverty and discrimination.

1.4 Structure of the paper

The paper is divided into the following sections. Section two begins by looking at the background and context concerning the development of social exclusion and equalities policies in the EU with the aim of establishing the linkages between equality and anti-discrimination measures and different areas of EU policy, particularly concerning social inclusion. This also includes an assessment of the objectives agreed at the December 2000 Nice European Council and the implications of these for equality under the nine grounds covered in the equality legislation. Section three provides an analysis of equality proofing and monitoring, and proposes an equality-proofing framework, including indicators that can be included in the plan. In so doing the paper proposes a methodology and framework for equality proofing, building on experience of poverty proofing, equality proofing and gender mainstreaming. Section four discusses equality-related policies, initiatives and service delivery mechanisms, which are suggested for inclusion under the Irish national action plan on social inclusion.

2. EU policy context

2.1 Introduction

The agreement at the Nice European Council for a new impetus towards the development of actions to combat poverty and social exclusion marks a major step forward for the EU. This will take place through three key activities:

- National action plans on social inclusion
- An open method of policy co-ordination
- A new action programme designed to strengthen member states efforts in developing indicators, benchmarking, improved statistical information, research, networking and exchanging of best practice.

This paper is concerned primarily with the national action plans on social inclusion, although the open method of co-ordination and the new action programme are closely connected to the actions on social inclusion that can also be developed at the national level. Whilst the anti-discrimination measures recently adopted by the EU under Article 13¹ and gender equality actions are relevant to this initiative, there are separate action programmes and initiatives to support their development. Nevertheless, the overlaps and linkages between these areas – social inclusion, gender equality, and other grounds for equality under Article 13 – have an important bearing on the understandings of the complex and multi-dimensional causes of poverty and exclusion. There is consequently an important case to be made about the importance of the anti-discrimination and equality measures (on gender equality and those adopted under Article 13) and the contribution that they play to reducing social exclusion. *See Appendix 1 for an overview of EU policies on equality between women and men, anti-discrimination, social inclusion and the intersection of EU equality and inclusion policies.*

The EU's fight against social exclusion recognises that there are linkages between inequality/discrimination, and social exclusion/poverty and that multi-dimensional policies are needed to tackle exclusion, inequality and poverty. There is also an understanding of the necessity for partnerships, involvement and consultations with groups who experience exclusion and poverty in order for policies to be relevant and for them to have a real impact. These understandings have some important implications for the development of policy in Ireland and for the promotion of an equalities agenda in the implementation of the

¹ Article 13, introduced under the Treaty of Amsterdam, is a non-discrimination clause which provides the legal basis for further measures and actions in areas where the EU has competence to act to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

strategy and in the drawing up of future national action plans. The EU's focus on competition and technology-led growth, requires policies on social inclusion to adopt more '...sophisticated, targeted, innovative, integrated approaches as well as new forms of partnership and participation of stakeholders, especially the excluded themselves' (2000d:8).

2.2 European strategy against social exclusion and all forms of Discrimination

The political context: the Lisbon and Nice European Councils

The March 2000 Lisbon Economic Council set the priorities of social inclusion and equality against the backdrop of the need for member states to create sustainable, technology-intensive growth, with social cohesion and more and better jobs. A strong focus is given to the quality of jobs, living conditions, and services within the context of the challenges of long-term sustainable growth and a knowledge-based economy; creating new jobs, improving employment rates and reducing unemployment; and reforming welfare systems so that they are financially sustainable and able to meet new risks and needs. In so doing the Lisbon European Council (2000) established a new strategic goal for the EU:

“...in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy [in the context of globalisation and the knowledge-driven economy in order] to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth and more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”.

This goal poses a number of difficult challenges for the EU. On the one hand, the EU is seeking to intensify its actions concerning the reduction of long-term unemployment, discrimination, growing income inequality, poverty and exclusion, primarily through the promotion of high employment rates and the integration of excluded groups into the labour market. On the other hand, globalisation, increased competition, liberalisation/open markets and the development of the 'information society' are central to developing sustainable growth. Strong links are made between a strong European economy, and the European social model, the combating of exclusion and discrimination. Overriding these are the pressures on welfare and public service spending that are constrained by the need for further reductions in budget deficits under the Stability and Growth Pact.

The overriding emphasis on employment, particularly in the context of the information society, as a solution to exclusion could have the effect of further marginalising those outside of employment (for example, refugees, older people or people with disabilities), whilst low pay and poor working conditions themselves can reinforce poverty and exclusion. The emphasis on quality jobs, in this respect, will be important for those working in the poorest conditions of employment. A further issue is the relationship between social protection and economic performance, work incentives, education, training and job creation measures. In response the Council has called on member states to restructure their social protection systems so as to be better able to combat unemployment through integrating unemployed and excluded people into the labour market; and by improving and modernizing social protection systems (European Commission, Communication 1999a). However, exclusion from society may not necessarily be material; rather dominant values and norms may marginalize and exclude certain groups from political, civil or cultural participation in society because of their gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, or ethnicity.

What is significant about the conclusions agreed at Lisbon is the establishment of an integrated framework for tackling economic, employment and social cohesion policies, along with proposals for setting indicators and targets for national governments through an annual review process. The implications for the coordination and integration of EU policies and for the development of a more concerted policy on social inclusion are significant. On reflection the member states did not agree to Europe wide targets and indicators for poverty reduction, as had been proposed by the European Commission. Instead, they opted for the development of indicators and targets at the national level, with evaluation and progress towards meeting targets reviewed through national exchanges of information and a mutual review and learning process.

The December 2000 Nice Summit reinforced these objectives and agreed the new *Social Policy Agenda and the European strategy against social exclusion and all forms of discrimination*. The strategy has a number of objectives related to the combating of poverty and social exclusion within the open method of co-ordination, and developed through the two-year action plan, with monitoring mechanisms and indicators that measure progress.

European Strategy against social exclusion and all forms of discrimination

The European Council approves the objectives of combating poverty and social exclusion adopted by the Council. It invites the Member States to develop their priorities in relation to these objectives, to submit by June 2001 a national action plan covering a two-year period and to define indicators and monitoring mechanisms capable of measuring progress.

The European Council underlines the importance of the recently adopted texts designed to combat all forms of discrimination in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty.

[Nice European Council, extract from Presidency conclusions]

Of importance to the overall strategy is Article 13 of the Treaty on combating all forms of discrimination and Article 137 of the Treaty on social protection and combating social exclusion. Against this is the broader context of EU social and employment policy that is set within a new policy framework that stresses quality in a number of areas including the emerging policy frameworks for social quality, quality of life, quality of work, and the quality of services.

2.3 The national action plans on social inclusion

The national action plans on social inclusion will be based on the objectives on social inclusion agreed at the Nice European Council (the full text of which can be found in Appendix 2). This reflects a multi-dimensional approach in that:

“Poverty and social exclusion take complex and multi-dimensional forms which require the mobilisation of a wide range of policies under that overall strategy. Alongside employment policy, social protection has a pre-eminent role to play, while the importance of other factors such as housing, education, health, information and communications, mobility, security and justice, leisure and culture should also be acknowledged”.

A central objective of the national action plans is the role that employment can play in combating exclusion. A high priority is given to measures to promote employability, skills development and lifelong learning and there are linkages to the objectives agreed under the European Employment Strategy for the promotion of social inclusion on the basis that “economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing”. This employment objective is also closely connected to the agreement reached at the Lisbon European Council regarding the promotion of the Information Society as a source of jobs and growth. Of interest to the action plan are the ways in which this objective does not further disadvantage those who are technology poor or whose access to technology is restricted because of disability or impairment. Another objective is the goal of developing social protection systems that can promote minimum income schemes that lead to welfare-work strategies and active welfare states. Furthermore the objectives call for the mainstreaming of inclusion into a range of policy areas and for specific target groups, whereby:

“...setting appropriate objectives should also involve promoting a better understanding of social exclusion; mainstreaming the promotion of inclusion in Member States' employment, education and training, health and housing policies; and developing priority actions in favour of specific target groups (for example, minorities, children, the elderly and disabled), with Member States choosing amongst those actions according to their particular situations”.

The action plans will require the establishment of goals and targets on measures to reduce social exclusion and poverty; guidelines and timetables for reaching the established goals; quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks; and the development of specific priority actions for target groups (for example, minority ethnic groups, children, older people and people with disabilities) with reporting mechanisms on their implementation.

The Nice European Council agreed the following objectives for the European strategy against social exclusion in order to provide a framework for the national action plans (the full text of which can be found in Appendix I):

- to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to all the resources, rights, goods and services
- to prevent the risks of exclusion
- to help the most vulnerable
- to mobilise all relevant bodies

In order to implement these objectives, the European Council went on to agree that member states:

- will pursue the objectives of fighting social exclusion and poverty
- underline the importance of mainstreaming equality between men and women in all actions aimed at achieving those objectives
- are invited to develop their priorities within the framework of those overall objectives and to present a national action plan by 2000| cover a period of two years
- in order to make it possible to monitor the policies set out here, are also invited to develop, at national level, indicators and monitoring mechanisms capable of measuring progress in regard to each of the objectives elaborated in their national action plans.

Finally, in order to develop best practice and new approaches within a system of peer review and support the Commission and the member states are invited to cooperate at the European level in order to exchange good practice and develop better understandings about exclusion.

The first action plans (covering two years) will be submitted to the Stockholm Summit in June 2001. The action plans will be assessed by the EU's Social Protection Committee and a joint report and proposals for indicators on social exclusion will be issued by December 2001, on the basis that they will be endorsed by the Laeken Summit in December 2001.

2.4 The rationale for an equality focus in the national action plans

Future national action plans have a great potential to address a range of equality issues, to furthering the understanding of the causes of and ways of measuring poverty and exclusion, and for highlighting the intersection of exclusion and poverty to inequality across the nine grounds. The objectives agreed at Nice have a broad agenda and the text lends itself to an equality focus and particularly to the need to develop an integrated equalities approach to tackling social inclusion. In summary an equality focus can be highlighted in two key ways:

- The mainstreaming of gender equality is an essential requirement of the plan throughout. The objectives stress the importance of gender mainstreaming as an approach to ensure that "all its activities aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women" on the basis that gender equality is mainstreamed into all actions "in particular by assessing the implications for both men and women at the different stages of the planning of, decision-making on, and monitoring of that action".
- The objectives are of key relevance to equality across the nine grounds covered under the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act since they refer to a wide range of equality issues that concern employment, goods and services.

The following provides a brief assessment of the main objectives agreed at the Nice European Council as they concern equality and points to areas of policy that can be developed with an equalities framework:

Objective 1: To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services

This objective provides a broad platform for equalities issues, particularly because it takes a similar focus and approach to that found in the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act.

Under 1.1 the objective is “to facilitate participation in employment” in the context of the European employment strategy. This has a number of equality related objectives. First, it focuses on the need to promote access to quality employment and pathways into employment and training “for those in the most vulnerable groups in society”. The Employment Equality Act prohibits direct or indirect discrimination in employment under the nine grounds and includes access to employment and vocational training. Second, equality is important to the objective of the development of family-friendly policies and the provision of care services “by developing policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, including the issue of child- and dependent care”. Other points concerning “integration and employment” in the social economy and the need to “prevent the exclusion of people from the world of work by improving employability, through human resource management, organisation of work and life-long learning” are relevant to the role and purpose of the Employment Equality Act and the broader developmental role that the Equality Authority and the social partners can play in promoting equality workplaces.

Under 1.2 the objective concerns “access to resources, rights, goods and services for all” and is closely connected to the role and purpose of the Equal Status Act, which outlaws discrimination in the provision of goods and services across the nine grounds. In particular the access that excluded groups have to services like housing, health, education, justice and so, is central to the development of policies on both equality and inclusion. There are further equality-related objectives, for example, which stress the need to have the “resources necessary to live in accordance with human dignity” and to “overcome the obstacles to employment”. Further, the focus on countering service exclusion is important to a broader equality objective, which is highly relevant across the nine grounds. This can be seen in the references in the objectives to implement policies “provide access to decent and sanitary housing” and other basic services; to develop policies “to provide access for all to healthcare appropriate to their situation, including situations of dependency”; and “services and accompanying measures which will allow them effective access to education, justice and other public and private services, such as culture and sport”.

Objective 2: To prevent the risks of exclusion

The greater awareness and understanding of the causes of social exclusion and the ways in which particular groups are vulnerable to exclusion lends itself to policies that are also geared to reducing inequalities, particularly where these impact on reducing poverty or exclusion. Under this objective an important focus is to “exploit fully the potential of the knowledge-based society” and to “ensure that no-one is excluded, taking particular account of the needs of people with disability”. This is part of a broader EU policy on the information society, which prioritises policies to prevent information and technology exclusion and the employability and social inclusion of people with special needs (European Commission, 2000e). As a result having access to technology both to improve employability and to provide access to services is an important issue of equality across the nine grounds. Whilst the objective particularly highlights the needs of disabled people, there are similar issues of technology exclusion that can be highlighted for women, older people, and minority ethnic groups including Travellers that will need to be addressed in this broader context of exclusion.

Objective 3: To help the most vulnerable

This objective is integrated into all objectives and highlights the needs of a number of groups that are vulnerable and excluded. It specifically refers to the need to promote the integration of those who are “at risk of facing persistent poverty, for example because they have a disability or belong to a group experiencing particular integration problems”. This has important equality objectives regarding the need to promote access to employment and services for those groups covered under the nine grounds in the equality legislation. A further objective regarding the “elimination of social exclusion among children” could also include an equality focus on children of groups experiencing inequality.

Objective 4: To mobilise all relevant bodies

This objective further demonstrates the broad perspectives and responsibilities placed on all stakeholders to support actions to reduce exclusion. This includes measures to promote the participation of people “suffering exclusion, in particular in regard to their situation and the policies and measures affecting them”, and to “mainstream the fight against exclusion into overall policy” and by promoting “dialogue and partnership between all relevant bodies”. This is relevant to equality across the nine grounds.

The focus in this objective on mainstreaming is relevant to actions developed in Ireland, particularly regarding an integrated proofing framework as a mechanism for integrating equality and inclusion issues in policy making. The action plan offers a unique opportunity for developing new mainstreaming practices, and particularly building on those already developed on gender mainstreaming under the National Development Plan. Likewise, the development of new strategies to improve service quality, both concerning the co-ordination of government, county and local authority policies, and of front-line services, is particularly important to this integrated equality framework and to meeting the needs of the most excluded groups. Finally, the need to promote dialogue and partnership at all levels has important equality objectives, particularly by ensuring that the most vulnerable groups participate and that there is a commitment across all sectors and all stakeholders to taking “social responsibility” and in particular the “social responsibility of business”.

The broad framework of the action plan and the system of “peer review” under the action plan’s reporting mechanisms will promote cooperation to develop better understandings of the causes of exclusion. The development of new techniques for measuring exclusion has the potential to support new thinking, new linkages and new ways of measuring the role of inequality and discrimination as it concerns poverty and exclusion. This is particularly important as the objectives refer to the development of measures that “prevent the risks of exclusion”. The possibility to develop indicators and monitoring mechanisms has implications for the measurement of inequalities under the nine grounds covered in the equality legislation, and in particular how indicators can be developed to also reflect equalities issues.

Some new challenges are also raised about the integration and coordination of policies to tackle social exclusion, particularly regarding the relationship with and the implementation and coverage of the equality legislation. Ireland is in an advantageous position in its development of an integrated equalities agenda and in relation to its development of equality and poverty proofing guidelines. These also have implications for Irish policies that seek to be proactive particularly in helping to promote a more co-ordinated and integrated

method for implementing the equality legislation, and to link a range of different strategies and government activities in order to fulfil the development (as opposed to the enforcement) potential of the equality legislation. The national action plans on social inclusion will, therefore, need to take account of these wider issues and particularly the intersection between inequality and poverty that results from this wider policy context.

This equality focus will form the basis for recommendations for equality objectives, policies and proofing procedures that it is suggested can be included in the national action plan (see sections 3 and 4).

2.5 The open method of co-ordination

The member states also agreed at the Lisbon and Nice European Councils that policies for combating poverty and exclusion would also be based on an open method of co-ordination. This requires the coordination of EU and member states policies on economic, employment and cohesion policies and therefore the development of new policy strategies that, first, are able to tackle multi-dimensional problems, and, second, that attach equal importance to economic, employment and cohesion policies. The open method of co-ordination has a number of important policy making implications for the EU and for individual member states. In this framework, there is the potential to identify the cross-cutting issues in both equality and inclusion policies, and the linkages and overlaps between the two. Member states will be required to report, each Spring, on the mechanisms put in place to implement the open method of co-ordination between economic, employment and cohesion policies. It is also an important development in recognising the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion and the need for national and local co-ordinated and integrated policy responses to it.

In highlighting the importance of the multidimensional nature of exclusion, and in suggesting that member states develop a greater degree of coordination and integration of national policies, the EU is duty bound themselves to develop these structures internally. Although the EU recognises the links between different policy areas, the institutional and organisational arrangements of EU decision-making, particularly within the European Commission, means that co-ordination of EU policies is not as well developed as it could be. The open method of co-ordination agreed at Nice, therefore, represents both a very significant step forward and a challenge for the EU.

A potential problem is that economic policy is likely to take precedence in the integration of economic, cohesion and employment policies. For this reason the European Anti-Poverty Network argued at Nice for the mainstreaming of social inclusion through the Social Agenda whereby "...all policies at European level should be vetted as to their effect on poverty and social exclusion" (EAPN, 2000). In theory, it will therefore be necessary to take into equal account both social and economic perspectives in assessing the triangle of economic, employment and social policy. The agreement for national action plans on social inclusion will further stimulate initiatives already taking place at national level, through co-ordination and integration of employment and social inclusion policies.

2.6 The New Social Policy Agenda

The new *Social Policy Agenda* agreed at the December 2000 Nice summit sets out a five-year action programme for 2000-2005. It aims to strengthen the role of 'social policy as a productive factor' through a range of employment, social protection and enlargement related actions. Significant emphasis is placed on the 'promotion of quality', including the quality of work, the quality of social policy and the quality of industrial relations (European Commission, 2000b). It specifically refers to the need to evaluate the impact of EQUAL on the promotion of social inclusion.

The new European Social Agenda sets out six strategic social policy guidelines, which form the basis of action for the next five years (our emphasis):

- More and better jobs
- Anticipating and capitalising on change in the working environment by creating a new balance between flexibility and security
- **Fighting poverty and all forms of exclusion and discrimination in order to promote social integration**
- Modernising social protection
- **Promoting gender equality**
- Strengthening the social policy aspects of enlargement and the European Union's external relations

The progress to achieving the social policy guidelines will be reviewed each Spring by a report submitted by the European Commission to the European Council. This new agenda places a much greater emphasis on equality and social inclusion measures, particularly in the context of EU competitiveness and the knowledge-based economy. The implementation of the agenda will be reviewed on an annual basis, beginning at the Stockholm Summit, 23 March 2001

2.7 Employment

The national reporting mechanisms on social inclusion will follow the framework established under the European Employment Strategy, and particularly the objective to make employment a tool for social inclusion, competitiveness and economic prosperity. The emphasis is on more integrated approaches to tackling unemployment via the four pillars of the annual employment guidelines (employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities). In continuing these themes, the 2001 guidelines place a new emphasis on the open form of coordination approach towards employment, the quality of employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning (European Council, 2000). Underlying these priorities is the objective of EU employment policy to improve employment rates, job creation in the service sector, local economic development and the social economy, and to reconcile work and family life. The recent emphasis given by the EU to measures to improve employability and reduce the skills gap, lifelong learning and measures to improve equal opportunities (including a new benchmark for improving childcare) is an important step forward in this respect.

2.8 Conclusion

At a practical level there are a range of reporting mechanisms now in operation that refer to and impact upon social inclusion policies, particularly in the context of the open method of coordination. These are:

- National employment action plan
- National social inclusion action plan
- Annual report (spring) on open method of coordination
- Annual report (spring) on the implementation of the social policy agenda

There are important linkages between equality/anti-discrimination policies and each of these reporting mechanisms. The conclusions of the Nice Presidency refer to the *European strategy against social exclusion and all forms of discrimination*, makes specific reference to measures to be developed under Article 137 (social inclusion) and that also take due account of Article 13 (anti-discrimination). Furthermore, the agreement for the new *Social Policy Agenda* has two strategic social policy guidelines concerned with equality, the first of which contains reference to both exclusion and discrimination. First, “fighting poverty and all forms of exclusion and discrimination in order to promote social integration”, and second, “promoting gender equality”. There are also a number of ways in which an equality dimension is important to the evolving policy framework on social inclusion, particularly in the way that it will operate through the national action plans on social inclusion, the open method of co-ordination, and more generally through the mainstreaming of gender equality and social inclusion through the policy making process. Finally, the breadth of the objectives agreed at Nice has a strong equality focus to them, thereby necessitating an equality dimension and an integrated equalities framework for the national action plan.

3. National policy context

3.1 The links between poverty and inequality

There now exist more complex understandings of the structured divisions and inequalities, which can inform the development of policies, particularly in the areas of gender, ethnicity, disability, age and sexuality. For example, the feminisation of poverty has informed our understandings of the distribution of income within households, the impact of lone parenthood on poverty, and increasingly of the specificities of ethnicity, disability and age in relation to gender. The complexity of this for policy-making is that the different identities or roles held by women may impact on poverty or exclusion in different ways and at different times over the lifecycle. Women may experience poverty in the labour market as a result of low pay and part-time work, or because of inadequate child or care of older people, as a result of dependence in marriage or in old age. Whilst women may move in and out of poverty at different times in their lifecycle, their experience of political, cultural or economic recognition and discrimination will also impact on their economic status.

As a result the connection between poverty and inequality is closely tied up with social relations, which in turn are complex and often multifaceted. As Lynch et al (2000) suggest inequality arises in three key contexts namely: economic, cultural and political, each of which can generate poverty. As a result the impact of material deprivation on social marginalisation or exclusion, in relation to lack of access to participation in social, economic and political institutions means that:

“The complete elimination of poverty demands restructuring multiple forms of social relations. It demands ultimately a restructuring of work, a revaluing of particular forms of labour including care work, a revaluing of states of dependence however they arise, and significant changes in the way in which wealth is managed and owned in society. The problems to be addressed are not simply economic, they are also social, cultural and political” (Lynch et al, 2000:5)

It is equally the case that these understandings have informed the need to show the relationship between identity and agency to poverty and exclusion and thereby a more complex understanding of the risks and opportunities that individuals or groups inhabit in relation to poverty and social exclusion, and importantly how flexible and diverse policy initiatives can also respond to these. In this context there is now a greater awareness of poverty regarding, first, the distribution of risks, including different forms of discrimination, and second, people’s own perceptions of the risks they are exposed to and the ways (financial resources, access to rights and choices etc) in which they can protect themselves

from these risks (Williams and Pillinger, 1995). In this context we can see how inequality operates at two principal levels. First, are the primary social relations of inequality related to gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability and sexuality. Second, are the secondary social relations of equality resulting from employed/unemployed, dual earner/non earner households, two parent/lone parent households, house owner/renter etc. Of importance to the further understanding and recognition of the complexity of the needs and risks associated with social exclusion is the need to map the dynamics of poverty and social exclusion by monitoring who is poor, how the risks of poverty are distributed amongst certain social groups, whether new forms of inequality and discrimination are emerging, and what national/local or urban/rural variations exist.

A further consideration is the difference between poverty and social exclusion on the basis that the broader concept of social exclusion allows for a more dynamic analysis that extends beyond material poverty. A key distinction is that social exclusion is relational in that it concerns issues of participation, power and integration (Room, 1995; Bradshaw et al, 2000). However, the problem is that there has been limited empirical research to operationalise and measure the concept of social exclusion and thereby establish the link between exclusion from participation, power and integration with poverty, on the one hand, and the identification of the groups that are most likely to be excluded and in poverty.

3.2 Equality proofing, gender proofing and poverty proofing

In recent years the development of policy proofing processes has led to the initiation of the following three main methodologies:

- Poverty proofing guidelines contained in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS).
- Gender Impact Assessment / Gender mainstreaming provisions under the National Development Plan (NDP).
- Equality proofing proposals, by each ground covered under the equality legislation or through an integrated approach covering all nine grounds.

They have to varying degrees led to administrative mechanisms for proofing policies across the board (poverty proofing) or in pre-determined areas of policy (gender impact assessment under the NDP). These three potentially separate mechanisms also pose some interesting questions about the overlaps between particular policy communities and the possibilities for providing a more integrated approach to proofing.

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy and poverty proofing

An important aspect of the implementation of NAPS is mechanisms to poverty proof policy. The poverty proofing guidelines established under the NAPS place an emphasis on “these groups, which have been identified as being either in consistent poverty or known to be at risk of poverty”. NAPS defines poverty proofing as

“...the process by which Government Departments, Local Authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty, with a view to poverty reduction”.

Poverty proofing is intended to take place in the SMI Statements of Strategy and Annual Business Plans; in policy proposals to Government; in preparation of annual budget estimates and proposals; in preparation of the National Development Plan and relevant EU programmes; and in the preparation of legislation. A key feature of NAPS is the setting of targets and this places Ireland in a good position for the types of reporting mechanisms that will be required under the European strategy. Whilst the NAPS guidelines for implementing the poverty proofing procedures refer to equality issues, there are no targets associated with equality (under the nine grounds), rather that:

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

These groups are covered under the equality legislation, in addition to the grounds of marital status, family status and religion.

Notwithstanding the limitations of data, and conscious of the need for a shorter term framework and simplified structure for equality proofing, research undertaken by the Equality Authority and the Combat Poverty Agency provides a set of practical tools for policy makers for addressing the interface between inequality and poverty and in applying this to different policy areas within the existing NAPS framework. Developing equality templates of this nature can be helpful first, as a screening mechanism, and, second, in alerting policy makers to the factors that contribute to equality, to assist them in the process of identifying equality impact issues in more concrete ways, and thereby lead to the need for policies to take account of and actively promote equality/diversity outcomes. The study concerned the development of a proofing process for those inequalities that are likely

to lead to poverty: young people, older people, people with disabilities, lesbians and gay men, Black and minority ethnic groups, Travellers and women. This process has the dual effect of awareness raising and a simple proofing template that highlights a key characteristic of the target groups that results in discrimination. Of importance is that the study provides an analysis of whether the inequalities experienced by each of the target groups leads to or is linked to poverty.

The potential for a greater focus to equality issues under the NAPS review and therefore also the national action plan on social inclusion is part of a greater awareness of the linkages between poverty and inequality under NAPS. For instance, the NESF Opinion on NAPS argues that:

“An important point to note is that the new poverty-proofing guidelines...include also a focus on inequality...The policy and practical implications arising from this overlap need to be assessed. An important focus in all of this should be how best to promote cross-Departmental actions and devise more effective and integrated strategies between all the varied interests involved” (NESF, 2000:27)

Gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment

It is in the area of gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment that the most advanced models can be found. For example, good models of gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment exist in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, and methodologies have been developed by the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations (European Commission, 1997 and 1998; Council of Europe, 1998)

As a result of EU gender mainstreaming requirements, a framework for gender mainstreaming under the National Development Plan, and specifically in Structural Fund operations has been introduced. This is a relatively simple framework that alerts policy makers to gender issues in the drawing up of Programme Complements under each Operational Programme, and has been accompanied by training for civil servants and the social partners in gender awareness and the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Under the Community Support Framework, social inclusion and gender are cross-cutting issues and the creation of a Community Support Framework Sub-Committee on gender equality and social inclusion is important to establishing the linkages between these cross-cutting issues, although at an operational and administrative level they are separate. Furthermore, the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Promotion and Monitoring Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform serves to support gender mainstreaming activities.

Gender mainstreaming is:

“The (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making” (*Council of Europe, 1998*)

Gender Impact Assessment (or gender proofing) is the first step of gender mainstreaming and is the starting point to compare and assess, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of this project (using criteria of: participation, resources, norms, values and rights) (European Commission, 1977). The following steps can be put in place:

- Define the desired outcome
- Assess the gender relevance
- Develop options
- Make recommendations
- Implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation

In assessing the gender relevance the Dutch SMART model has been taken up by the European Commission as a useful model. It asks straightforward questions to assess gender relevance.

- Does the proposal concern one or more of the target groups? Will it affect the daily life of part(s) of the population?
- Are there differences between men and women in this area regarding rights, resources, participation, values and norms relating to gender, are resources equally distributed between women and men?
- If the answer to either of these two questions is positive, gender is relevant to your issue. An assessment should be made of the potential gender impact of the policy proposal.

There are a number of tools and techniques that can be used for this process: analytical (assessment of available data, analysis of the broader social, economic and political context of women's lives); educational (to change attitudes and practices), and consultative (asking women what they think and want). This framework can be helpful in ensuring that gender (or the other grounds) is applied to all activities through a cycle of identifying the desired

outcomes, assessing the gender relevance, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. For instance, it can help to highlight the key questions and issues that need to be addressed in undertaking gender aware evaluation and monitoring.

Equality proofing

Equality proofing as a mechanism to promote equality in the policy making process has been developed from a commitment to equality proofing, the “strengthening of administrative procedures for equality proofing”, under Partnership 2000 and subsequently under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF), and research by the Equality Authority and the Combat Poverty Agency into the application of poverty proofing in relation to inequalities likely to lead to poverty (as discussed above). In Northern Ireland, PAFT and the Statutory Duty on public authorities to promote equality has led to a useful model for equality proofing.

Equality proofing is “an integrated and systematic approach to ensure that discriminated and marginalized groups are provided with the necessary means and resources to participate in society as equal citizens” (NESF, 1996:4). It has grown out of national and international experience of gender impact assessment and poverty proofing. It is an integral part of a mainstreaming approach, the objective of which is that equality objectives run through all aspects of the policy process – planning, implementation, monitoring and review. McCrudden defines equality proofing as structures that involve government and public bodies in activities that “weave policies of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination into the fabric of decision-making across all spheres of government” (1996:3). This implies that equality proofing is synonymous with ‘mainstreaming equality’ (Mullally & Smith, 2000), and that equality proofing is “a mechanism, process or technical method to implement equality objectives built into a variety of social and economic policies” (NESF, 1996). As a result equality proofing concerns the appraisal of policies and services as they concern different target groups.

The overlaps and intersections between poverty proofing issues and equality proofing issues, are based on understandings of the linkages between poverty and inequality, particularly inequalities that may lead to poverty, and the way in which equality underpins the poverty-proofing process (Mullally & Smith, 2000; McCrudden, 1996; Zappone, 2000; Lynch et al 2000). It is no coincidence that a significant number of the target groups in the equality legislation are also the targets groups of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. However, equality proofing differs from poverty proofing in a number of respects, since inequality may not necessarily lead to material poverty, but to a range of other exclusions, for example, concerning their social, political or cultural recognition as a group, or in the case of women, differential roles, power and responsibilities (Nolan & Watson, 1999).

Measures for the development of equality proofing procedures include the setting of objectives and targets, monitoring and data collection, identifying equality impacts before policy is implemented, implementation strategies related to equality targets, monitoring and review, reporting, and participation of target groups (NESF, 1996; Mullally & Smith, 2000). As a longer term goal the development of an integrated proofing process, covering gender, the other eight grounds covered under the equality legislation and poverty, has been proposed by the Partnership 2000 Equality Proofing Working Group, established under Partnership 2000 to strengthen the administrative procedures for equality proofing. The objective to develop a 'learning phase' between 2000 and 2003 is designed to build experience on equality proofing under all of the nine grounds covered in the legislation in a number of policy areas.

It is this learning phase that can be further operationalised under the action plan on the basis that equality proofing can be developed from the various frameworks on gender mainstreaming, and particularly of Gender Impact Assessment, which were discussed earlier.

3.3 A framework for equality proofing the national action plan

A framework for equality proofing the national action plan needs to be simple and easy to manage. The previous discussion showed that there are a number of different tested and emerging methodologies that can be drawn on, that take account of experiences of gender proofing, equality proofing and poverty proofing. The proposed framework suggests that there is a need for a greater degree of integration between equality issues and poverty / social exclusion issues in the development of a coordinated policy proofing framework. A further issue is the need for indicators and monitoring mechanisms to be introduced that reflect or take account of the equality/anti-discrimination axis of social inclusion in the implementation of the national action plans.

Equality proofing the national action plan involves two inter-related processes. First, is the development of a proofing framework that assesses proposed actions for their relevance to and impact on the nine grounds covered in the equality legislation. This needs to be seen in the wider context of the current review of NAPS (which will form the basis for the national action plan) and the work currently being undertaken in the working groups and wider consultations connected with the review. It is not feasible in this policy paper to be making recommendations concerning the detailed content of the NAPS review; rather to highlight that in the context of both the equality legislation and a greater awareness of the linkages and cross-overs between poverty and inequality, a focus on equality issues will inevitably

need to be important both to the revised NAPS and to the national action plan on social inclusion. Once an equality relevance has been established a more detailed equality impact assessment can be carried out at a later stage covering the following: options, recommendations, implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Second, is the development of indicators, which can help to monitor poverty and social exclusion and that can also take account of equalities issues under the nine grounds. Proposals are made for indicators that can integrate equalities issues in the national action plan.

An integrated proofing procedure would make it possible to highlight and thereby respond to multiple forms of discrimination or disadvantage. This would also help in developing new understandings about the connections, causal factors and overlaps between poverty and inequality, and for broadening out proofing procedures at the national level. These developments in NAPS; the new thinking and research on the linkages between poverty, social exclusion and inequality; new understandings about the multi-faceted nature of social exclusion and disadvantage; and the development of new proofing frameworks that include the inequalities faced by the nine grounds under the equality legislation, are helping to mould a new and more integrated approach to policy proofing. Whilst these frameworks are in a developmental phase they do point to new possibilities for more coordinated and integrated approaches to tackling poverty, exclusion and inequality, whether this be in respect of the co-ordination and integration of policy or the co-ordination and integration of proofing processes.

It is important to note that the framework proposed is of an interim or basic nature. It acknowledges that we are at an early stage in developing a capacity for equality proofing. It seeks to identify steps to be taken so that a start can be made to equality proofing while simultaneously building a capacity to do it to greater effect and greater levels of complexity. Future action plans should include a more evolved approach reflecting growing levels of capacity.

The action plan will promote new proofing guidelines that integrate poverty and inequality perspectives and will follow-up on the provisions agreed under the PPF regarding the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy which “will also have a significant impact on equality matters, with particular reference to integrating equality proofing with other proofing systems” (PPF: point 3.12.5)

Under the national action plan a proofing framework will be piloted that integrates equality issues across the nine grounds. This will be based on the SMART model and on the experience of gender mainstreaming.

A total of four actions will be selected for equality proofing in the plan – one under each of the objectives agreed at Nice. An equality impact assessment will be carried out on each of the four actions during the life of the plan.

The equality impact assessment will be conducted for any proposals or policies suggested under these four actions. The Equality Authority will develop supports for this work.

The four actions will be chosen on the basis of applying the following questions to assess the relevance of the issue to equality:

- a) How does this action impact on equality (for one or more of the target groups)?
- b) Are there differences between the target group and the general population in relation to rights, resources, participation, values or norms?
- c) If yes, equality is relevant and an equality impact assessment should be carried out.

The actions chosen will be mainstreamed actions rather than actions targeted on specific groups.

3.4 Indicators and monitoring mechanisms

An important aspect of the action plans is the requirement for indicators and monitoring mechanisms developed at the national level. This also reflects the increasingly important role attached to social monitoring by the EU. There are a potentially wide range of different types of indicators that can be developed: contextual, demographic, input, output and outcome; some can be performance related others not. Indicators are regularly used as a measure for performance; they are increasingly being used by governments to measure progress in a wide range of policy areas, and as a mechanism for achieving pre-established targets.

Indicators assist with the monitoring of the policy outcomes, for example, regarding the quality of services, of achievements, of progress, the management and planning of resources and so on. They can also be helpful in identifying examples of good practice, setting benchmarks, identifying areas of weakness, gaps in provision, strengths and successes, and in reviewing an action, policy or project in a systematic way. Indicators need to be simple, measurable and realistic, and drawn up in such a way that they reflect the needs of target groups and/or participants. The proposed proofing framework outlined above will also have implications for the development of indicators so that they are complementary to and integrated with the proofing framework. A crucial issue is the availability of data; if not indicators could be developed to expose the need for new forms of data.

This discussion reflects on a number of international examples of indicators that have been drawn up in the areas of equality and social inclusion. Appendix 3 lists a number of different examples of social and equality indicators that have been selected to exemplify different approaches to developing indicators, which impact in one form or another on equality. For example, social indicators have been developed to measure the well-being or quality of life and can serve as a benchmark of progress; and there are also examples of equality indicators that measure progress to achieving equality around a range of contexts and themes. These indicators can help in monitoring and planning for future well-being or equality, and for providing benchmarks for monitoring changes.

Although Ireland has not to date been involved in setting indicators in the policy making and implementation process, work to establish criteria for selection and tools for developing indicators for poverty and social exclusion are being drawn up for the Combat Poverty Agency, the results of which will be available in 2001. Indicators will need to reflect the multidimensional nature of social exclusion and the intersection of inequalities with social exclusion; they may also need to reflect both objective and subjective experiences of poverty and social exclusion. From an equality or anti-discrimination perspective this raises

some important questions about the types of indicators that can be usefully and practically used. Two approaches could be applied:

- First, to adopt an 'equality proofing' approach for each aggregate indicator that is drawn up on poverty and social exclusion, and then assess whether there are reasons for looking at it by one or more of the nine grounds. This approach would ensure that the indicators are relevant to the measurement of poverty and exclusion, with a process for allowing issues of discrimination and inequality to come into the frame if this is relevant and thereby enable an assessment of variations between different groups to take place. It would enable issues related to the target groups who face poverty to be raised and for variations between target groups to be mapped. This method could also operate as an effective screening process and thereby help to keep the proofing process simple. Finally, it could promote more disaggregation of data on the basis that aggregate indicators (which in essence are aggregate statistical information) could be broken down further to reflect the nine grounds. For example, this could be modelled on the development of a set of key indicators, based on the European Commission's structural indicators on social cohesion in its 1998 Communication on Structural Indicators. The objective would be to develop secondary indicators from these key indicators, some of which could be country specific (Vandenbroucke, 2001). In January 2001 the EU's Social Protection Committee established a working group on indicators; the objective being to investigate different indicators with a view to agreeing the first series of proposals for indicators by the end of the year at the Laeken summit. The proposals for indicators will be drawn from the analysis that will be made of the national action plans. For this reason the Irish action plan can play an active role in stimulating the development of indicators that can be assessed for their equality impact.
- Second, would be to adopt indicators specifically related to each of the nine grounds of discrimination. Whilst this might be a useful exercise, there are questions about how realistic the indicators could be in practice, in this case if they are relevant or connected in concrete ways to poverty and exclusion. Nevertheless, there may be some very specific indicators that can be drawn up in relation to poverty and exclusion.

It is recommended that the national action plan develop generic indicators on poverty and social exclusion. Allowance should then be made for an equality assessment to be made of each indicator where this is appropriate. This would ensure that the indicators that are drawn up are primarily relevant to poverty and exclusion, with the possibility that variations between the aggregate statistic can be broken down by one or more of the nine grounds of

discrimination. Nevertheless, there is scope for specific indicators covering one or more of the target groups, particularly where the national action plan highlights specific targets, actions or policies in favour of one or more of the grounds under the equality legislation. The key factor in developing indicators is that they be simple and measurable.

The Equality Authority will conduct further research and development into the drawing up of specific equality indicators in order to measure objective and subjective progress towards equality across the nine grounds in a range of policy areas.

Additional work will be carried out on the further identification and disaggregation of data sources across the nine grounds particularly to ensure that generic indicators on poverty and social exclusion can be broken down across the nine grounds. This work will be carried out in association with the Combat Poverty Agency.

Given that at this stage the NAPS review has not been completed, it is recommended that appropriate generic indicators be drawn up under the national action plan and further work be undertaken to assess ways in which they can be broken down and assessed under one or more of the nine grounds. Where specific targets are set for one or more of the grounds covered under the equality legislation specific equality indicators will need to be drawn up.

Generic indicators covering social inclusion and poverty are included in the action plan. The key themes are: income, housing, work, community, health, and learning.

In order to pilot an equality approach to generic indicators, a minimum of four generic indicators will be identified for assessment under one or more of the nine grounds. For this purpose the indicators will be considered using the following questions as a framework:

- a) Is it relevant that this indicator should be broken down to consider the effect on one or more of the grounds of discrimination covered under the equality legislation?
- b) What data source can be drawn upon for this?
- c) What are the data gaps?

Targets

It is likely that the review of NAPS will establish revised targets for poverty reduction, with new targets for particular groups. This will need to be reflected in the action plan. Where generic targets are developed, for example, for poverty reduction overall, these should take the same format as the generic indicators that were proposed above, thereby allowing for the targets to be further disaggregated across the nine grounds. Specific targets covering some or all of the nine grounds will need to be considered further, and appropriate levels set.

The action plan will develop a broad range of new targets for poverty reduction, particularly as this concerns women, older people, young people, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, lone parents and carers. These targets will be linked to indicators.

Data issues

A significant hurdle in implementing a comprehensive and integrated equality/poverty proofing framework is the absence of disaggregated data and/or data to document the impact of inequality (under each of the nine grounds). This data would be necessary to establishing both targets and indicators and to measuring either progress, barriers and/or obstacles to achieving equality, and the impact of specific developmental equality or legislative initiatives. Recommendations about data have been made in the *Partnership 2000 Working Group on Equality Proofing* and in Ursula Barry's (2000) report for the Equality Authority *Building the Picture*.

The absence of data covering all nine grounds means that it has been difficult to assess the impact of the equality legislation on poverty and social inclusion. Likewise, the assessment of the impact of NAPS by target groups is equally problematic. Whilst conventional statistics can be disaggregated and different questions included in key statistical surveys, there are other forms of data collection that could be usefully adopted that, for example, include a focus on qualitative, rather than quantitative data sources. The usefulness of disaggregated data can be seen in the model Swedish project run by Statistics Sweden as a tool for gender mainstreaming. All national statistics are broken down by gender, which are then used as tools for gender impact assessment and the integration of gender into policy making at the national, regional and municipal levels.

Associated with this is the way in which equality auditing can be developed as a tool for reviewing and disseminating progress towards the achievement of social inclusion and/or equality. Gender auditing has been carried out on an annual basis since 1993 by Engender, the Scottish women's campaigning organisation. The gender audit assesses the impact of public policy on women's lives and the audits have led to significant progress in collating and disseminating data, research and statistics on gender. The audit has been used as a tool for mainstreaming equal opportunities and for monitoring progress to removing inequalities (Engender, 2000). Regular auditing could help to assess progress in meeting targets, monitoring developments regarding the indicators and also highlighting data gaps. This could have the effect of providing more detailed reporting of progress and could be considered as a way forward for following up on targets and indicators.

A further issue is the need for new data sources and research to identify the links between poverty and exclusion. Recent research projects in the UK and the Netherlands have attempted to develop measures and indexes of social exclusion using the British Household Panel Survey (Burchardt et al, 1999), data from the UK's General Household Survey (Gordon et al, 2000) and the European Community Household Panel Survey (Dirven et al, 2000). For example, Gordon et al's research in the UK, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with the Office for National Statistics, has sought to identify the ways in which poverty and social exclusion interact. Indicators were used to analyse poverty and social exclusion. Poverty indicators included income poverty, lack of socially perceived necessities and subjective poverty; whereas social exclusion indicators included exclusion from the labour market, service excluded, exclusion from social relations (including isolation, perceived lack of support, disengagement and confinement). The preliminary data analysis shows the proportion of socially excluded people who are poor, the proportion of poor people who are socially excluded, and identifies who are the poor and whether they are the same groups as the socially excluded. They show, for example, that minority ethnic groups, women and particularly lone parents are likely to be poor and socially excluded; whilst older people are likely to be excluded from social relations.

This type of empirical analysis could be developed under the national action plan, and provide a methodology to show the interaction between exclusion from the labour market, services and social relations, and poverty across the nine grounds covered under the equality legislation. Whilst the Living in Ireland survey has been a useful source of data on poverty, income inequality and low pay and their incidence amongst specific groups, there is potential for it to be extended to cover the experience and risk of poverty under other grounds, for example, covering people with disabilities and minority ethnic people. In addition, it would be interesting to further explore through new empirical research the links between poverty and exclusion, particularly as this concerns the nine grounds under the equality legislation.

Under the action plan more systematic methods of data collection across the nine grounds will be developed. This will facilitate better understandings of the causes of poverty and exclusion, and particularly the relationship of inequality to exclusion. It will make active use of the Action Programme on Social Inclusion to encourage cooperation regarding data collection between member states to combat social exclusion.

The action plan will also put into place the provisions agreed under the PPF to disaggregate data through "A co-ordinated strategy including the relevant Government Departments, The Equality Authority and the Central Statistics Office will develop a system for the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data for women and, in relation to health, education and training, for Travellers" (PPF: point 3.12.12).

Building on these commitments the Department of Justice, equality and Law Reform, other relevant government departments, the Equality Authority and the Central Statistics Office will prioritise the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data across the nine grounds.

The Equality Authority, in partnership with ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency will work together to develop data sources across the nine grounds. This may mean highlighting new data sources and new methods of data collection.

Empirical research identifying the links between poverty, inequality and exclusion will be developed using indicators across the nine grounds.

4. Equality policies and service delivery

4.1 Introduction

This section provides some specific examples of and recommendations for equality initiatives that can be highlighted and further developed in the national action plan and that can contribute to poverty reduction and social inclusion. There are specific equality policies and service delivery mechanisms that can be introduced in order that the plan adequately takes account of the linkages between exclusion and the nine grounds of discrimination in the legislation. These could have a direct impact on reducing poverty and exclusion particularly where this relates to employment, rights, goods and services, and participation in relation to the nine grounds

4.2 Equality and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy

Against the background of the national action plan is NAPS, which is a broad based approach to tackling social exclusion, including educational disadvantage, income adequacy, long-term unemployment and urban and rural disadvantage. The strategic aims of the NAPS relate to activities in five key areas: educational disadvantage, with a particular focus on reducing early school leaving; unemployment, with an emphasis on reducing long term unemployment; income adequacy, with an emphasis on providing people with sufficient incomes to move out of poverty; and to reduce the marginalisation of disadvantaged urban areas and the isolation associated with rural poverty. Under NAPS those who are identified at a higher risk of poverty include:

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

The current review and updating of NAPS will result in an outcome based review leading to revised targets, and the possibility of new targets for child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health and housing. Six working groups have been established under each of the themes covered under NAPS and women, young people and older people / emerging causes

of poverty are considered by each working group as cross-cutting issues. An additional working group has been formed to examine income adequacy and the possibility of creating a benchmark for adequacy of social welfare payments. Extending the coverage of NAPS, with the possibility for specific targets for some of the target groups covered under the equality legislation, will also mean that NAPS has the potential to have a more direct equality focus than hitherto.

4.3 Specific equality policies/activities that can be developed under the plan

Objective 1 - Participation in employment and access by all to all the resources, rights, goods and services

In its role under the Employment Equality Act, the Equality Authority has a statutory duty to combat discrimination and promote equality in employment under the nine grounds. The Act covers part-time and full-time workers and includes access to employment, conditions of employment, training, promotion and dismissal in the public and private sectors. The Equality Authority has a similar role under the Equal Status Act. This Act addresses discrimination in the provision of goods, services and facilities, accommodation and education and the operation of registered clubs. The first objective under the European strategy is closely linked to promoting equality in these areas. The Employment Equality and Equal Status legislation (covering the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, race and membership of the Traveller community), and the EQUAL Community Initiative are relevant to this objective on the basis that exclusion from the labour market and from access to goods and services can be a result of discrimination.

Employment and the EQUAL Community Initiative

The action plan on social inclusion will need to complement and be coordinated with the national employment action plan in providing access to quality work and training for the groups covered under the equality legislation. The EQUAL initiative has the potential to widen learning about all forms of discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market. The mainstreaming of this learning into policy and practice will be the key contribution of the EQUAL initiative to a more efficient and therefore more equal labour market. Effective mainstreaming needs a commitment from all the relevant actors to put in place mechanisms to incorporate this learning.

The experiences of the EQUAL initiative in Ireland will directly inform future action plans on social inclusion. The necessary mechanisms will be established for this to happen.

The Operational Programme for the initiative envisages a strategic approach to mainstreaming. Relevant Government Departments, public sector bodies and state agencies will actively engage with this strategy and report on progress in this regard.

The linkages between the social inclusion measures and employment measures in respect of equality across the nine grounds will be further strengthened through complementarity between the national action plan on social inclusion and the national employment action plan.

Mainstreaming equality within the public sector

A more broad based approach would be to integrate and mainstream equality and to develop an equality perspective across all government activity, including departmental business plans, budget plans, consultation procedures, policy, programmes, legislation, staff training, guidance and support, and an improved research and statistical base. This would require government departments to work closely with people with direct experience of inequality and discrimination through consultation mechanisms that assist effective and responsive policy and practice that takes account of diversity and difference.

A key objective is to develop new approaches to service quality, particularly in the provision of front-line services by government departments and public sector bodies to vulnerable and excluded people. The public sector has a lead role to play in ensuring that equality is mainstreamed into customer service and service quality initiatives. It can pioneer new initiatives on equality and it can ensure that equality is realised in access to goods and services, an ambition that is already established in the Equal Status Act.

Equality is an important focus to the Strategic Management Initiative's Quality Customer Service framework. Strategic commitment will be given to the need to improve service quality so that services take account of multiple and diverse needs, inequalities and discriminations, and that front-line staff are sensitive to the needs of the different groups that face discrimination.

The Equality/Diversity Support Pack, drawn up by the Quality Customer Service Working Group with support from the Equality Authority, will be widely disseminated across government departments and will provide the framework for further progress in this area.

Additional support and training measures will be introduced to raise awareness about how equality/diversity can be integrated into Quality Customer Service and the delivery of front-line services.

An accessibility checklist will be implemented to ensure that public services are accessible to all.

Equal Status Reviews and Action Plans as provided for under the Equal Status Act will be piloted and a template will be drawn up by the Equality Authority for this purpose. Under the action plan a commitment will be given for a pilot in one area of public sector provision. This pilot will inform the implementation of Equal Status Reviews and Action Plans across the public sector.

Employment in the public sector

The public sector can take a lead role in providing models of good practice and in becoming an employer of first choice through its promotion of equality and diversity. The development of a gender policy and a diversity policy for employment in the civil service is an important step forward in this respect. There already exists a 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities in the civil and public services and recommendations exist in the Report on the Task Force on the Travelling Community on the employment of Travellers that need to be implemented and monitored. This lead role can also include developing positive action and mechanisms for tracking equality.

The public sector will further develop its policies on equality/diversity and will take a lead role in the area of equality within a partnership model. Equality will be enhanced through the implementation of the gender policy and the diversity policy in public service employment, through the implementation of the 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities, through the introduction of new methods for tracking employment under the nine grounds, and the development of positive action policies in recruitment and promotion for those groups that are under-represented in employment at all levels in the public service.

Embedding equality into the workplace

In its broader developmental role the Employment Equality Act allows for the development of workplace Equality Reviews and Action Plans in public and private organisations, covering the nine grounds under the equality legislation. These will review, monitor and evaluate the achievement of equality in workplaces, and propose actions that will further equality objectives. The focus of an equality review is to “undertake a comprehensive examination of the procedures, practices, policies and perceptions which operate within the workplace”. An important aspect of the equality reviews is that they take a strategic and integrated approach in assessing access, working conditions, management of equality/diversity, and data collection. The Reviews address all nine grounds of discrimination in recognition of the multiple forms of discrimination that exist. Funding has been provided for these reviews under the Positive Action for Women measure in the National Development Plan.

The programme for Prosperity and Fairness contained a commitment to establish a Framework Committee for the development of equal opportunities policies at the level of the enterprise. The social partners have established this committee and it is convened by the Equality Authority. The Committee is developing initiatives that support practical approaches to equality at enterprise level. The work will contribute to a further embedding of equality in the workplace.

In partnership with employers and trade unions the Equality Authority will conduct workplace Equality Review and Action Plans under the nine grounds. Public and private sector organisations will participate. The policy learning from these reviews will be identified and incorporated by the relevant bodies.

The outcomes of the work of the Framework Committee established under PPF to develop equal opportunities at the level of the enterprise will be disseminated across the public and private sectors. The implication of this work for the further development of institutional supports for promoting equality at the level of the enterprise will be identified and developed by the relevant bodies.

Reconciliation of work and family life/child care and care of older people

The National Development Plan makes reference to the need for more workplace family-friendly policies to be developed. A Framework Committee to develop and oversee family friendly initiatives has also been set up under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. This has led to a number of measures including the introduction of family friendly workplace day on 1 March and other activities are planned. However, equality in the workplace is constrained by inflexible employment structures and inadequate social infrastructure to support parents and particularly women's equal participation in the labour market.

An important aspect of equality in the workplace is the provision of child care and care of older people. Whilst work is being undertaken under PPF to provide a strategy for childcare there has been an absence of policy initiatives concerning the care of older people.

The national action plan will build on the commitments to family friendly working practices established under the PPF. Baseline data on family friendly workplaces will be collected. Targets, indicators and benchmarking will be developed on foot of this data.

A working group of the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs, the Equality Authority, and the relevant representative organisations will be set up to report on strategies for the care of older people from this labour market perspective.

Disseminating learning and good practice

The national action plan provides a framework within which learning and good practice identified through research or pilot initiatives can begin to be incorporated into the mainstream. Formal mechanisms are required for this to happen effectively.

New learning and good practice on equality will be widely disseminated and structures will be developed to incorporate learning from the following areas:

- Good practice in employment developed under the EQUAL initiative
- The experiences of gender mainstreaming under the National Development Plan with a view to extending the model across government departments.
- Forthcoming research to be undertaken by the Equality Studies Unit of the Equality Authority which is to be established under the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme.
- The recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Framework Committee, for example, in developing policies for older workers and recruitment across the nine grounds.
- The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Older People and the Advisory Committee on Sexual Orientation established by the Equality Authority.

This learning will be built into future national action plans on social inclusion.

Objective 2: Prevent the risks of exclusion

Preventing technology exclusion

Under this objective a specific equality focus can be given to the development of the knowledge based society. Particular attention needs to be given to the dangers of technology poverty or technology exclusion of those groups who are already excluded from society and work. These groups include older people, women, people with disabilities, minority ethnic people including Travellers.

The development of e-government and IT strategies in government departments will take account of the particular needs of disabled people.

Training programmes will be targeted to meet the needs of those groups who are technology poor, most notably older people, women, people with disabilities, and minority ethnic groups including Travellers.

Objective 3: To help the most vulnerable

Helping the most vulnerable

As stated earlier this objective cuts across the other three objectives in highlighting the needs of the groups that are vulnerable and excluded. In particular integrating those people who experience persistent poverty into work and society is tied into the need for services for those groups covered under the nine grounds in the legislation. Eliminating exclusion amongst children should also stimulate further policies of an equality focus, for example concerning the children of Travellers and other minority ethnic groups.

Under the action plan attention will be given to the measurement of persistent poverty across the nine grounds, particularly concerning people with disabilities, women, minority ethnic groups including Travellers, gay men and lesbians, and older people. This will tie into the recommendations made earlier concerning the need to develop disaggregated data across the nine grounds and indicators that can be monitored across the nine grounds.

Guidance for action to help the most vulnerable will be drawn from the recommendations of the following reports and particular attention will be given to the implementation of these recommendations:

- Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities
- National Plan for Women
- Report on the Task Force on the Travelling Community
- Outcomes of the Global Conference on Racism
- Recommendations of the Equality Authority Advisory Committee on Older People and the Equality Authority Advisory Committee on Sexual Orientation
- Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and areas that refer directly to the nine grounds

Objective 4: Mobilise all relevant bodies

The fourth objective highlights the need for a more broad based approach to tackling social inclusion that mobilises all actors and bodies, through coordination of policies and services, and adapting services to meet users needs. It also requires dialogue and participation between NGOs, providers, business, social partners, governments and citizens.

Mainstreaming equality

A key challenge under the national action plan is the mainstreaming of equality. National and European good practice in the area of gender mainstreaming and emerging integrated equality proofing frameworks can be further developed throughout the life of the plan. One way to achieve equality at more decentralised levels is to develop an equality proofing framework and equality objectives in County and City Development Board Plans. Work is being undertaken by the Equality Authority to develop an equality-proofing template to assist in ensuring that mainstreaming equality takes place from the outset.

Mechanisms for mainstreaming equality will be developed during the life of the plan. The working group established under PPF on equality proofing will further develop and disseminate good practice. This will include the implementation of pilot projects and the development of a single equality and poverty proofing mechanism as proposed under the Partnership 2000 report on equality proofing. One pilot will be developed to equality proof the employment action plan.

An examination will be made of the operation of the Statutory Duty placed on public bodies in Northern Ireland in the area of equality proofing and its political implication in the Republic.

County and City Development Boards will develop mechanisms for equality proofing their plans and in drawing up strategies for subsequently implementing and monitoring these plans. Models of equality impact assessment will be developed as part of the implementation of these plans.

A co-ordinated/integrated approach

The co-ordination and integration of policies to tackle social exclusion is relatively under-developed in Ireland, although good examples of co-ordination of activities do exist. The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion has been formed to co-ordinate policy nationally. Key features of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy has been its capacity to generate cross-departmental structures that recognise the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and exclusion and the development of new Cross-departmental initiatives on homelessness and literacy amongst the unemployed, and its capacity to innovate, for example, in co-ordinating services at local levels through the Integrated Services Project and Family Services Projects.

Despite these co-ordination initiatives at national and local levels, there is still a great deal that needs to be done to ensure that co-ordination develops further. The co-ordination and integration of policies on social inclusion can be costly in terms of human and financial resources, and should not be seen as another administrative burden. For this reason future coordination activities should be adequately resourced, for instance, the proposed social inclusion units at local authority level will need to have access to good local data, resources and expertise if they are to be effective. Furthermore, there needs to be the most senior level support for these initiatives if they are to be followed through and implemented. Research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions shows that co-ordination and integration of policies to tackle social exclusion requires new flexible organisational structures in government and in service delivery. These approaches can allow for more tailoring of services to meet diverse and multiple needs and thereby improve the quality of services to users (Pillinger, 2001).

A focus will be given to equality issues under the coordination instruments such as the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee particularly concerning activities that impact on equality in the employment and social policy fields.

The County and City Development Boards service coordination activities and local pilot projects on coordinated service delivery will be further developed to promote social inclusion. An evaluation of the contribution of these initiatives to equality across the nine grounds will be undertaken.

Participation of target groups

The participation of the target groups will be a key aspect of the national action plan and its implementation. In the spirit of equality proofing guidelines, and national and EU importance attached to the civil dialogue, the voice of discriminated and marginalised groups is critical to ensuring that the needs and interests of the target groups are engaged in a participatory process at all levels and stages of policy development.

The groups representing the nine grounds under the equality legislation will participate in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

Appendix 1: EU inclusion, cohesion, equality and anti-discrimination policies

European policies on social inclusion, equal opportunities, employment and economic and social and economic cohesion have promoted a greater awareness of discrimination and inequality faced by the most marginalised groups. This appendix provides an overview of relevant policy issues concerning social inclusion, equality between women and men, anti-discrimination, and cohesion. It finishes by pointing to the areas where EU equality and inclusion policies intersect.

Community Action Programme on Social Inclusion

In parallel to the action plans on social inclusion a new Community Action Programme (2001-2006) to encourage co-operation between member states to combat social exclusion aims to further promote good practice across the member states in the field of social inclusion through innovatory approaches, networking and exchanges of information and good practice. It is anticipated that the Action Programme will be agreed at the latest at the Stockholm Summit in June. The Programme has three core strands: improving understanding of and data on social exclusion; policy cooperation and exchange of best practice; and supporting and developing the capacity of NGOs and other actors to address social exclusion.

The Programme is intended to complement the national action plans by developing "...a better understanding of mainstreaming the combating of exclusion in Member States and Community policies and measures, and the development of priority actions chosen by Member States in accordance with their particular situation" (European Commission, 2000c:8). One clear objective is to improve the understanding of social exclusion and poverty, whilst a further objective is to develop the capacity of actors to address poverty and social exclusion effectively. A particular emphasis is placed on an integrated and co-ordinated approach, dialogue and involvement with relevant networks and organisations, including those representing poor and excluded people, and to the "variety of situations of social groups, including child poverty, as well as of territories which are exposed to risks of social exclusion". Consistency and complementarity is established between relevant activities related to non-discrimination, equality between women and men, and immigration, and in a range of policy areas, including employment, structural funds (and particularly EQUAL), social protection, and education, training and youth policy.

Equal opportunities between women and men

Equal opportunities between women and men and anti-discrimination measures have legal bases within the Treaty and have thereby become important to EU policy. There are concerns that the most recent package of directives covering equal opportunities and anti-discrimination may mark the end of an important stage of regulation in EU policy making history in favour of more peer review, exchange of good practice, and voluntary agreements. Nevertheless, the broader objectives of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination are closely connected to those of social inclusion and it is not surprising that those groups who are the subject of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination measures are also those that are highlighted as facing the greatest poverty and exclusion across the EU.

Women's legal rights, and the commitment to equal opportunities between women and men were strengthened under Article 2 of the Amsterdam Treaty, giving the EU new roles, tasks and legislative powers. Equal treatment between women and men now represents a fundamental right enshrined in national and EU law and has led to new legislative enactments in the Member States on equal pay, equal treatment, parental leave and maternity rights, sexual harassment at work and the protection of part-time and fixed-term contract work. In addition, action programmes have focused on the core issues of the representation of women in decision-making, the reconciliation of work and family life, and gender mainstreaming.

In addition policy has emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming all areas of EU activity, the centrality of equal opportunities in the European Employment Strategy, the promotion of women's participation in the labour market, and improving employment rates. These are tied up with reducing the costs of social protection, protecting women against the adverse effects of flexible labour markets, providing the opportunities for a work/family balance and developing services (vocational training, leave schemes, childcare, elder care). Whilst they are seen to be vital for removing obstacles and discrimination, they are viewed as economically beneficial to competition and reduced welfare dependency.

The importance now attached to gender mainstreaming in EU policy means that gender equality has to be incorporated into all policies, at all levels and at all stages of the policy-making process through systematic incorporation of the equal opportunities dimension into all Community activities (European Commission, 1998). Good progress can be seen from the incorporation of gender into the European Employment Strategy under the 1999 employment guidelines and the new programme of European Structural Funds (2000–2006). Although there has been some progress made towards gender mainstreaming, the lack of awareness amongst policy makers has led the European Commission (1998) to recommend

that Member States enhance awareness through training in order to introduce gender impact assessments and gender proofing of all legislative and policy-making activities. A number of Member States, including Ireland, have introduced training for policy makers and social partners in this respect, particularly based on the models of good practice in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden. The impact of this is currently being felt under the new round of structural fund programmes (2000–2006), which require gender impact assessments to be made for all operational programmes.

The European Commission's new package of equality measures include a recognition that gender equality runs through the whole of the new *Social Policy Agenda*, with additional measures concerning "women's access to decision making and the reinforcement of equality related rights and those reconciling work and family life". Measures include:

- An Action Programme on Gender Equality (2001–2005); and
- A proposal for a new directive to amend Directive 76/207/EEC on the principle of equal treatment for men and women in employment, vocational training/promotion and working conditions by giving equal treatment a stronger legal base.

Anti-discrimination measures

The agreement for a new set of anti-discrimination measures and the legal base given to this in the Treaty is a further step forward for the EU. In particular, evidence of growing racism across Europe, and a greater awareness of the need for governments and employers to seriously tackle discrimination in employment and services, and to take account of diversity, has led to a package of measures being adopted by the EU.

Proposals for a package of measures to tackle anti-discrimination under Article 13 of the Treaty were launched by the European Commission in November 1999. The package includes a communication directed to the social partners and national governments, the new EQUAL programme, a new action programme to combat discrimination, and two new directives:

- The EQUAL programme aims to improve understanding about discrimination issues through exchanges of good practice, support to combat discrimination and the promotion of awareness on discrimination issues. A strong emphasis is placed on dissemination of information and good practice at a national and transnational level. The new *Social Policy Agenda* specifically refers to the need to evaluate the impact of EQUAL on the promotion of social inclusion.

EQUAL also complements the European Employment Strategy, and in turn is expected to develop specific measures around the four pillars of employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities between women and men. EQUAL aims to find new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market through innovatory projects undertaken by geographical or sectoral partnerships and with mechanisms for mainstreaming the learning and outcomes of the innovation across the economy. It therefore has the possibility of testing and mainstreaming innovative approaches for integrating people excluded from the labour market or those whose labour market access has been restricted to precarious employment. The emphasis placed on mainstreaming good practice and disseminating results widely, and the potential impact on policy, for example, under the European employment strategy and the European structural funds is more significant than under previous programmes.

- The Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006) aims to support member states in developing legislation and policies for combating discrimination. It covers a number of grounds of discrimination (racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation), but does not include gender. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity to address or prevent discrimination through exchanges of information and good practice, and through awareness raising.
- Anti-discrimination measures are further developed under the new *Social Policy Agenda* (discussed above) and through the inclusion of provisions for the respect for fundamental social rights 'as key components of an equitable society and of respect of human dignity' (European Commission, 2000b:22). This has led to the creation of a Charter of Fundamental Rights, agreed at the November 2000 Nice Summit, alongside the adoption of new directives on anti-discrimination in employment, and equal treatment irrespective of racial and ethnic origin. The first directive sets out a general framework for equal treatment in employment in all of the areas covered by Article 13, with the exception of gender. Although the draft acknowledges that there is a need to apply a gender mainstreaming approach in recognising that gender cuts across other forms of discrimination (race/ethnic origin, disability, age, religion/belief, sexual orientation), no specific provisions concerning the double/multiple discriminations which women face are included. The second directive aims to implement equal treatment between people of different racial or ethnic origins. It has a wider scope than the directive for a general framework in that it includes access to social protection, social security, education, goods and services and cultural activities. Gender is also excluded from this directive.

European policies on social inclusion, equal opportunities, employment and economic and social cohesion have promoted a greater awareness of discrimination and inequality faced by the most marginalised groups. A number of policy questions are raised for the development of EU economic policy that also have implications for a wider discussion of Irish policy, of liberalisation and open markets and how this can be reconciled with adequate social protection, improved working conditions, equal opportunities and strong welfare systems that meet the needs of the most marginalised groups. At the same time there is a need to ensure that the main drivers of a EU economy of competition, globalisation and technology are adequately reconciled with social cohesion and inclusion in the new open method of coordination.

Economic and Social Cohesion

As the main instrument for promoting economic and social cohesion across the EU, the European structural funds have been important in stimulating new activity on social inclusion and for funding the social and economic integration of marginalised young people, minority ethnic groups, women and disabled people. Of importance is the role given to the principle of social inclusion in structural operations and the increased emphasis placed on horizontal measures like gender mainstreaming. The European Social Fund in particular has targeted the social inclusion of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people, and has led to the introduction of coordinated packages of measures to integrate into the labour market people with physical and mental disabilities, young people, immigrants, refugees and other marginalised groups. The ESF programme for 2000–2006 links active labour market policies, social inclusion and equal opportunities, mobility and integration into the labour market with the main pillars of the European Employment Strategy. The EQUAL community initiative is a new departure in this respect and links the goal of anti-discrimination for specific target groups (under Article 13) to the goals of inclusion and non-discrimination in employment and vocational training.

Cross-cutting issues

At a policy formulation and agreement level policy documents regularly refer to the cross-overs between different areas of policy and particularly to certain horizontal principles that run through the policy making process, most notably social inclusion and gender equality. Just as exclusion can be multifaceted, there is now a broader recognition in the EU of the existence of multiple forms of discrimination. This is particularly the case concerning women. As a result the European Commission suggests that “Gender is a crucial cross-cutting issue which impacts to an important extent on the effects as well as on the causes of poverty and exclusion” (European Commission 2000c:7).

There are similar connections being established in EU policy discourses between discrimination in the labour market and social exclusion. This is particularly important to the equality agenda since the EU sees the solution to social exclusion to be principally related to exclusion from work. This has been the case where there has been a recognition of the need to develop regulatory approaches to outlawing discrimination, formerly under Article 119 of the Treaty and the subsequent development of a body of women’s legal rights, and more latterly under Article 13 of the Treaty. Furthermore, the added value of Community action in the area of anti-discrimination is expressed as a requirement that there is “coherence and complementarity of actions... in particular in the fields of education and training and equal opportunities between women and men under the European Social Fund and those to promote social inclusion” (European Commission, 2000b:24); and consistency with and mechanisms for co-ordination with other areas of policy including research employment, equality between women and men, social inclusion, culture, education, training and youth policy (European Commission, 2000b). There is an equally important connection made between social inclusion and the need for complementarity and co-ordination with equality objectives (European Commission, 2000c).

The intersection between equality/anti-discrimination policies and social inclusion policies can be summarised as follows:

- The conclusions of the Nice Presidency refer to the *European strategy against social exclusion and all forms of discrimination*, which makes specific reference to measures to be developed under Article 137 (social inclusion) and that also take due account of Article 13 (anti-discrimination).
- The agreement for the new *Social Policy Agenda* has two strategic social policy guidelines concerned with equality, the first of which contains reference to both exclusion and discrimination. First, “fighting poverty and all forms of exclusion and discrimination in order to promote social integration”, and second, “promoting gender equality”.
- The open method of coordination and the implications this has for the coordination of equalities and social inclusion policies with a wide range of policy areas.
- The recognition of the existence of multiple forms of discrimination, particularly in the area of gender, and which can impact on poverty and exclusion.
- The increasing reference to horizontal principles of a) gender and b) social inclusion. Gender mainstreaming has had the biggest effect in structural fund operations and in the European Employment Strategy.
- The focus on social inclusion and the integration of excluded groups into the labour market under the European Employment Strategy and the European structural funds. Particular reference is made to disabled people, women, older people, migrants and refugees in both. Employment is seen to be a tool for inclusion. Likewise, significant importance is attached to equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming in both the annual employment guidelines and structural fund operations.
- The linkages between equality and exclusion are evident in the EQUAL community initiative and particularly in the reference for the need to identify the impact of EQUAL on social inclusion.

- The action programme on anti-discrimination (2001-2006) refers to the “coherence and complementarity” with other areas of EU policy, for example, education and training, equal opportunities between women and men, and social inclusion; and “consistency” and “mechanisms for coordination” with areas such as research, employment, equality between women and men, social inclusion, culture, education, training and youth policies.
- The action programme on social inclusion (2001-2006) similarly refers to the need for “coherence and complementarity” and “mechanisms for coordination” with other policy areas, including immigration, employment, structural funds (particularly EQUAL), equality between women and men, and anti-discrimination measures.

Appendix 2: Objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion

[The following is the text of the objectives agreed at Nice]

Objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion

– Introductory note –

1. Political guidelines laid down by the European Council

At the European Councils in Lisbon and in Feira, the Member States of the European Union took a major initiative by making the fight against poverty and social exclusion one of the central elements in the modernisation of the European social model. The Heads of State and Government agreed on the need to take steps to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by setting suitable objectives to be agreed by the Council by the end of the year. They also agreed that policies for combating social exclusion should be based on an open method of co-ordination combining national action plans and a programme presented by the Commission to encourage cooperation in this field.

The European Councils in Lisbon and in Feira made the promotion of social cohesion an essential element in the global strategy of the Union to achieve its strategic objective for the next decade of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. It also set a goal for full employment in Europe in an emerging new society which is more adapted to the personal choices of women and men.

This initiative follows from the inclusion, through the Amsterdam Treaty, of the fight against exclusion in the provisions relating to the Union's social policy (Articles 136 and 137 of the Treaty).

2. Multi-dimensional approach

Poverty and social exclusion take complex and multi-dimensional forms which require the mobilisation of a wide range of policies under that overall strategy. Alongside employment policy, social protection has a pre-eminent role to play, while the importance of other factors such as housing, education, health, information and communications, mobility, security and justice, leisure and culture should also be acknowledged.

It is necessary, therefore, to mainstream the objective of fighting poverty and social exclusion into relevant strands of policy, at both national and community level.

Employment is the best safeguard against social exclusion. In order to promote quality employment it is necessary to develop employability, in particular through policies to promote the acquisition of skills and life-long learning. The implementation of the objectives to which the European Union has committed itself within the European Employment Strategy will, therefore, make a vital contribution to the fight against exclusion. Economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing. It is a precondition for better economic performance that we create a society with greater social cohesion and less exclusion.

Social protection systems also play a key role. In this context, the national social assistance and minimum income schemes are important instruments in social protection policy. It is vital, in the context of an active welfare state, to create modern systems of social protection which promote access to employment. Retirement pensions and access to health care also play an important role in the fight against social exclusion.

The new knowledge-based society offers great possibilities for reducing social exclusion, both by creating the economic conditions for greater prosperity and by opening up new ways of participating in society. The emergence of new information and communication technologies constitutes an exceptional opportunity, provided that the risk of creating an ever-widening gap between those who have access to the new knowledge and those who do not is avoided. The Lisbon Council directed that exclusion from the information society should be prevented and that it was necessary to pay special attention to the needs of people with disabilities. The implementation of the Commission's action plan "E-Europe 2002 – an Information Society for all", approved by the Feira European Council, should contribute to the achievement of this objective.



In line with the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, setting appropriate objectives should also involve promoting a better understanding of social exclusion; mainstreaming the promotion of inclusion in Member States' employment, education and training, health and housing policies; and developing priority actions in favour of specific target groups (for example, minorities, children, the elderly and disabled), with Member States choosing amongst those actions according to their particular situations.

3. Arrangements for implementation

Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty respectively give to the Community the task of promoting equality between men and women and of ensuring that all its activities aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women. It is therefore necessary to ensure that a concern for gender equality is mainstreamed in all action to be taken to achieve the stated objectives, in particular by assessing the implications for both men and women at the different stages of the planning of, decision-making on, and monitoring of that action.

The implementation of this approach must take account of the principle of subsidiarity. Combating social exclusion is first and foremost the responsibility of Member States and their national, regional and local authorities, in cooperation with the full range of the bodies concerned, in particular the social partners and NGOs. Furthermore, the nature of the response depends particularly on the nature of national social protection systems and social policies.

Applying the open method of coordination to the fight against social exclusion, in line with the principles defined in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, will allow for both coherence and diversity of action at national level. Policies in pursuit of the objective of fighting social exclusion and poverty can vary in nature, and in their implications for Member States and their target groups. Differences in approach between Member States in dealing with these problems will result in solutions and priorities reflecting their individual circumstances.

The open method of coordination will combine national action plans with a Community support programme. In this context, it would be desirable for the Member States to present their national action plans by June 2001. The Social Protection Committee will play a key role in following up this initiative. On employment matters, it will work closely with the Employment Committee.

4. Implementation of the Lisbon European Council's conclusions

The Council, having regard to the guidelines defined by the Lisbon and Feira European Councils, proposes to the Nice European Council:

- the following objectives, detailed in the annex hereto:
 - to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to the resources, rights, goods and services;
 - to prevent the risks of exclusion;
 - to help the most vulnerable;
 - to mobilise all relevant bodies;

- the following arrangements to pursue these objectives:
The Member States,
will pursue the objectives of fighting social exclusion and poverty;
underline the importance of mainstreaming equality between men and women in all actions aimed at achieving those objectives;
are invited to develop their priorities within the framework of those overall objectives and to present a national action plan by June 2001 covering a period of two years;

in order to make it possible to monitor the policies set out here, are also invited to develop, at national level, indicators and monitoring mechanisms capable of measuring progress in regard to each of the objectives elaborated in their national action plans.

The Commission,

with a view to a joint report, is invited to present, on the basis of the national action plans to be prepared by the Member States, a summary report identifying good practice and innovative approaches of common interest to the Member States.

The Member States and the Commission

are invited to undertake cooperation at European level in order to bring about a better understanding of the problem of exclusion, to promote exchanges of good practice and to seek to develop common approaches and compatibility in regard to indicators; the Action Programme proposed by the Commission will support that co-operation.

Annex to the Annex

Objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion

- I. To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services
 - I.1. Facilitating participation in employment
In the context of the European employment strategy, and the implementation of the guidelines in particular:
 - (a) To promote access to stable and quality employment for all women and men who are capable of working, in particular:
 - by putting in place, for those in the most vulnerable groups in society, pathways towards employment and by mobilising training policies to that end;
 - by developing policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, including the issue of child- and dependent care;
 - by using the opportunities for integration and employment provided by the social economy.
 - (b) To prevent the exclusion of people from the world of work by improving employability, through human resource management, organisation of work and life-long learning.
 - I.2. Facilitating access to resources, rights, goods and services for all
 - (a) To organise social protection systems in such a way that they help, in particular, to:
 - guarantee that everyone has the resources necessary to live in accordance with human dignity;
 - overcome obstacles to employment by ensuring that the take-up of employment results in increased income and by promoting employability.
 - (b) To implement policies which aim to provide access for all to decent and sanitary housing, as well as the basic services necessary to live normally having regard to local circumstances (electricity, water, heating etc.).
 - (c) To put in place policies which aim to provide access for all to healthcare appropriate to their situation, including situations of dependency.
 - (d) To develop, for the benefit of people at risk of exclusion, services and accompanying measures which will allow them effective access to education, justice and other public and private services, such as culture, sport and leisure.

2. To prevent the risks of exclusion
 - (a) To exploit fully the potential of the knowledge-based society and of new information and communication technologies and ensure that no-one is excluded, taking particular account of the needs of people with disabilities.
 - (b) To put in place policies which seek to prevent life crises which can lead to situations of social exclusion, such as indebtedness, exclusion from school and becoming homeless.
 - (c) To implement action to preserve family solidarity in all its forms.

3. To help the most vulnerable
 - (a) To promote the social integration of women and men at risk of facing persistent poverty, for example because they have a disability or belong to a group experiencing particular integration problems.
 - (b) To move towards the elimination of social exclusion among children and give them every opportunity for social integration.
 - (c) To develop comprehensive actions in favour of areas marked by exclusion.

These objectives may be pursued by incorporating them in all the other objectives and/or through specific policies or actions.

4. To mobilise all relevant bodies
 - (a) To promote, according to national practice, the participation and self-expression of people suffering exclusion, in particular in regard to their situation and the policies and measures affecting them.
 - (b) To mainstream the fight against exclusion into overall policy, in particular:
 - by mobilising the public authorities at national, regional and local level, according to their respective areas of competence;
 - by developing appropriate coordination procedures and structures;
 - by adapting administrative and social services to the needs of people suffering exclusion and ensuring that front-line staff are sensitive to these needs.

- (c) To promote dialogue and partnership between all relevant bodies, public and private, for example:
- by involving the social partners, NGOs and social service providers, according to their respective areas of competence, in the fight against the various forms of exclusion;
 - by encouraging the social responsibility and active engagement of all citizens in the fight against social exclusion;
 - by fostering the social responsibility of business.

Appendix 3: Examples of Indicators

Example 1: Equality indicators in the UK National Health Service

The NHS in the UK is currently in the process of developing national equality indicators as part of their Human Resources performance management framework. This is part of a broader strategy to place the values of equality, fair treatment and social inclusion at the heart of government plans to modernise the health service in relation to a workforce for equality and diversity

The national framework will provide a framework for local equality indicators and equality statements. The aim is that NHS employers will use the equality indicators to improve management. Ten equality indicators are developed on the basis that they will be analysed according to the following workforce profile: gender, disability, ethnic origin, fulltime/part-time, occupation, length of service with the employer and age. The equality indicators include profile by ethnicity, disability, gender, age; disability; recruitment; training and development plans; discipline and grievance procedures; harassment; sickness absence; violence; staff turnover; and flexible working. Each of the indicators will draw on data to assess the impact on equality. The objective is to provide indicators of progress against planned actions, which can then be incorporated into equality statements

Source: NHS Executive (2000) *The Vital Connection: An Equalities Framework for the NHS*

Example 2: Economic Gender Equality Indicators in Canada

A two year project in Canada by the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women led to the drawing up of an innovative set of indicators, which were designed to provide an overall picture of women's economic status in Canada. The indicators were drawn up for use by governments and other actors in the policy making process in undertaking gender-based analysis. The indicators focus on income, work and learning; they include aspects of women's economic realities that are often overlooked; value the differences and similarities between women and men; and link economic and social experiences. The objective is that the indicators will stimulate public policy discussions, monitor progress to gender equality, and lead to new activities to achieve gender equality.

Source: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women (1997) *Economic Gender Indicators*

Example 3:

Voluntary Quality of Life and Cross-cutting Indicators: Audit Commission

The Audit Commission has developed a set of 69 voluntary quality of life and cross-cutting indicators for English Local Authorities. They are grouped around three themes – economic, social and environmental and under 14 broad goals. One of these goals is tackling poverty and social exclusion, which includes three indicators: Deprivation level, households on benefit, and children living in households with low incomes. It is proposed that additional indicators be included in the future, for example, on ethnic minority unemployment, and elderly people living in fuel poverty.

This follows on from the development of statutory performance indicators in UK local authorities. The development of indicators on the quality of life and cross-cutting indicators was the result of a wide-ranging consultation with voluntary organisations and Local Authorities in the context of requirements placed on Local Authorities to prepare a local community strategy. Of interest to the approach taken by the Audit Commission and broadly supported in the consultation process is that the indicators refer to the impact on equalities issues, particularly where data may be broken down into different categories of equality, for example, gender or ethnicity. Even where data is not available it was considered important to flag up the equalities dimension on the basis that additional equalities data and information could be available in the future.

Source: Audit Commission (2000) *Voluntary Quality of Life and Cross-cutting indicators for Local Authorities: Consultation*, October; Audit Commission (2001) *Voluntary Quality of Life and Cross-cutting Indicators for Local Authorities, Feedback*, February

Example 4: Indicators for monitoring poverty and exclusion in the UK

The UK based New Policy Institute has drawn up fifty indicators to monitor poverty and exclusion in order to map trends. The indicators are grouped under six headings: income, children, young adults, adults aged 25 to retirement, older people, communities. These indicators are assessed for their trends over the medium term and over the latest year, providing a useful benchmark for identifying where improvements have been made or where the situation has been worsening. An important feature of the success of the indicators to measure poverty and social inclusion is that they draw on data from a large number of sources that has been facilitated by the cooperation of civil servants across government. In terms of target groups the indicators refer to young people, older people and disabled people and are principally income based.

Source: Rahman R, Palmer G, Kenway P and Howarth C (2000) *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2000*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; and Howarth C, Kenway P, Palmer G and Street C (1998) *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion: Labour's inheritance*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Example 5: European System of Social Indicators

A research project at the Centre for Survey Research and Methodology (ZUMA) in Germany has developed a European System of Social Indicators to measure and monitor the welfare of European citizens using a range of different concepts of what constitutes welfare, and with an ultimate goal of monitoring social change. Emphasis is placed on the objective living conditions and subjective well-being of citizens.

There are two domains: life domains and goal domains, and subjective and objective indicators are included. In the area of life domains there are fourteen groups of indicators (or modules) with measurement dimensions that concern European policy issues and additional concerns regarding the quality of life: population; household and family; housing; transport; leisure, media and culture; social and political participation and integration; education and training; labour market and working conditions; income, standards of living and consumption patterns; health; environment, social security; public safety and crime; and total life situation. In the area of goal domains there are six groups of indicators concerning improvement in objective living conditions; enhancement of subjective well-being; reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion, and promotion of equal opportunities; strengthening social connections and ties; preservation of human capital; preservation of natural capital. Each indicator is further broken down, for example, the indicator concerning the reduction of disparities and inequalities includes measurement of gender inequalities in employment and inequalities of opportunity for disabled people in employment, and social exclusion: long-term unemployment.

Source: Noll, H-H (2000) *The European System of Social Indicators: An Instrument for Social Monitoring and Reporting*, Centre for Survey Research and Methodology (ZUMA), Mannheim, Germany

Appendix 4: Equality proofing framework for the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion

Objective	Aspect under the objective selected for equality proofing	Proposed action	How does this action impact on equality?	Are there differences between the target group(s) and the general population?	Outcome in terms of an equality action
1. Participation in employment and access by all to all the resources, rights, goods and services					
2. Prevent the risks of exclusion					
3. Help the most vulnerable					
4. Mobilise all relevant bodies					

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