

SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

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Social Inclusion Policy

1.0 Introduction

Social inclusion is one of the clearly defined objectives of the European Union whereby it is an intrinsic goal that members of the Union should not be prevented from benefiting from and contributing to economic and social progress. The European Social Inclusion Strategy was propelled by the Lisbon European Council ('Summit') in 2000, as part of the Lisbon Agenda, a ten-year strategy to modernise and reform the EU social and economic model. Since 2001 the strategic approach for social inclusion has been allied with the Open Method of Co-ordination of the European Union, to assist Member States in achieving the goal set down by the Lisbon European Council to make a decisive impact on poverty by 2010. This method essentially provides for a peer review process and evaluation of the plans at EU level, and has facilitated exchanges of knowledge, experience and good practice with other Member States, under the Social Exclusion Community Action Programme.

The main objectives of the Strategy were four fold:

1. To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services. This relates to access to quality employment and the need for adequate social protection "to live life with dignity" and to meet basic needs such as income, housing, healthcare and education.
2. To prevent the risks of exclusion. This relates to the prevention of exclusion of disabled people, the promotion of family solidarity and the mitigation of life crises such as in indebtedness.
3. To help the most vulnerable. This refers to the prevention of exclusion of those who are most at risk of consistent poverty, action on behalf of the child and the promotion of integration.
4. To mobilise all relevant bodies. This relates mainly to the better co-ordination of national and local government in the delivery of services

aimed at tackling social exclusion and also to participation of non-governmental organisations and social partners.

Member States have since developed a series of National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under the new streamlined EU approach, Member States' strategies for social protection and social inclusion (NSSPI) now form part of a single integrated process also covering the area of pensions and health and long-term care. Ireland's first integrated report on these three policy areas, covering the period 2006 to 2008, was submitted to the EU in September 2006 (NAPinclusion, 2007).

National Action Plans for social inclusion (NAPs/inclusion for short) play a key role in the EU process, to the extent that they translate the common objectives into national policies, while taking into account their individual national circumstances and the particular nature of national social protection systems and social policies. The 15 'older' EU member states each adopted two-year National Action Plans (NAPs Inclusion) in 2001 and 2003. The 10 newer Member States, which joined the EU in May 2004, adopted two-year plans in 2004. To prepare for this, they had agreed 'Joint Inclusion Memoranda' (JIMs) with the European Commission in late 2003. These outlined the challenges and priorities for the fight against poverty and were important in drawing up the European Social Fund (ESF) programmes in those countries.

Since 2000 when EU leaders established the Social Inclusion Process to make an impact on eradicating poverty by 2010, the European Union has provided a platform for national policy development as well as for policy synergising and coordination between Member States. Indeed, in the European context the ultimate aim of community action is on the social protection of vulnerable groups and for the development of "conditions of economic, social and cultural participation that will promote equal opportunities and strengthen solidarity and social cohesion in society thereby making it possible for vulnerable people to raise their standard of living and quality of life in the society in which they live" (CWC, 2000, p.

6, quoting from a conference background paper by the European Commission (1999) *Towards a Europe for All*).

Actions in the field of Social Inclusion are supported by the PROGRESS Programme (2007-2013), the EU's employment and social solidarity programme. The goal of PROGRESS is to ensure that EU social policy remains on course to face the key policy challenges and to act as a catalyst of modernisation in five key areas: Employment, Social Inclusion and Protection, Working Conditions, Non-discrimination and Gender Equality.

Table 1.0 Social Inclusion Regime of the European Union

The social inclusion regime of the European Union: the five key elements of the open method of coordination (Source Stubbs and Zrinšèak, 2005)
1. <i>Common Objectives</i> on poverty and social exclusion which were agreed at the Nice Summit in December 2000 (Council of the EU, 2000) and were revised at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in December 2002 (Council of the EU, 2002). The Objectives set out an agenda in which member states commit themselves to "take steps to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" by 2010.
2. <i>National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion</i> , often known as National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl). There are the main vehicles through which member states indicate their response to the Common Objectives. The NAPs/incl follow a common outline and cover a two-year period. The 15 member states submitted their first NAPs/incl in June 2001 and their second in July 2003. The ten new member states submitted their first NAPs/incl in July 2004 covering the period to mid-2006.
3. <i>Joint Memoranda on social inclusion</i> , also known as Joint Inclusion Memoranda (JIMs). These were a prelude to the NAPs/Incl process, outlining the situation and policy priorities regarding poverty and social exclusion in the accession countries prior to their membership. Ten such JIMs were signed by the Commission and the national authorities on 18 December 2003. The JIM process remains in place for all accession countries, so that the JIMs for Bulgaria and Romania will be signed later in 2004.
4. <i>Joint Reports on social inclusion</i> , which represent the response of various EU bodies to the NAPs/Incl. The first such Report was submitted to the Laeken European Council in December 2001 and the second, more detailed, was adopted in March 2004iv. In addition the Commission staff produced in June 2004 a working paper on Social Inclusion in the New Member States, which is a consolidated synthesis response to the 10 JIMs but, also, takes the opportunity to highlight key issues in the further development of EU social inclusion policy as a whole.

5. *EU Indicators on social inclusion* The construction of indicators was agreed to encompass three levels: (1) 10 primary indicators on financial poverty and material deprivation, employment, health, and education; (2) secondary indicators, supporting the lead indicators and supplying greater detail or describing other dimensions of the problem of poverty and social inclusion and (3) indicators which member states themselves decide to include in their NAPs/Incl to help interpret level 1 and 2 indicators and/or highlight specificities in particular areas.

2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The European Commission has designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The € 26 million campaign aims to reaffirm the EU's commitment to making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010. 79 million people in the EU – or 16% of the population – currently live at risk of poverty (Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, 2009).

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/joint_reports_en.htm#2009

The European Year 2010 intends to raise public awareness of the way poverty continues to blight the daily lives of so many Europeans.

The European Year has four specific objectives:

1. Recognition of the right of people in poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to play a full part in society;
2. An increase in the public ownership of social inclusion policies, emphasising everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation;
3. A more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
4. Commitment of all actors, because real progress requires a long-term effort that involves all levels of governance.

The European Year shall focus on 5 themes:

1. Child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty
2. An inclusive labour market
3. Lack of access to education and training
4. Gender dimension of poverty
5. Access to basic services

The 2010 European Year will coincide with the conclusion of the EU's ten-year strategy for growth and jobs (Lisbon strategy). The actions

undertaken during this European Year shall reaffirm the initial political commitment of the EU at the start of the Lisbon strategy, in 2000, to making “a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty” by 2010.

1.1. Social Exclusion, Poverty and Inclusion

The term ‘social exclusion’ originated in France in the early 70s as a response to the problem of sustaining social integration and solidarity (Barry, 1998). The term was first used at European level in 1989 by the European Commission linking social exclusion with the inadequate realisation of social rights. In response, the *European Observatory on National Policies for Combating Social Exclusion* was established in 1990 with the aim of examining the “social rights of citizenship to a basic standard of living and to participation in major social and economic opportunities in society” (Cousins, 1999). Under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, the development of social policy in the United Kingdom was heavily influenced by the “underclass” debate and Thatcher’s ambition to recover Victorian ‘virtues’ and Victorian ‘values’. Victorians, she stated, distinguished between the deserving and undeserving poor “both groups should be given help: but it must be help of very different kinds if public spending is not just going to reinforce the dependency culture. The purpose of help must not be to allow people to merely live a half life, but rather to restore their self discipline and self esteem” (Evans, 1997).

The social exclusion term was eventually imported from France by the New Labour government in the 1990s (Barry, 1998). However, for New Labour the socially excluded were regarded as the poor but not only the poor. They stated that the socially excluded often lack the necessary skills and capabilities to get and keep a job and are often cut off from the world of work and education. This definition, however narrow, resulted in the establishment of the Government’s Social Inclusion Unit in 1997 (Driver and Martell, 2006). In reality, those groups vulnerable to experiencing social exclusion vary depending on a range of inter-related factors such as education, demographic characteristics, social prejudices,

corporate practices and public policies. Social exclusion can also manifest itself in numerous ways: failure at school, job insecurity, social isolation, poor housing and excessively frequent illnesses, to mention but a few examples.

The Irish Government recognised that poverty and exclusion are multi-faceted and can affect all age groups thereby calling for a multi-policy response. This is echoed in the definition of poverty and social exclusion which the Government first adopted in 1997:

"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society" (NAPS, 1997).

Ireland introduced a strategic approach to combating poverty in 1997 with the publication of the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). This plan was the first national strategic approach to reducing poverty which acknowledged that the elimination of poverty would prove an onerous task, one that would require an exhaustive analysis of the problems and an integrated targeted approach to tackling them. Five key areas were identified requiring specific attention: unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, and disadvantaged rural and urban areas.

In 2001 NAPS was reviewed in consultation with the social partners and this process led to the launch of the revised NAPS: *Building an Inclusive Society*, in February, 2002. In addition to the previous five themes, new themes were adopted in the areas of health and housing and accommodation, both closely associated with poverty. Since older people, children, women and people with disabilities often experience particular forms of poverty and social exclusion, special attention was paid to them across all thematic areas. The Strategy also recognised new and emerging groups experiencing poverty including migrants and ethnic minorities.

At European level, poverty and social exclusion were recognised as significant impediments to the growth of the EU and future social

cohesion. Member states agreed to develop National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl), which agreed common objectives on combating poverty and social exclusion. Local authorities are named specifically as one of the key players in reaching those objectives since it is recognised that as the level of government closest to the people they have particular responsibilities and expertise in mobilising key stakeholders and delivering national strategies on the ground.

Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness Government of Ireland describes 'Social Exclusion' as "***cumulative marginalisation from production (unemployment), from consumption (income poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision making and from an adequate quality of life***" (Department of the Taoiseach, 1998). The Joint Report on Social Inclusion published in 2004 similarly defines social exclusion as a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

In relation to a definition of poverty the report stated that "***people are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantage through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation***".

Consequently, in order to address issues of poverty and social exclusion the Joint Report defined 'Social Inclusion' as "***a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the***

opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights" (Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2004).

Other definitions of Social Inclusion have been proposed such as that put forward by the UK based Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion in 2002 which defines it as ***"...the process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. To achieve inclusion, income and employment are necessary but not sufficient. An inclusive society is also characterised by a striving for reduced inequality, a balance between individuals' rights and duties and increased social cohesion"*** (www.cesi.org.uk).

Similarly, the Combat Poverty Agency in Ireland defines 'Social Inclusion' as ***"a series of positive actions to achieve equality of access to goods and services, to assist all individuals participate in their community and society, to encourage the contribution of all persons to social and cultural life and to be aware of, and to challenge all forms of discrimination"***. In addition, social inclusion is about ensuring the marginalised and those living in poverty have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives as well as allowing them to improve their living standards and their overall well-being.

1.2 Social Inclusion in Ireland – Key Trends

Economic Outlook

The short-term outlook for the Irish economy has deteriorated reflecting a combination of domestic and external developments. Domestically, the sharp decline in the level of new house building to around half of last

year's level is having a significant dampening effect on economic growth. Globally, a continuation of international financial market difficulties, adverse exchange rate movements and a general weakening of the economic outlook in several of Ireland's trading partners are also causing problems.

The Quarterly National Household Survey published by the Central Statistics Office revealed that in the fourth quarter of 2008 there were 2,052,000 persons in employment, an annual decrease of 86,900 or 4.1%. This is the largest annual decrease in employment since the labour force survey was first undertaken in 1975. This compares with an annual decrease in employment of 1.2% in the previous quarter and growth of 3.2% in the year to the fourth quarter of 2007. The report also revealed startling figures in unemployment with a total of 170,600 persons unemployed in the fourth quarter of 2008 representing an increase of 69,600 (+68.9%) in the year. Male unemployment increased by 54,200 (+85.2%), with the number of unemployed females increasing by 15,400 (+41.1%).

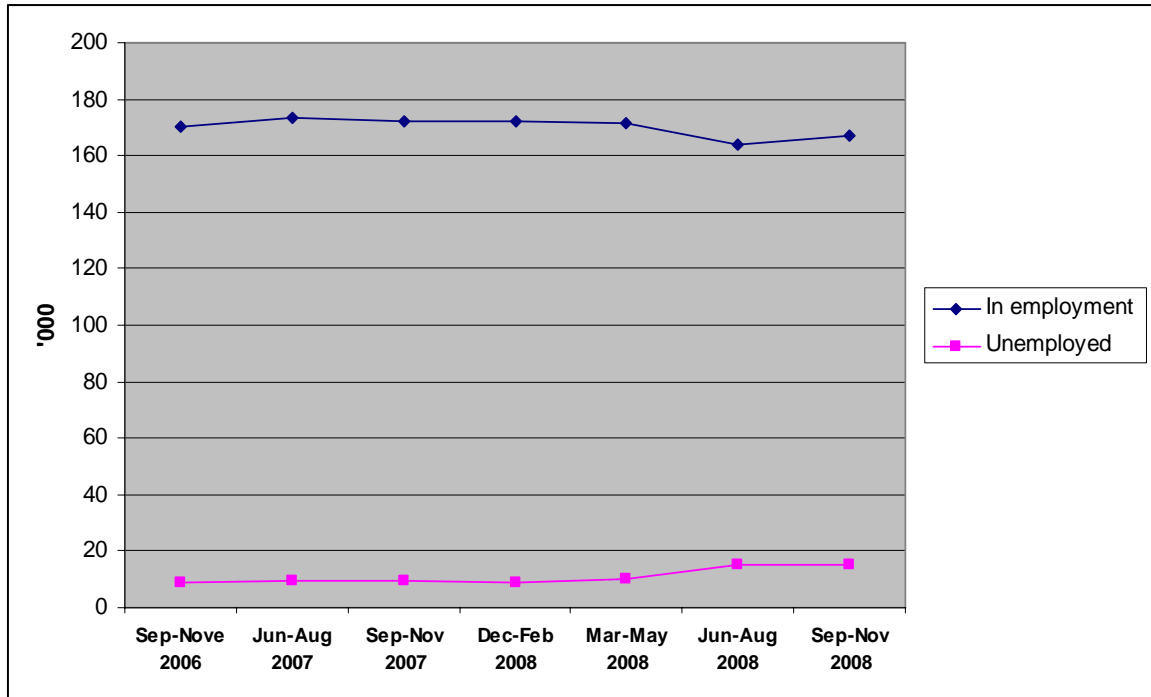
At regional level employment fell by 36,100 (-6.5%) in the Border, Midland and Western region and by 50,800 (-3.2%) in the Southern and Eastern region in the year to the fourth quarter of 2008.

In the Mid-West region Table 2.0 shows that between Sep 2006 and Sep 2008 the unemployment rate increased from 4.8% to 8.5%.

Table 2.0 Key Employment Trends in the Mid-West Region

	In employment '000	Unemployed '000	In Labour Force '000	Unemployment Rate	Participation Rate
Sep-Nov 2006	170.2	8.6	178.8	4.8	62.2
Jun-Aug 2007	173.4	9.8	183.2	5.4	62.9
Sep-Nov 2007	172.2	9.3	181.4	5.1	61.9
Dec-Feb 2008	172.1	9	181.2	5	61.6
Mar-May 2008	171.6	10.4	181.9	5.7	61.8
Jun-Aug 2008	163.9	14.9	184.2	8.1	62.2
Sep-Nov 2008	167.2	15.4	182.7	8.5	61.6

Figure 1.0 Employment Trends in the Mid-West 2006-2008



EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2007

The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland is a voluntary survey of persons living in private households and was first carried out in Ireland in June 2003. The primary focus of the survey is the collection of information on the income and living conditions of the population, from which indicators on poverty, deprivation and social exclusion are derived. The most recent report presents results from December 2006 to November 2007 and was published by the CSO in December 2008.

The key findings to emerge from the SILC are summarised here.

1. At risk of poverty rate

In 2007, the at risk of poverty rate was 16.5%, indicating no significant change overall from 2006. However, children continued to be the age-group most at risk, with a rate of 19.9% in comparison to an at risk of poverty rate of 15.0% among people of working-age. There was an

increase in the at risk of poverty rate for older people from 13.6% in 2006 to 16.6% in 2007. Interestingly, there was a significant decline in the at risk of poverty rate for persons living in lone parent households, where the rate fell from 45.6% in 2006 to 37.6% in 2007. However, members of lone parent households continued to be the most at risk when compared with people living in other household types. Other high-risk groups were adults of working age living alone (29.6%) and older people living alone (24.3%).

2. Consistent poverty rate

The official Government approved poverty measure used in Ireland is consistent poverty, developed independently by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). This measure identifies the proportion of people, from those with an income below a certain threshold (less than 60% of median income), who are deprived of two or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living.

The consistent poverty measure was devised in 1987 using indicators of deprivation based on standards of living at that time. The Government in 2007 accepted the advice of the ESRI to revise the deprivation indicators to better reflect current living standards and, in particular, to focus to a greater degree on items reflecting social inclusion and participation in society. This resulted in the measure, originally based on lacking one or more items from an 8-item index, changing to one based on lacking two or more items from the following 11-item index:

1. Two pairs of strong shoes.
2. A warm waterproof overcoat.
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes.
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week.
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money.
7. Keep the home adequately warm.
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year.
9. Replace any worn out furniture.

10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month.

11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment.

(<http://www.socialinclusion.ie>)

In Ireland, the consistent poverty rate fell from 6.5% in 2006 to 5.1% in 2007, driven primarily by a fall in deprivation rates. The consistent poverty rate for children fell from 10.3% in 2006 to 7.4% in 2007. However, children had higher consistent poverty rates than working age adults (4.7%) or older people (2.0%). Children account for nearly 40% of all those in consistent poverty.

Members of lone parent households showed a sharp fall in their consistent poverty rate from 33.9% in 2006 to 20.1% in 2007, but this remained far higher than persons in other types of households, with the lowest rate being recorded for persons living in households with 2 adults at least one of whom was 65 or over (1.0%). Over one third of persons living in lone parent households (35.6%) reported experiencing at least two of the deprivation indicators. The most commonly experienced forms of deprivation for lone parents were an inability to afford to have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month (35.3%), an inability to afford to replace worn out furniture (35.2%) and an inability to afford heating at some stage in the previous twelve months (21.4%). Lower proportions of the members of lone parent households reported other measures of deprivation but still at much higher rates than other types of households. These included the inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day (8.4%), the inability to afford a warm waterproof coat (9.1%), the inability to afford new (not second-hand) clothes (11.8%) and the inability to afford two pairs of strong shoes (12.2%).

Adults of working age living alone also featured as a high-risk group, with a consistent poverty rate of 12.5% while Unemployed people had the highest consistent poverty rates (17.5%) (compared with a rate of just 1.3% among people who were at work). Persons living in households where no person was working had a high consistent poverty rate (16.3%).

Persons living in accommodation that was rent free or rented at below the market rate (e.g. local authority housing) experienced a high rate of consistent poverty in 2007 (20.7%), compared with a rate of 2.5% among persons living in owner-occupied accommodation.

3. Income

Average household net disposable income was €47,988 in 2007, an increase of just under 10% from 2006. Annual average equivalised income increased by 11.2% between 2006 and 2007, from €21,229 to €23,610. The at risk of poverty threshold in 2007 was €11,890 compared with €10,566 in 2006, an increase of 12.5% year on year. At state level income from SSIA's that matured in 2007 increased average equivalised disposable income by 3.2%.

4. Children remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society

Despite an increase of 16.2% in their average equivalised disposable income, children remained the most vulnerable age group in 2007 (See Table 3.0). There was a fall in the consistent poverty rate for those aged 0-17, from 10.3% in 2006 to 7.4% in 2007. However, this was still higher than the rates recorded for working-age people (4.7%) or older people (2.0%).

- Nearly 40% of all people in consistent poverty were children (39.1%).
- Just over 69% of all the persons in consistent poverty lived in households with children compared with 63.8% of the persons at risk of poverty. This indicates that having children in a household has a clear impact on the likelihood of experiencing deprivation.

Table 3.0 Disposable Income and those at risk of poverty by Age Group

	Average Annual Equivalised Disposable Income		% Change in Annual Equivalised Disposable Income	At Risk of Poverty Rate		Consistent Poverty	
	2006	2007		2006	2007	2006	2007
0-17	19008	22085	+16.2	22.3	19.9	10.3	7.4
18-64	23033	25192	+9.4	15.4	15	5.6	4.7
65+	16413	18401	+12.1	13.6	16.6	2.2	2

1.3 Local Authorities and Social Inclusion

The Local Agenda 21 (now Local Action 21) initiative stems from the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio, when more than 150 nations endorsed Local Agenda 21, a commitment to plan for sustainable development into the next century. Sustainable development has been defined as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Essentially sustainable development is a multi-faceted concept which recognises the links between the interconnected spheres of economic development, social cohesion, environmental protection and enhancing quality of life (Kelly, 2002).

In relation to local government, Local Agenda 21 identifies that local authorities have a key role 'in thinking globally but acting locally', both in terms of the resources it controls and especially by its leadership as a decision-making institution and that it is also strategically positioned to advance social inclusion initiatives and in promoting active citizenship, participation and collaboration.

As the level of government closest to the community, local authorities have a significant role to play in promoting social inclusion. The publication of the 1996 report *Better Local Government: A Programme for Change* promotes forging strong links with local communities in delivering quality services and reaching consensus in planning and implementation across all functional areas (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 1996). Chapter 3 of *Better Local Government* states "there is a strong case therefore, for greater integration, simplification and reorganisation on a way, which retains and strengthens the essence of the local development experience. Accordingly, the Government has decided that from 1 January 2000, an integrated local government and local development system will come into place". It also outlines that "a primary aim is to renew local government so that it will be fully accepted as the legitimate voice of local communities and be recognised as such within the overall system of government and public administration."

From a legislative perspective the Local Government Act 2001 further consolidated the role of local authorities with regard to social inclusion. The Act places an obligation on local authorities to consider social inclusion in the design and delivery of local services and to develop local strategies to address social inclusion. Part 13 of the Act outlines that a local authority may take such steps as it considers appropriate to consult with and promote effective participation by the local community in local government.

More recently, Mr John Gormley T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, launched the Green Paper on local government, *Stronger Local Democracy - Options for Change* in 2008. *Stronger Local Democracy* presents a set of options for change which share a strong common theme of renewing local democratic leadership.

Chapter 7 of the Green Paper, *Participative democracy and local government* states that 'local government is in a prime position to tackle social exclusion, a role which goes much further than just providing services and observes that councils have a 'long tradition of representing and engaging with the community'. The Paper proposes new forms of participation to make 'direct, meaningful contact' between councils and communities. The Combat Poverty Agency in its submission on the Green paper stated that local authorities have a key role in building active citizenship, social capital and promoting community development and that poverty and social exclusion cannot be tackled without building community infrastructure and encouraging and supporting community development activities.

Combat Poverty, as part of its statutory remit, promotes community development as a means of overcoming poverty and defines community development as 'a process whereby those who are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self-confidence, to join with others and to participate in actions to change their situation and to tackle the problems that face their community' (CPA, 2007).

1.3 Social Inclusion Initiatives in Ireland at National and Local Levels

Tables 4.0 and 5.0 summarise the key social inclusion initiatives and structures identified by the Combat Poverty Agency at both national and local levels (CPA, 2006). These structures are in place to enable a high level strategic view of the issues surrounding poverty and social exclusion and to facilitate the co-ordination of the delivery of public services as key to tackling exclusion and disadvantage.

Table 4.0 National Level Structures and Initiatives

A. Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Drugs and Rural Development

This Committee is chaired by the Taoiseach and includes ministers from relevant departments.

B. Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion

This Group comprises high-level civil servants from relevant departments and is chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach.

C. Social Inclusion Consultative Group

This Group is co-chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Office for Social Inclusion. It is viewed as an important vehicle for involving the social partners in the NAP/inclusion process.

D. Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)

The Office is headed by a Director within the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It was established in December 2002 with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/inclusion). The Office coordinates the process across government departments, agencies, regional and local government, and implements key support functions. It has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of NAP/inclusion, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress.

E. Social Inclusion Units

These units have been established in key government departments to co-ordinate the department's contribution to NAP/inclusion and its implementation.

F. Departmental Social Inclusion Liaison Officers

These officers were appointed in a number of government departments, following publication of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The officers act as a first point of contact in relation to NAP/inclusion issues.

G. Combat Poverty Agency

Apart from the immediate framework at central level there are a number of critically placed agencies such as the National Children's Office, the Equality Authority, Pobal, FÁS and the Combat Poverty Agency. Combat Poverty works closely with the national authorities in providing advice to government and central departments. More recently it has played a critical support role for local authorities across the State in developing awareness on poverty issues pertaining to local government

Table 5.0 Local Level Structures and Initiatives

A. County and City Development Boards

The CDBs are led by the local authorities and include the social partners, State agencies, local, rural and community development organisations and community and voluntary representatives. The Boards have recently undertaken reviews of their strategies and have adopted these reviews, with a refocusing on prioritised local strategic actions, particularly those aimed at a more joined-up approach to local service delivery involving relevant agencies.

B. Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network

In addition to the CDBs, the local authorities generally are being encouraged to engage in a more pro-active approach to addressing local poverty and social inclusion issues. This is particularly relevant given their planning and housing functions where there is a clear need for consideration of poverty and social inclusion requirements. As a part of this, the Combat Poverty Agency has supported the development of a Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network through its Local Government Work Programme.

Since 2006, the Network is being managed by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) under the guidance of a Local Authorities and Social Inclusion Steering Group (LASISG).

C. Social Inclusion Units

Pilot Social Inclusion Units have been established in seven local authorities, with funding from the DoEHLG, to foster a strategic and cross-cutting approach to social inclusion (Dublin City Council had a unit prior to the establishment of the pilot units but also received funding under the pilot programme). Following an evaluation in 2004, it was decided that from 2006 the units would be placed on a permanent footing and that the programme would be extended to other local authorities.

D. Local Anti-Poverty Strategies

Most recently a number of local authorities have begun to prepare Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS) that complement the county strategies for social, cultural and economic development. Combat Poverty Agency is currently supporting two pilot LAPS in Wicklow and Laois. It is anticipated that one of the outcomes will be a worked model of LAPS which, following an evaluation, could provide a framework to other local authorities. A critical aspect of the implementation of such strategies will be the application of poverty impact assessment to, in particular, the physical planning policies of the local authorities.

E. Other Initiatives

The cohesion of LEADER Groups and Area-Based Partnerships and Community Groups that are responsible for the delivery of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme are moving towards having a single overall institutional setting within individual cities and counties. A key focus of these bodies will be the management of certain social inclusion support programmes under the next National Development Plan.

1.4 Key Policy Developments

The preparation of Ireland's National Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008 took place in the context of the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*. This agreement outlines a new framework within which key social challenges have been developed around the "lifecycle" approach. This framework offered a cross cutting and transparent approach to addressing poverty and social exclusion, as well as developing greater social protection (NSSPI, 2006-2008).

The four priority policy objectives identified in the NSSPI 2006-2008 were:

1. Child poverty
2. Access to quality work and learning opportunities
3. Integration of immigrants
4. Access to quality services.

This Social Partnership Agreement and the NSSPI formed the basis for the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion) published in February 2007. They also formed the basis for a Chapter on social inclusion in the National Development Plan (NDP), published in January 2007. Both the NAPinclusion and the NDP chapter provide the strategic framework for tackling the priorities identified in the NSSPI. Here some of the more significant developments in relation to the emergence of social inclusion policies are examined.

A. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016: *Building An Inclusive Society*

Under the action plan, the Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the lifecycle approach set out in the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. This National Action Plan for Social inclusion (NAPinclusion), complemented by the social inclusion elements of the National Development Plan 2007-2013: *Transforming Ireland– A Better Quality of Life for All*, sets out how the social inclusion strategy will be achieved over the period 2007-2016. The strategic framework will facilitate greater co-ordination and integration of structures and procedures across Government at national and local levels, as well as improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

Lone Parents: Reforming income supports for lone parents and other low income families and supporting them into education, training and employment. Address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes.

Travellers: The High Level Group on Travellers which reported to Government in 2006 identified three priorities for the effective implementation of policy to support the fullest possible participation of Travellers in Irish society:

- Coherent inter-agency co-operation.
- Meaningful consultation with Travellers and their representatives.
- Incorporation of law enforcement measures into the inter-agency approach.

Disabled: The vision is of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life, free from discrimination.

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

Employment and Participation: High Level Goal

Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the

number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Within each section of the lifecycle, NAPinclusion established a range of high level goals to be achieved over the period and has highlighted a large number of actions and targets to be implemented in order to achieve these high level goals.

Table 6.0 Lifecycle Stages and High Level Goals

Lifecycle Stage	Description
<p>Children</p>	<p>Goal 1: Education Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.</p> <p>Goal 2: Education Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016.</p> <p>Goal 3: Education Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013.</p> <p>Goal 4: Income Support Maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33%-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate over the course of this Plan and review child income supports aimed at assisting children in families on low income.</p>
<p>People of Working Age</p>	<p>Goal 5: Employment and Participation Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long-term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.</p> <p>Goal 6: Income Support Maintain the relative value of the lowest social welfare rate at least at €185.80, in 2007 terms, over the course of this Plan, subject to available resources.</p>
<p>Older people</p>	<p>Goal 7: Community Care Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services, to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible.</p> <p>Goal 8: Income Support Maintain a minimum payment rate of €200 per week, in 2007 terms, for all social welfare pensions over the course of this Plan and, if possible, having regard to available resources and the Government's commitment in <i>Towards 2016</i>, to enhance this provision.</p>
<p>People with Disabilities</p>	<p>Goal 9: Employment and Participation Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.</p>
<p>Communities</p>	<p>Goal 10: Housing Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in <i>Towards 2016</i>, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities);</p> <p>Goal 11: Health Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.</p> <p>Goal 12: Integration of Migrants Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.</p>

The National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection And Social Inclusion 2008-2010 draws much of its focus from pre-existing plans, especially the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007 – 2016. The National Strategy Reports incorporate a number of high level goals from the national action plan, including the adoption of a specific poverty related targets. The report was formulated before the publication of *Budget 2009*, following which the full impact of the recent economic downturn on public finances started to emerge. Budget 2009 was criticised for failing to protect Ireland's vulnerable. CORI (Conference of Religious in Ireland) stated that children and the working poor lost out in Budget 2009, particularly those who work but did not pay tax because their incomes were outside the tax net. Following Budget 2009 they now pay a levy of 1% on every Euro they earn. In practice this means that a person (or couple) on €15,000 will be €150 a year worse off. A person (or couple) on €25,000 will be €250 worse off as a result of Budget 2009. According to CORI, the introduction of an income levy means that people at or below the minimum wage who were outside the tax net in previous years now find themselves paying tax from their already very meagre income - an income that is often below the poverty line. Similarly, the failure to raise Child Benefit payments means that the value of this payment will fall by 2.5% per cent in real terms in 2009. This again will have a negative impact on 'working poor' households. Even with the changes introduced in the Family Income Supplement many working poor households will see their standard of living fall in 2009 (<http://www.cori.ie>).

B. Annual Social Inclusion Report 2006-2007 (Office of Social Inclusion, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs)

This report contains chapters covering each lifecycle stage and includes a chapter on the social inclusion priorities for communities. Each chapter sets out the *Towards 2016* strategic vision for the lifecycle stage and the progress made to date in this ambitious 10 year programme of work. A summary of these visions is shown in Table 7.0.

Table 7.0 Towards 2016 Strategic Visions

<i>Life Cycle Stage</i>	<i>Vision</i>
Children	The vision as set out in <i>Towards 2016</i> for children in Ireland is a society where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.
People of Working Age	The vision as set out in <i>Towards 2016</i> for people of working age is of an Ireland where all people of working age have sufficient income and opportunity to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life and where all individuals and their families are supported by a range of quality public services to enhance their quality of life and well-being.
Older People	The vision as set out in <i>Towards 2016</i> for older people is of an Ireland where supports are provided, where necessary, to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, as well as to live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.
People with Disabilities	The vision as set out in <i>Towards 2016</i> for people with disabilities is of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life with their families and as part of their local community, free from discrimination.
Communities	The vision as set out in the NAPinclusion for community life in Ireland is centred on building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital. Tackling disadvantage in urban and rural areas is a key priority. Urban poverty can take a number of forms – poor households living in urban areas, urban communities where there are high levels of unemployment and high concentrations of poverty and areas suffering from a decline in the environmental and social infrastructure.
Implementing and Monitoring	Implementation by government departments, agencies and other stakeholders will be crucial in achieving the outcomes sought in terms of making a decisive impact on poverty and social exclusion. The strategies address this challenge through provision for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More “joined up” implementation at national and at local levels to be promoted and facilitated by the lifecycle approach. 2. More streamlined and coordinated consultation on all aspects of implementation of the strategies with the social partners and other stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty. 3. Regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting of progress on goals and targets to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration and to the social partners and other stakeholders, with a view to ensuring that any additional action required to meet specific commitments is taken in good time.

C. Fourth Meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum 15th November 2007 Conference Report (February 2008)

The Social Inclusion Forum is part of the institutional structures put in place by the Government to support the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). The current strategy is set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion), which covers the same period as the national partnership agreement, Towards 2016.

Table 8.0 summarises key recommendations from the workshop and priority issues to be addressed.

Table 8.0 Workshop Recommendations

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Children & Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the quality of literacy teaching • Provide supports for parents, particularly immigrants, to help them work with their children on literacy • Provide early and better access to support services • Increase investment in quality and accessible early childhood education
People of Working Age – Employment and Activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the barriers to taking up employment • Address the need for greater inter-agency and inter-departmental co-operation at national and local level • Provide accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare • Develop flexible training and education options • Provide clear and accessible information on the options and consequences for people taking up employment
Older People & Community Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Home Help service in terms of availability and quality of services and employment • Focus services on the needs of the person, co-ordinate the services better, and develop common assessment and service delivery tools • Investigate and develop new models of Community Care • Develop quality respite care services for carers and those cared for
Communities – Integration of Migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct funding for immigrant-led organisations • Consult with immigrants at all stages of policy development and implementation • Recognise that integration occurs along a continuum and not when legal status is granted
Overarching issues arising in the workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop services that meet people's needs, not services that people have to fit into • Develop integrated approaches to policy and service delivery • Address the gap between national policy and local implementation • Consult with stakeholders including those affected by policies • Build on current successful models of service implementation

D. National Development Plan 2007-2013

Over the Plan period, investment of about €50 billion, all funded by the Exchequer, will address issues of social exclusion. The social programme in this Priority complements the infrastructure improvements under the Social Infrastructure Priority to address social exclusion of defined groups within our society. Implementation of these social inclusion measures requires actions to be taken at both national and local level and to be focused on the most disadvantaged areas. The major objectives of the Social Inclusion Priority under the NDP 2007-2013 are to:

1. Address the shortages in supply of childcare places by the creation of an additional 50,000 places by 2010 with subsequent targets to be set after the 2010 Mid-Term Review of the Plan.
2. Provide for the protection and care of children at risk.
3. Provide support for recreational facilities for children.
4. Help children with special needs in the education system to reach their full potential.
5. Provide those from disadvantaged backgrounds with the education, skills and training necessary for employment and active participation in society.
6. Assist people of working age to access further education and third level education as well as supporting those returning to work and education.
7. Promote equality of access to Higher Education.
8. Support the reintegration and rehabilitation of prisoners and offenders.
9. Assist older persons to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and to support the provision of quality residential care for older persons who are no longer able to live at home.
10. Provide quality services and opportunities for people with disabilities.
11. Assist communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, to identify and address challenges and problems in their area.
12. Develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland based on a commitment to inclusion.

High Level Goals for Social Inclusion

Investment of some €49.6 billion, all funded by the Exchequer, will be made under the Social Inclusion Priority. The priority consists of the following Programmes (Table 9.0):

Table 9.0 Social Inclusion Priority (All figures in €million current prices)

Programme	Exchequer.	PPP	Local Auth	State Bodies	Other	Total
Children Programme	12,290	0	0	0	0	12,290
Working Age — Education	4201	0	0	0	0	4201
Working Age — Social & Econ. Particip.	1160	0	0	0	0	1160
Working age — Justice	300	0	0	0	0	300
Older People	9725	0	0	0	0	9725
People with Disabilities	19250	0	0	0	0	19250
Local and Community Development	1862	0	0	0	0	1862
Horizontal Prog.	848	0	0	0	0	848
Social Inclusion Total	49,636	0	0	0	0	49636

The Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the life cycle approach set out in *Towards 2016*, with implementation supported by the NDP and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. While both Plans identify a wide range of targets and interventions, the Government has also identified a number of high level social inclusion goals to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty.

Children

- Ensure that targeted pre-school education is provided to children from urban primary school communities covered by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.
- Reduce the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties in primary schools serving disadvantaged communities. The target is to halve the proportion from the current 27%-30% to less than 15% by 2016.
- Work to ensure that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 completing upper second level education or equivalent will exceed 90% by 2013.

People of Working Age

- Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long term unemployed, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Older People

- Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible.

People with Disabilities

- Increase the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job.
- The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.

Communities

Housing

- Deliver high quality housing for those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs and to underpin the building of sustainable communities. An important element will be the enhanced housing output reflected in *Towards 2016*, which will result in the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households being addressed over the period 2007 to 2009. This will embrace meeting special housing needs (the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities).

Health

- Develop 500 primary care teams by 2011 which will improve access to services in the community with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.

Integration of Migrants

- Develop a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society. As an initial action, resources for the provision of 550 teachers for language supports in the education sector will be provided by 2009 and access to other public services through translation of information and supports will be improved.

E. An Agreed Programme for Government: A Blueprint for Ireland's Future 2007-2012

Integration

Under the Agreed Programme the Government is committed to ensuring that all new residents are welcomed and that effective integration is supported. Therefore, the Government pledges to:

1. Develop a national integration policy, based on equality principles and taking a revised and broader view of social inclusion which builds on the experience of other countries.
2. Appoint a Minister of State to implement the national integration policy. The Office will bring together in one administrative unit key officials from relevant government departments who provide services to immigrants.
3. Increase the number of language support teachers to 1,800 and review language requirements across government.
4. Continue to promote national campaigns aimed at challenging racism and promoting understanding of diversity and fund campaigns that educate the Irish public about the role of immigration in Irish society.
5. Support the services offered by ethnic-led non-governmental organisations working with the immigrant community, in particular

those that provide for the educational, cultural and linguistic needs of migrant workers.

Older People

In light of the growing involvement of many Departments and agencies in this area, and of the successful model for developing policy relating to children and people with disabilities, the Government intends to develop in conjunction with the recognised voluntary groups in this area a New National Positive Ageing Strategy to include:

1. The development of operational plans by Government Departments clearly setting out objectives relating to older people.
2. Joined up thinking on initiatives serving older people.
3. Ongoing mechanisms to monitor progress and identify challenges.
4. Liaise with recognised voluntary groups in the area.
5. Give consideration to the appointment of an Ombudsman for Older People.

The Government will also designate a Minister of State for Older People who will be a member of the cabinet committee on social inclusion. In addition, the development of quality transport systems in rural and urban areas and the expansion of the Rural Transport Initiative will improve accessibility for older people.

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