

DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2007 – 2012

PROGRESS REPORT 2007 – 2008

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The Economy

Competiveness and Innovation

“The Government will underpin Ireland’s success as a highly-productive, trading nation by the following measures:

- *We will instigate a review of the entire economic regulatory environment. This review will be designed to ensure that the existing regulatory regime is operating efficiently, is balancing the needs of users with the requirements of producers and is not imposing excessive costs on the economy...”*

An Interdepartmental Group, chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach, and comprising representatives of the Departments of Finance; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; and Transport as well as the Office of the Attorney General is advancing work on this commitment.

In April 2008, the Economist Intelligence Unit, in a partnership with Compecon Limited, was commissioned to conduct an independent Review of the Economic Regulatory Environment. This Review, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year, will compare key Irish economic Regulators with their counterparts in the EU and the OECD. It will address the need for stronger international data and benchmarks in relation to the comparative efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of Regulators. It will also examine issues such as whether current regulatory structures are appropriate and whether existing statutory mandates sufficiently protect both public policy objectives and consumer interests having regard to international best practice. While the Review will comprehend the entire economic regulatory environment, for analytical purposes it will address in particular the key economic sectors of Energy, Communications, Transport, Health and Safety and Financial Services.

Social Partnership

Social Partnership

“We are determined to maintain the success of Social Partnership in the years ahead by:

- *Working with the social partners to ensure the full implementation of the Towards 2016 Agreement.”*

Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the commitments contained in *Towards 2016*, the Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, since the agreement of the Programme for Government.

A Report highlighting progress during the first phase of the Agreement is available at www.taoiseach.gov.ie.

Between April and September 2008 the Government and Social Partners undertook a formal review of *Towards 2016*. Given that the terms of the pay agreement for the private sector expired from March 2008, this review process also included negotiations on a new pay round. These negotiations reached a successful conclusion on the morning of Wednesday, 17 September, when a Draft Agreement was reached on a successor to the first module of *Towards 2016*, which is now subject to ratification.

The Social Partners have also now agreed on an assessment of overall progress over the first two and a half years of *Towards 2016* – and the economic and social challenges facing the country in the short and medium term.

Using this shared understanding, the Government and Social Partners intend to work together through the current period of economic transition and uncertainty to ensure that the Vision and Goals set down in *Towards 2016* can still be achieved. They have also identified a number of priority issues on which they will work together as Social Partners over the next phase of the agreement.

The text of the Report on the Review of *Towards 2016* and the Transitional Agreement (Pay and the Workplace) will be available shortly on the Department’s website at www.taoiseach.gov.ie.

- *“Arrangements for representation of environmental issues on Social Partnership will be considered in the course of the review of Towards 2016 which will take place in 2008.”*

The issue of environmental representation in social partnership was considered during the Review of *Towards 2016* and, in the light of these discussions, the Government will consider proposals before the end of 2008. The Government’s decision on this issue will take account of a number of long-standing criteria by which applications to join the Social Partnership process are considered.

Ensuring Value for Money

The Organisational Review Programme (ORP) constitutes an important element of the process for modernisation of the public service, especially in contributing to better value for money. The ORP will help to ensure that departments and other government bodies will be optimally structured to deliver in the most effective manner on the commitments in framework policy documents like the *Programme for Government*, the *National Development Plan* and *Towards 2016*.

The ORP involves assessments of individual organisations in terms of their capacities to develop strategy, manage resources and conduct evaluations. By systematically reviewing each government organisation in turn, the ORP is complementing the wider, systems-level OECD review of the public service.

The pilot phase of the ORP covers three departments: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; and Transport. The report will be published in the last quarter of 2008 and will include follow-up action plans for each department on the main findings. The programme will then be rolled out to a further three government departments.

Public Sector Management

“This Government will:

- *Support the further opening up of management roles to the best qualified candidates.*
- *Roll out the new Performance Management and Development System (PMDS). This is an essential tool for managing performance and career development for all staff. A consistent evaluation system will help to identify outstanding performance and highlight underperformance.*
- *Implement improvements in human resource management which will ensure that all public servants are helped to develop to the best of their ability.*
- *Support succession and career planning to ensure a talent pipeline for the future leadership of the public sector.”*

The Human Resource Management commitments outlined in the Programme for Government, specifically around recruitment to management grades, the extension of PMDS, improvements in HR and succession and career planning, are primarily matters for the Department of Finance. However, it might be noted that the recent Report of the OECD Review of the Irish Public Service (*Towards An Integrated Public Service*) includes recommendations on these and related issues. The Task Force on the Public Service, established by Government to consider how the OECD’s recommendations might best be implemented, is due to report to Government shortly and this report may have implications for the progression of these Programme for Government commitments.

Customer Service

The Task Force on Customer Service was established by the Government in July, 2007, to, among other things, *“advance relevant [customer service] commitments in the Programme for Government, including those in the Health, Justice and Local Government sectors and to report back on progress through*

the Implementation Group of Secretaries General.” The customer service commitments contained in the *Programme for Government* are summarised at Appendix 2.

To date, the Task Force on Customer Service has met on six occasions. The second of two interim reports on its work is virtually complete. The Task Force is due to submit its final report to Government in early 2009. That report will detail the achievements in implementing those commitments pertaining to customer service issues. It will also include recommendations for further action in a number of areas. The work of the Task Force also informs and dovetails with the work of two key interdepartmental groups: the Interdepartmental Quality Customer Service (QCS) Officers’ Network; and the QCS Research Group.

Ireland in Europe

Transposition of EU Directives

“We will:

- *Aim to have Ireland consistently within the top group on the EU internal Market Scoreboard which monitors transposition of EU Directives.”*

The Government has remained strongly committed to ensuring that Ireland is consistently within the top group of the EU Internal Market Scoreboard, which monitors transposition of EU Directives.

Transposition and implementation of EU Directives is, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant Departments and Ministers. The Department of the Taoiseach has a monitoring role regarding the timely transposition of EU legislation into Irish law, through the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on European Affairs (ICCEUA) which is chaired by Minister of State Roche. The transposition of EU Directives is a standing item on the work programme of that Committee and Departments are required to provide regular updates on Directives which are applicable to their area. The Department of the Taoiseach, in conjunction with key Departments concerned, developed an EU Directives Extranet which allows Departments to record and track progress on the transposition of EU Directives. The system, which was rolled out in September 2007, provides central Government with timely reports of Ireland’s performance on transposition.

Ireland achieved 1% transposition deficit ratio for non-transposed directives in the July 2008 EU Internal Market Scoreboard, the target set by EU Heads of State and Government to be achieved by 2009. This is the best score ever achieved by Ireland.

National Forum on Europe

“We will:

- *Continue the work of the National Forum on Europe.”*

The National Forum on Europe was established by the Government and political parties in October 2001 in order to provide a place for public debate on the European Union, its future and relevance to Ireland. The work of the Forum for the period of the Programme of Government is set out in detail in the two most recent reports of its Chairman, Maurice Hayes. These reports can be found on the Forum website www.forumoneurope.ie The role of the Forum in relation to the Lisbon Treaty was to promote and facilitate public debate on the Treaty and its implications for Ireland’s future in Europe.

Civic Life

Active Citizenship and Volunteering

“...this Government will implement the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship.”

The Government is committed to strengthening and deepening Ireland’s tradition of active engagement by its citizens in every aspect of our communities nationwide. Last May, the Taoiseach renewed the Government’s commitment to this area by giving it Ministerial responsibility to coordinate the Government’s efforts to promote Active Citizenship. An Active Citizenship Office has been established within the Department of the Taoiseach and it is currently preparing a progress report on implementation of the Taskforce’s recommendations, in consultation with other relevant Government Departments.

Oireachtas Reform

“We will:

- *Reconsider the recommendations of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution regarding Dáil Reform.”*

The Government Chief Whip is currently reviewing proposals to reform the workings of the Dáil and is continuing to examine measures which will enhance the workings of the Dáil. The Chief Whip will bring any new arrangements to the Committee on Procedures and Privileges (C.P.P.) sub-committee for cross party discussion and agreement in due course.

Appendix 1 - Legislation

Bills enacted (May 2007 – July 2008)

1. MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES (MINISTERS OF STATE) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 9th July 2007*)
2. FINANCE (NO.2) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 9th July 2007*)
3. COMMUNITY, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 9th July 2007*)
4. ROADS ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 11th July 2007*)
5. PERSONAL INJURIES ASSESSMENT BOARD (AMENDMENT) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 11th July 2007*)
6. CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 25th October 2007*)
7. MARKETS IN FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 31st October 2007*)
8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ROAD FUNCTIONS) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 26th November 2007*)
9. COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 4th December 2007*)
10. SOCIAL WELFARE ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 20th December 2007*)
11. HEALTH (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 21st December 2007*)
12. APPROPRIATION ACT 2007 (*Signed on: 21st December 2007*)
13. CONTROL OF EXPORTS ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 27th February 2008*)
14. SOCIAL WELFARE AND PENSIONS ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 7th March 2008*)
15. FINANCE ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 13th March 2008*)
16. PASSPORTS ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 26th March 2008*)
17. MOTOR VEHICLE (DUTIES AND LICENCES) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 26th March 2008*)
18. VOLUNTARY HEALTH INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 15th April 2008*)

19. CRIMINAL JUSTICE (MUTUAL ASSISTANCE) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 28th April 2008*)
20. CRIMINAL LAW (HUMAN TRAFFICKING) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 7th May 2008*)
21. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES (CORPORATE BODIES) (CONFIRMATION OF ORDERS) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 20th May 2008*)
22. PRISON DEVELOPMENT (CONFIRMATION OF RESOLUTIONS) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 2nd July 2008*)
23. ELECTRICITY REGULATION (AMENDMENT) (EIRGRID) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 8th July 2008*)
24. LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (IRISH LANGUAGE) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 9th July 2008*)
25. CHEMICALS ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 9th July 2008*)
26. CIVIL LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 14th July 2008*)
27. NUCLEAR TEST BAN ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 16th July 2008*)
28. DUBLIN TRANSPORT AUTHORITY ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 16th July 2008*)
29. INTOXICATING LIQUOR ACT 2008 (*Signed on: 21st July 2008*)

Appendix 2 - Customer Service Commitments

Programme for Government

Commitments relating to Quality Customer Service

Competition and Consumer Protection (Enterprise, Trade & Employment)

- Make consumers more aware of their rights through information campaigns and through the education system.
- Ensure that Consumer Codes of Conduct are published by businesses.

Cutting Red Tape (Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

- Work with the implementation group established under the Farmers' Charter to monitor outcomes and ensure that the charter is modified if necessary.

Putting Patients First (Health)

- We will examine implementing an advisory charter of patients' rights similar to the European charter of patient rights.
- Progressively introduce patient guarantees of what people can expect from their health service.

Disability (Health)

- Implement appropriate standards in service delivery to people with disabilities.

Accessibility (Environment, Heritage & Local Government)

- Make public buildings, footpaths, parks, information and services more accessible to people with disabilities, with real targets set and achieved.
- Plan from the outset for accessibility of public services and local authority facilities.
- Enforce building regulations to ensure appropriate accessibility for new buildings, as well as buildings which undergo major refurbishment.
- Ensure that developers are reminded at pre-planning stage of their obligations to make buildings accessible.

Immigration (Justice, Equality & Law Reform)

- Ensure advice and assistance are provided in appropriate languages at ports of entry and that legal aid is provided for immigration cases.
- Ensure a visibly independent appeals process.

Improving Facilities & Expanding Participation (Arts, Sport & Tourism)

- Ensure accessibility as a key component in the provision of sports and recreational facilities.

Irish Language (Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs)

- Increasing support for the public service to develop the capacity to provide comprehensive services through the medium of the Irish language.

Gardaí (Justice)

- Introduce a Garda Charter setting out targeted Garda response times and levels of service which the public can expect, including frequency of high visibility patrols in urban and rural communities.

Local Government Reform (Environment, Heritage & Local Government)

- Reform local government making it more transparent and more responsive to its customers.

Green Paper on Local Government Reform (Environment, Heritage & Local Government)

- We will put customer service to the forefront with:
 - required response times for correspondence;
 - ‘customer friendly’ opening hours;
 - telephone response from real people, not machines;
 - customer training programmes;
 - a right of appeal or review of local authority decisions for customers as a further step to greater transparency.
- These changes will be set out in a Local Authority Customer Service Charter.