

Strategic Planning Discussion Document

For Presentation
To Council

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Introduction

This chapter outlines the approach taken to developing the strategic planning discussion document for the NCPP. Each aspect of the strategic planning framework and process is summarised to provide a guide to the content and sequence of the material presented in the document.

The strategic planning process to be outlined was carried out in tandem with the work of establishing the NCPP as a new agency. This work included recruiting new professional staff to fill national co-ordinator roles; deciding how the Centre should be governed; setting in train the process of establishing a Council; designing an organisational structure; obtaining suitable premises for the Centre and developing a corporate identity. All of these tasks took account of the issues and priorities emerging in the strategic planning process.

1.1 Strategic Planning Framework and Approach

The strategic planning framework is summarised in Figure 1.1. Each aspect of the framework is summarised below. The sequence in which the completed stages have been undertaken and that proposed for the remaining tasks are outlined in figure 1.2. A time-line for the stages of the planning process is also outlined.

1.2 Context

The establishment of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance is one of the key recommendations of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. The new Centre has been established to promote and deepen partnership in the enterprise and workplace and to support organisations in the private and public sectors in adapting to change and improving performance. A key challenge is to place partnership and performance at the heart of national policy, as this will be crucial to the success of social partnership and indeed the wider economy in the future.

In the *PPF*, the role and agenda of the NCPP is first of all set in the wider context of how partnership might be fostered in enterprises and workplaces and secondly considered in a more specific sense. The role for the Centre outlined in the *PPF* and further guidance provided in the evaluation of progress under *Partnership 2000* are summarised in Appendix 1.

Both of these documents are of necessity highly general and abstract with respect to the issues or topics that might be amenable to partnership and with respect to the activities and priorities of the Centre. The Centre must also develop a strategy beyond the life of the national agreement under which it was established and beyond the immediate agenda for workplace partnership outlined in the *PPF*.

The remainder of the strategic planning document seeks to provide focused and specific guidance for the Centre and its mode of operation.

1.3 The External Environment

These source documents also provided a focus for an examination of the external environment of the NCPP in chapter 2. Where possible the analysis seeks to identify how the environment seems likely to evolve over the medium-term, defined in broad terms as over about the next five years. The analysis considers the general economic, business, policy and industrial relations environment and more specifically addresses trends and challenges in the major areas presented as amenable to partnership in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* and *Partnership at Work in Ireland*. The analysis of medium-term trends in the external environment focuses on the following specific areas.

- The macro-economy, competitiveness and adaptability.
- Changing work preferences.
- The changing labour market and implications for skills, training and life-long learning, working-time flexibility and work- life balance, equal opportunities and workforce diversity.
- Developments at European Union level in the areas of information and consultation, employee involvement in the European Company; European works councils, financial participation; life-long learning and work reorganisation through partnership.
- Developments in Irish industrial relations, particularly with regard to the underlying climate of industrial relations and the future of pay determination.
- The present status of enterprise and workplace partnership and indications of the current level of momentum.
- The main drivers in external environment of the work of the Centre.

1.4 The Consultative Process

The operating environment of the NCPP was examined through an extensive process of consultation. The overall aim of the consultative process was to clarify better the role of the Centre and to identify opportunities, challenges and priority areas for action in the short to medium term. The main themes emerging from the consultative process are summarised in chapter 3. The consultative process involved the social partners, public agencies active in the promotion of change and adaptation at enterprise and workplace levels in such areas as industrial development, training, equality, health and safety and the modernisation of management processes. The national institutions for dispute resolution and the promotion of good industrial relations were consulted, as was the National Benchmarking Body. Expert providers of partnership training and facilitation were included. The consultative process extended to a number of civil service departments and to parties active in the promotion of partnership in the health services, in local government and in unionised and non-union companies widely regarded as exemplars of partnership.

The process of consultation focused on the expectations of the social partners and key national institutions with respect to the Centre, to identify opportunities for collaboration and priority areas for action in the short and medium term. This process was undertaken with a view to developing a clearer definition of the role, function, priorities and operational programmes of the Centre.

It also sought to define the role of the Centre in relation to other organisations and to identify areas where there is an overlap in services or gaps in current provision, and where scope for strategic alliances and other forms of co-operation may be found. Many of those consulted were also well placed to observe and form views on significant environmental trends and challenges and so their views also informed the analysis of the external environment presented in chapter 2.

1.5 Challenges, Opportunities and Threats

Chapter 4 presents an examination of the challenges, opportunities and threats to the Centre emerging from the environmental analysis and the consultative process. These inform proposals as to how the Centre should be positioned and the development of a strategic vision for the Centre.

1.6 Positioning, Mission and Strategic Priorities

Chapter 5 considers how the NCPP should be positioned and outlines its mission and strategic priorities. It also identifies the Centre's target markets/client groups and considers the services and forms of association that might be developed for and with these groups.

1.7 A Business Model

Chapter 6 outlines a model through which the Centre can work towards the achievement of its mission and strategic priorities. The core business of the NCPP is clarified and the core competencies required to support the core business are identified. The chapter examines scope for strategic alliances, joint ventures and outsourcing. The structures, roles and relationships envisaged for the Centre are identified, including the support structures to be established to provide expert advice and assistance to the Centre's executive staff and to involve multiple stakeholders in partnership in the governance and work of the Centre.

1.8 Next Steps

The final chapter outlines the next steps to be taken following presentation of the document to the Council of the NCPP. The Council's reflections, feedback and recommendations will be sought as a basis for agreement on the strategic plan. When the Council's recommendations on the strategy discussion document have been received, an operational plan and work programme will be presented in support of the strategy. The Council Executive will also develop proposals concerning the management systems to be adopted to support the implementation of the plan. Performance indicators will also be identified as a basis for assessing progress in relation to the plan's major strategic priorities. The proposed Council substructures outlined in the document will be established and convened. Recruitment and deployment of professional staff will continue in the light of the strategic priorities identified and the proposals contained in the document regarding the Centre's core business and core competencies. It is expected that the NCPP's Strategic Plan will be formally launched early in 2001.

Figure 1.1
Strategic Planning Framework

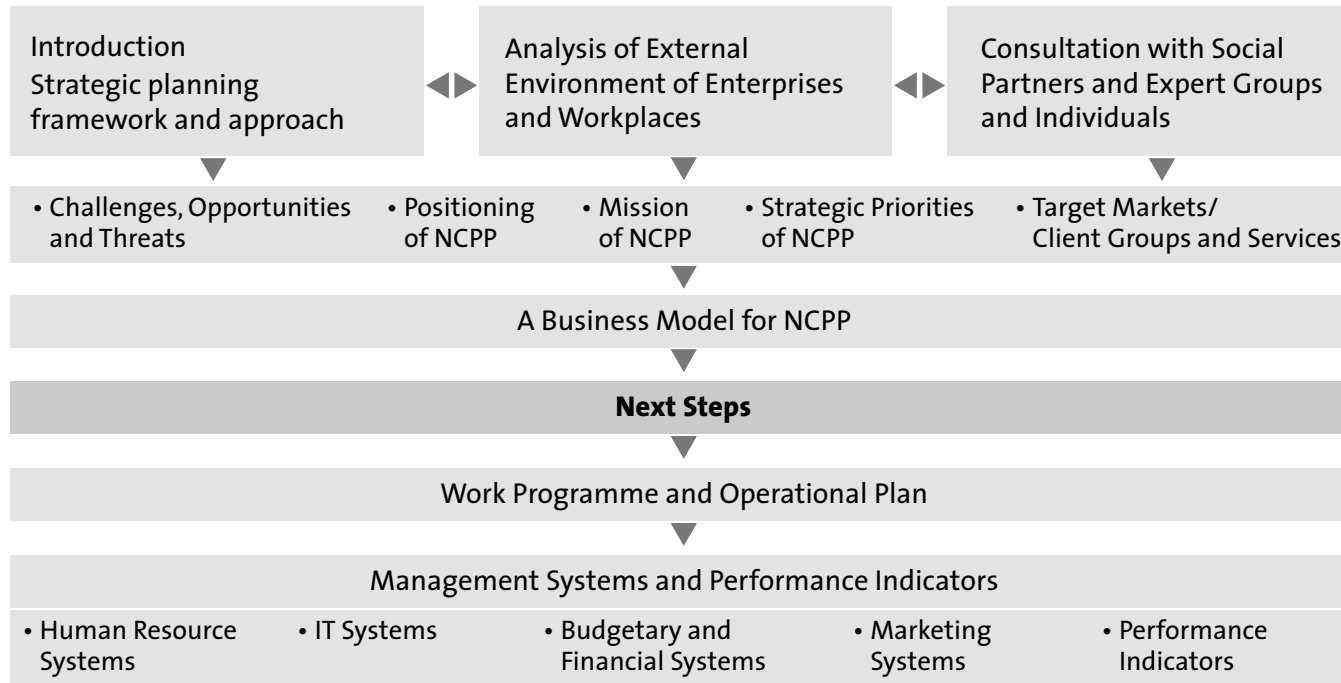


Figure 1.2
Time-Line for Strategic Planning Process

| May / June '01 | July / Aug / Sept. '01 | October '01 | November / December '01 | Jan / Feb '02 |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Guidelines on role and agenda of Centre as set out in <i>Programme for Prosperity & Fairness and Partnership at work in Ireland</i></p> | <p>Consultation with social partners organisations and expert bodies</p> <p>Preliminary drafts of sections of Strategic Planning Discussion Document</p> | <p>Consultative process completed</p> <p>Discussion document on Strategy drafted</p> <p>Document presented to Council</p> | <p>Council feedback and recommendations concerning Strategic Plan Discussion Document</p> <p>Documents on work programme, business plan and management systems to be prepared for Council</p> <p>Strategic plan to be finalised</p> | <p>Expected launch of NCPP Stra</p> |

The External Environment

This chapter examines the main trends in the external environment of the NCCP and their likely evolution over the medium-term. The focus is on the implications of trends for enterprises and workplaces and for partnership at these levels. It begins by considering trends in the macro-economy, in firms and the public services and in people's preferences with respect to work and jobs. The chapter then examines labour market trends, focusing on skills and training, life-long learning, flexible working, equality and diversity. Developments at EU level are examined next. The chapter also examines trends in the environment of industrial relations in Ireland. In this context it considers possible scenarios for the future of pay determination and centralised bargaining and their implications for the promotion of partnership at enterprise and workplace level. Next an outline assessment is presented of the current state of play with respect to the penetration and operation of partnership at these levels. Indicators of the current level of momentum are also discussed. The chapter concludes by highlighting the key environmental drivers that will shape the context in which the NCCP operates.

The review of trends in the external environment is supported by Tables and Figures. These are presented in Appendix 2.

2.1 The Macro-Economy, Competitiveness and Adaptability

Momentum built up behind workplace partnership during the second half of the 1990s. This was a period of exceptional economic performance. Real GDP grew on average by 9 per cent between 1993 and 2000. Employment grew at an annual average rate of close to 5 per cent from 1995-2000. Unemployment fell from 12 per cent in 1995 to 4.2 per cent in 2000. Living standards also rose significantly, cumulative real take-home pay rising by 35 per cent between 1987-97. Wage rises remained modest relative the rate of growth in productivity: successive national pay agreements moderating wage growth and contributing to improved competitiveness. The wage share of GDP declined from 73 per cent in 1985 to 60 per cent in 1998. Order was restored to the public finances, the level of public debt to GNP declining from 100 per cent in 1990 per cent to just over 40 per cent in 2000. By the early 2000s public spending in Ireland in proportion to GDP was among the lowest of developed Western Economies and budget surpluses were equivalent to about 2 per cent of GDP.

As labour supply declined and capacity and infrastructural constraints developed, a slow-down in the pace of economic growth was widely predicted: the so-called 'soft landing' scenario. The downturn in the US economy in 2000-2001, however, and the sharp reversal of fortunes in the high technology and ICT sectors, led to growing uncertainty as to sustainability of the Irish economic miracle. A spate of job losses in US and indigenous high technology companies in the spring and summer of 2001 added to the economic uncertainty, as did lower than projected revenue returns resulting from the US downturn and the effects of the foot and mouth crisis. The rate of wage rises increased significantly during 2000 and 2001, partly as a consequence of rising inflation and partly in reflection of the tight labour market, sparking fears of a damaging decline in competitiveness. Pressure for sizeable pay increases across the public sector – accommodated within the public sector benchmarking exercise – gave rise to further doubts concerning the sustainability of the current regime of public spending. The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11 2001 have added further to economic uncertainty, leading to a sharp fall in share prices and raising fears that the US economy could be tipped into deeper and more prolonged recession.

2.1.1 Economic projections over the short and medium term

Whether recent pressures on economic performance represent a temporary if significant dip in economic activity, or mark a decisive turning point in Ireland's economic fortunes, is thus a critical issue in assessing the environment in which

workplace partnership will develop over the medium-term and the challenges to which the Centre must respond.

The most reliable and wide-ranging medium-term economic forecast is that provided in the *ESRI Medium-Term Review 2001-2007* (Duffy et al. 2001). The review's 'benchmark forecast' projects continuing high growth for the rest of the decade relative to Ireland's European neighbours but a slowing in the rate of growth from the exceptional performance of recent years (Table A2.2.1). It projects that real GNP growth will slow over the decade to an annual average growth rate of 4.8 per cent between 2000 and 2005, falling to 4.3 per cent per annum to 2010. This growth scenario is seen to facilitate a continuation of the recent Irish convergence towards average standards of living in the EU. A growth rate below potential is forecast between 2003-2005, attributable to less favourable external conditions, principally a slowdown in world trade, a loss in competitiveness and an expected appreciation of the exchange rate of the Euro to the dollar and sterling.

The *MTR* recognises, however, that the benchmark portrayal of the prospects for the economy *over the next two to three years* might be considered optimistic. An alternative 'slowdown scenario' is also presented, which envisages more difficult economic conditions over the short term but a return to high growth thereafter without major consequences for the medium-term projections set out in the benchmark forecast. In the light of developments following the terrorist attacks on the US, the slowdown scenario represents the more probable outlook for the economy in the immediate future. This scenario anticipates that the US economy will undergo a more serious downturn. US equity prices will decline sharply and personal consumption and investment will be more adversely affected. A fall in the value of the dollar will result in a loss of competitiveness in the Eurozone and a slowdown in European growth. These developments will give rise to a very unfavourable short-term environment for the Irish economy. The projected outcomes include a sharp deceleration in the rate of growth from 10 per cent in 2000 to 6.0 per cent in 2001 and 1.8 per cent in 2003, a substantial cutback in FDI, a reduction in employment growth, a rise in unemployment, with an expected peak of 7.6 per cent in 2003, and a temporary ending of net immigration (Table A2.2.2). All firms in the traded sector are expected to come under pressure due to a loss of competitiveness and a slowdown in demand in Ireland's key markets. The general government surplus is projected to turn into small deficits in 2002-2003. It is recognised, however, that a further exposure exists with respect to the cost of meeting the benchmarking provisions of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*.

The Central Bank is somewhat more optimistic about the short-run prospects for the economy. A growth rate of 3.5 per cent is predicted for 2002 as against the 1.8 per cent predicted by the ESRI. The Central Bank predicts a rise in the rate of unemployment in 2002 to 4.5 per cent as against the ESRI's 6.3 per cent (Central Bank of Ireland 2001). An important difference between these outlooks is that the Central Bank forecast does not consider changes in the exchange rate.

The ESRI slowdown scenario forecast for the medium term envisages an annual average rate of employment growth of 1.7 per cent to 2005, and 2.4 per cent onwards to 2010, compared with 4.9 per cent between 1995 and 2000. Given a slackening in the rate of labour supply and a fall in the level of employment growth, the benefits of economic growth will increasingly be taken in the form of rising real wages, resulting in a stabilisation of the wage share of national output. It is projected that after tax real pay will rise by over 4 per cent per year over 2000-2005 – higher than the growth rates of the past 25 years. A gradual rise is projected in wage rates relative to Ireland's main trading partners, resulting in a loss of competitiveness. A danger of too great a loss of competitiveness arises, particularly in the face of a serious downturn. The medium-term forecast envisages, however, that any loss of competitiveness should not prevent the economy returning to near full employment after the temporary slowdown.

Projected continued high growth in both output and employment over the medium term is expected to permit a continuation in the overall strengthening of public finances. The Government is seen to have the opportunity over the next decade to repay the national debt, while simultaneously investing large amounts in the physical infrastructure and improving public services, especially in areas like health and education. The *ESRI MTR* assumes the adoption of a broadly neutral fiscal stance by Government, in contrast to the largely procyclical stance of recent years.

In summary, the ESRI's 'benchmark forecast' envisages a temporary downturn in the economy over the next few years. The now more probable 'slowdown scenario' envisages a significantly deeper and more pervasive downturn over the next two to three years, with serious short-term consequences for FDI, employment growth, unemployment and the public finances. The economy is expected to recover by the middle of the decade. Over the decade as a whole the economy will slow down from the exceptional growth rates of recent years but still achieve levels of growth above Ireland's EU neighbours. Living standards will continue to converge on the EU average and a return to full employment is projected following the downturn over the next few years. Ireland is expected to

lose cost competitiveness relative to its main trading partners, but rising relative wage levels should be consistent with the attainment of full employment over the medium term. A neutral fiscal stance by Government should make possible over the course of the decade substantial investment in physical infrastructure, the repayment of the national debt and substantial improvements in public services, especially in health and education.

This highly benign medium-term economic scenario is focused in the main on aggregate-level activity and indicators. Projections for specific sectors sometimes involve different scenarios. High-technology industries will remain the driving force behind the expansion of manufacturing industry as a whole. Traditional manufacturing, on the other hand, is projected to experience stagnation and then decline due to high relative labour cost rises and an appreciation of the exchange rate. A similar scenario is projected for the food-processing sector. The public utilities (electricity, air transport, post etc) will continue to undergo liberalisation, leading to falling employment over the decade. Construction will remain strong. By 2010 market services (distribution, transport and communication and personal and professional services) will become the dominant sector of the economy in employment terms, representing a level of employment 66 per cent higher than manufacturing. These sectors will also become more integrated into the international economy (the distributive sector) and will be more commonly traded than heretofore (the professional services sector).

A serious short-term downturn, followed by recovery and growth from the middle of the decade, will impact significantly on the ongoing efforts of businesses to adapt to competitive pressures. Efforts to modernise the public services may also be made more demanding by a slide into recession followed by a return to high growth. The tempo of adaptation in each sector and the implications of economic trends will be considered in the next two sections.

2.1.2 Competitiveness and adaptability in businesses

The major national competitive imperative, as outlined in a series of studies and reports, is for businesses to compete, wherever possible, primarily on the basis of productivity, quality, innovation and high skill. This imperative now underlies the policy of the IDA towards the FDI sector, where the priority is to shift from generating more jobs to improving the productivity and innovative capabilities of firms. This policy finds expression in the efforts of the IDA to assist multinationals to renew mandates from their parent firms in the direction of

moving their Irish subsidiaries higher up the value chain. Central here is the objective of encouraging firms to undertake higher levels of research and development in their Irish plants. The fact that fewer than one in four of the top exporting companies are involved to any significant extent in R&D in Ireland provides an indication of the challenge facing firms and the development agencies (*Forfas Annual Report 2001*). This policy imperative reflects the ongoing and increasing vulnerability of low skilled and low value-added jobs to cost competition from other regions of the global economy.

For all manufacturing and internationally traded services combined, there was an increase of 12.6 per cent in nominal terms in net output per employee in 2000. The increase in labour productivity amounted to 2.9 per cent in Irish-owned firms and 14 per cent in foreign-owned companies. Productivity levels and growth in the foreign segment of manufacturing and internationally traded services are high by international standards. Much of the Irish-owned segment, however, has low productivity levels and relatively modest productivity growth. The improvement of these levels has been identified by Forfas as a priority for the Irish-owned segment (*Forfas 2000: ch.3*). Other key priorities involve continuing to create additional higher value-added jobs in the internationally traded sector and raising the productivity of existing employees, as well as driving productivity in the non-traded sector, especially in services, by improving education and training levels in the sector and by exposing the sector to increased competition (*Forfas 2000: 25*).

The short-term uncertainty and projected loss of cost competitiveness over the medium term, as outlined in the *ESRI MTR*, adds to the urgency of building competitive capacity around adaptability, productivity, quality, innovation and high skills. Enterprise Ireland's range of supports for export-oriented indigenous firms also reflects this imperative, and again projections of declining cost competitiveness add further urgency to building competitive strength on the basis of similar attributes.

Nationally representative data collected at establishment level in the late 1990s by the Smurfit Graduate School of Business at UCD provides clear indicators of the growing intensity of competition in the Irish private and commercial semi-state sectors. Levels of competition were reported to be 'intense' or 'very intense' by 95 per cent of establishments; 86 per cent reported that competition had become more intense over the previous five years, and 75 per cent of establishments expected competition to intensify further over the medium term (Tables A2.2.3–5). Very strong trends are reported in the same survey with respect to the rate of change in production technologies, operating processes,

product development, within R&D activity and with respect to diversity in production methods. At the same time, most report that technical barriers to entering sectors have remained the same or declined (Table A2.2.6). These trends in the competitive environment and in production processes have clearly fed through into significant demands for change and adaptation across a range of operational areas, such as working practices, payment systems, working time arrangements and promotional structures. Change and adaptation with respect to a series of strategic issues have also become commonplace at establishment level (Table A2.2.7).

These indicators of the pace of competition and pressure for adaptation can be supplemented by data from a study of small to medium-sized manufacturing enterprises employing from 1 to 200 employees (Keegan et al. 2001). The study compared Irish SMEs with a sample of firms from other European countries. The highest single proportion of Irish SMEs in the sample, labelled 'contenders' (39 per cent), possessed the potential to compete internationally. Ireland, however, is seen to possess a significantly larger 'tail' of poor performers when compared with the rest of Europe (Figure A2.2.1). This result was due substantially on the relatively low performance of Irish SMEs in areas such as training provision, employee involvement and the approach adopted to people management. The extent, to which competitiveness and firm performance are already seen to determine by quality, speed to market and related product attributes is borne out in the survey (Figure A2.2.2).

2.1.3 Modernisation and adaptation in the public domain

The public services are faced with a need for modernisation, adaptation and change greater than at any time since the foundation of the State. Programmes of reform and modernisation are underpinned by the twin imperatives of supporting overall national, regional and local competitiveness and responding to the demands of users for services of higher quality and greater accessibility. The Strategic Management Initiative aims to modernise public service delivery and the management systems that support service provision. Nothing short of wholesale change in areas like performance management, flexibility and human resource development is envisaged as a prerequisite for the transformative vision articulated under the SMI (*Delivering Better Government*, 1996).

A parallel process of reform in local government also envisages significant improvements in efficiency, customer service and management decision-making (*Modernising Government: The Challenge for Local Government*, 2000).

The imminent Health Strategy is likely to propose major changes with respect to core areas of work organisation, scheduling and staff development and to view such changes as prerequisites for the achievement of a better health service. Change of such scale and depth must be achieved in a context marked by chronic deficiencies in industrial relations procedures, communication and consultation arrangements and management systems. These deficiencies are now viewed as unsustainable even in the context of the existing health service (*Review of Industrial Relations in the Health Service for the Minister for Health and Children, 2001*). The education sector is also faced with new challenges at multiple levels. The Department of Education and Science face the most significant re-organisation in its history. Agencies are to be created with responsibility for the management and delivery of core services. Services are to be localised and made available in a more integrated manner. Wide-ranging change across the education sector as a whole will be required if it is to respond adequately to challenges in such areas as governance, curriculum reform, quality assurance, access, equality of opportunity and life-long learning (*Department of Education and Science: Strategy Statement, April 1998*).

In the public utilities, especially air transport and electricity, EU-engendered policies of deregulation and marketisation have radically transformed the parameters of service provision. Significant programmes of change and restructuring have been implemented in bodies like the ESB, Aer Lingus, Aer Rianta and An Post, as well as in the now privatised Telecom/Eircom. Further restructuring is underway, or pending, in a number of semi-state companies. The imperative of undertaking large-scale investment in rail transport has had to confront major problems in underlying industrial relations, human resource management and operational management systems (*Iarnrod Eireann: The Way Forward July 2001*). The *ESRI MTR* projections envisage continuing pressure on the utilities to increase productivity and become more competitive. Change and restructuring are set to continue over the decade.

The promotion of performance and mutual gains through partnership needs to connect with ongoing efforts at adaptation and modernisation and consider the likely effects on these efforts of projected economic trends.

- A major challenge for the Centre for Partnership and Performance in the short term is to demonstrate the relevance of partnership to performance in conditions of economic downturn and growing uncertainty.
- Any perception that may arise or develop that economic uncertainty and downturn obviate the need for partnership or render partnership redundant will need to be countered.

- The major medium-term and long-term challenge is to demonstrate how partnership can assist employers, employees and unions to build competitive strength and contribute to performance in conditions of recovery and growth. Rising cost pressures will reinforce ongoing efforts to enhance productivity and adaptation and to shift economic activity, wherever possible, into higher value-added areas and markets. Partnership can and should be an important driver of adaptation in these areas.
- Beyond the downturn, important sectors of the Irish economy, especially indigenous manufacturing and the utilities, are set to experience particularly serious cost-based competitive pressure. The projected scale of the ongoing adaptation required calls for serious and sustained joint effort by employers, employees and unions in the handling of change.
- In the short term, pressure on public spending may magnify the challenge of improving efficiency and quality in public services. While partnership may thus have to operate in somewhat more straitened conditions, no major alternation of context appears likely on the basis of the economic projections available. The uncertainty surrounding the effects of benchmarking settlements needs however to be borne in mind. The major short-term and longer-term challenge in the public service is to establish partnership as a self-sustaining process linked with the realisation of the core objectives of programmes of reform and modernisation.
- Reform programmes are commonly focused on specific sectors (health, education, local government, central civil service department's etc.) and orchestrated in various ways from the centre within these sectors. Ways will need to be found to infuse partnership into core decision-making activities at these levels, as well as within individual organisations and workplaces.

2.2 Changing Work Preferences

International research provides evidence that employees commonly express a preference for higher levels of involvement in organisational decision-making that which is available to them at present. It also shows that progressively more employees are expressing a preference for involvement and participation as

time goes by (Inglehart, 1990; Gallie et al., 1998; Freeman and Rogers, 1999). The available evidence for Ireland, though limited in quantity, suggests that similar patterns and trends are evident here.

It is now nearly two decades since an Irish study found evidence of high levels of interest in involvement and participation in a large sample of Irish adult employees (Whelan, 1982). High quality representative data on the trend of preferences with respect to ways of working can be obtained from the Irish surveys conducted in conjunction with the periodic *European Values Surveys*. These show expectations and preferences with respect to many aspects of work and employment trending upwards over time, including expectations with respect to pay, conditions and job security.

The surveys, conducted in 1981, 1990 and 1999-2000, reveal a clear pattern in attitudes towards a range of aspects of jobs and decision-making. Progressively higher proportions of those at work in Ireland, amounting to substantial majorities by the end of the 1990s, reveal that they value such attributes of work as 'an opportunity to use their initiative', a job in which something can be achieved', a 'responsible job', an 'interesting job' and a 'job that meets one's ability (Figure A2.2.3).

Further evidence concerning how people wish to work can be obtained from two national surveys conducted for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions by Research and Evaluation Services. The first of these conducted in 1998 reveals that among the issues those at work identify as being most important to them in the future are a range of ways of becoming more involved in jobs and decision-making (Table A2.2.8). A second study conducted in 2001 reveals job-based and organisational decision-making as future priorities for unions. Respondents endorse 'joint partnership agreements' as an effective way of pursuing issues of concern in the workplace (Tables A2.2.9 and A2.2.10).

These findings have important implications for the development of workplace partnership.

- Part of the appeal of workplace partnership to employees and union members should be that large and growing numbers have revealed that they value working in jobs and organisations that provide scope for involvement and participation.
- In this way, advocacy of workplace partnership is working with the trend of social change in employment preferences.

- In order to develop the appeal of partnership to employees and union members it is important to emphasise how it is related to involvement, participation and people's preferred ways of working.

2.3 Labour Market and Workplace Challenges

Anecdotal evidence of acute labour shortages in recent years across a wide spectrum of jobs and sectors is underscored by research on vacancies in the economy (Williams et al. 2001: ch. 4). Currently available medium-term projections of labour demand and supply draw on revised versions of the growth and employment projections contained in the *ESRI Medium-Term Review 1999-2005* (Duffy et al. 1999). Notwithstanding the 2001-2003 downturn, as forecasted in the current *ESRI Medium-Term Review 2001-2007*, the available labour market projections appear reasonably robust with respect to the situation anticipated around the middle of the decade.

It has been projected that a gross labour force inflow of 621,000 would be required over the period 1997-2005 to meet an expected labour force demand of 1,225,000 in Spring 2005 (Sexton et al. 2000: iii-iv). In the aggregate supply is expected to be sufficient to meet demand requirements to 2005, but with serious inflow shortages relative to projected demand arising among skilled manual workers, craft workers and workers in sales.

Projected increases in labour supply to 2005 involve a significant rise in labour force inflows over those recorded in the period 1990-95 (Sexton et al. 2000). The sources of the projected increase in supply (Table A2.2.11) comprise sizeable inflows from three sources:

1. The educational system.
2. Persons engaged in 'home and 'other domestic' duties.
3. Immigration.

Increased inflows from these three sources pose significant challenges to enterprises and establishments. Challenges arise with respect to levels of training and human resource development required to sustain economic growth, with respect to pressure for more flexible working time arrangements and a better work-life balance and with respect to equal opportunities and growing workforce diversity.

Each of these areas and their implications for partnership will be considered in turn. As discussed in Chapter 1, a number of these areas were also identified in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* as issues that are amenable to being handled on a partnership basis.

2.3.1 Skills and training

The white paper *Human Resource Development* (1997:11) was emphatic that Ireland's competitiveness into the future would be determined above all by the skills and creativity of its people and by the creativity with which they were organised and deployed in business and society. The explicit policy premise was that business itself should be enabled to take greater ownership of, and responsibility for, defining its own training needs and delineating the necessary response. Given the mutuality of interest between employer and employee in human resource investment, it advocated that this greater ownership should be approached in a framework of partnership (1997: 15).

The long-run trend in the composition of employment involves a progressive rise in the proportion of the workforce in skilled occupations (O'Connell 2000: 75-6). The transformation of the economy and employment up to 2005 involves a continuation of the trend towards a growing share of managerial, professional and skilled occupations, but also involves a rise in the share of sales and service occupations (Table A2.2.12 and Figure A2.2.4).

Labour force projections up to 2005 have sought to identify the shares of employment across the spectrum of occupations that are likely to have to be filled by the inflow of younger and less experienced workers: a concept known as the 'total human resource requirement' (THR) (Sexton et al. 2001). These workers, for the most part, will need to be provided with the skills necessary to function adequately in the jobs in question, whether through on-the-job or off-the-job training or education.¹ THR projections show that the burden of basic training and development needs to 2005 is predicted as being heaviest among

¹ The utility of the THR measure as an indicator of training needs and their variation across groups of occupations carries a number of caveats. For example, the training that might be required for unskilled and semi-skilled occupations could be quite rudimentary in nature. Older/more experienced workers moving between jobs, or returning to the workforce, may require additional training, especially where the content of jobs has changed. THR projections also do not take account of imperatives for training and development that may arise from changes in processes and products that affect experienced and skilled employees. Data outlined below show that such changes have a substantial impact of skill requirements and training needs.

professional occupations, workers in sales and skilled workers – principally because these occupations are expected to undergo substantial employment increases (Table A2.2.13) (Sexton et al. 2001: 50-53). These projections, when viewed in conjunction with the changing occupational composition of employment, suggest that notwithstanding Ireland’s aspiration to compete internationally by following the ‘high-skill route’, the requirement for the education and training of high-skill workers co-exists with the need to make training provision for medium and low-skilled workers. Companies have therefore been encouraged by analysts to upgrade the skills of their employees at all levels (Hughes et al. 2000: 54-5).

Comparative data on the incidence of training in EU countries in the mid 1990s suggest that the overall level of provision in Irish companies compared well with the advanced European economies (Figure A2.2.5). Comparative data on levels of participation in job-related training among adult workers (25-64 age-group), however, indicated that Ireland lagged behind OECD nations in the mid 1990s, although the average duration or intensity of job-related training compared better with the OECD benchmarks (Table A2.2.14) (O’Connell, 1999: 9-18). The national survey of vacancies in the private non-agricultural sector, undertaken in late 1999/early 2000, indicated that nearly half of all firms reported that they provided neither formal or on-the-job training, though these accounted for only 16 per cent of employment, underscoring the well-established pattern of a training deficit in small firms as compared with large (Williams et al. 2000: 80)

A national training survey of a sample of 1,292 companies conducted in 1998 by IBEC indicated that more than 60 per cent of these were spending more on training compared with ‘previous years’. Those increasing their spend reported a more structured approach was being undertaken to training, suggesting the emergence of a less ad hoc and more strategic approach to human resource development (IBEC 2000: 37-8). The training effort for management and salaried staff frequently encompassed ‘hard’ aspects of competencies, such as production and service related skills as well as ‘soft’ aspects of competencies such as management and personal development. The training of manual staff more frequently focused on ‘hard’ skills and competencies (IBEC 2000: 27-8). The main drivers of training are the objectives of increasing competitiveness, improving productivity and increasing staff motivation (Figure A2.2.6). In line with current provision, future training priorities span hard aspects of skill and competence, as well as soft (Table A2.2.15).

In the national survey of vacancies in the private non-agricultural sector, undertaken in late 1999/early 2000, nearly 40 per cent of companies reported

that required skill levels had increased over the short-term. Changes in products, technology and processes and competitive/customer/market positions emerged as the main drivers of increased skill requirements (Table A2.2.16).

2.3.2 Life-long learning

Skill formation and human resource development in enterprises and workplaces in the medium-term will also be affected by the growing focus at multiple levels on continuing education and life-long learning. A series of national policy initiatives have addressed the provision of access to continuing education by mature students. The priority is to increase access on a part-time or distance basis and to provide specially designed employment-related courses concerned with upgrading skills and knowledge (*Report of Review Committee on Post Secondary Education and Training Places 1999* (De Buitelir Report); *Learning for Life – White Paper on Adult Education 2000*; Hayden 2001).

The white paper *Learning for Life* (2000: 126) points to the imperative of enhancing the quality of labour supply and upgrading the skills of those in the workforce through continued investment in education and training and through the development of a framework for life-long learning. In line with this imperative, the report states that the ultimate goal of workplace strategy involves ‘transforming the workplace into a learning organisation’ (2000: 127). This objective has led, inter alia, to investment in the creation of partnership-based education and training consortia of workplaces, under the guidance of the *Skillnets* initiative.

The ‘De Buitelir’ report (1999: 60), which focused on access to higher education, is explicit that provision for continuing education and life-long learning should respond to major policy priorities with respect to competitiveness and industrial policy. These include rapid technological change, dramatic changes in the nature of jobs and the fact that industrial development strategy relies on attracting high skill industries, which demand continual upgrading of the skills and knowledge of the work force (De Buitelir 1999: 60).

The target proposed in the report is to add an additional stock of 10,000 places for mature students (over 23 years of age) above the estimated level of up to 24,000 in the third-level system in 1996/97 (De Buitelir 1999: 60). While major challenges arise for education providers, it is clear that life-long learning also poses challenges at the level of enterprises and workplaces. These include flexibility to permit learners to make best use of part-time and distance

programmes, the provision of block release arrangements and the possible delivery of programmes of education in workplaces (De Buitelir 1999: 61-62). Similar challenges have been identified in an EU Working Paper on Lifelong learning, issued in 2000 and considered below in the context of an examination of EU-level developments impacting on enterprises and workplaces.

The implications for enterprises and workplaces of trends and priorities in skill formation and training provision include the following:

- Workplaces are increasingly operating in an economic and competitive context characterised by rising levels of skill and by increasing skill requirements that affects a wide range of occupations. Trends in markets, competitive conditions and production technologies are also driving significant numbers of enterprises to demand higher skill levels from their employees.
- The focus in both current training provision and future training priorities on ‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’ or technical skills and competencies may to a significant degree reflect organisations’ attempts to intensify bottom-up participation by employees in process and product development (see McCartney and Teague 2001: 786).
- The new priority being attributed to lifelong learning implies the need for more flexibility in the workplace with respect to access to part-time and full time education and training, block release opportunities to attend education and training programmes and the delivery of programmes at the workplace.
- An enterprise-focused and partnership-based framework for addressing the provision of training and life-long learning in Irish organisations now represents a favoured policy stance in these areas (see *Ireland’s National Employment Action Plan 2000*: 9).
- Training directly focused on the development of partnership skills has been engaged in various joint initiatives under such programmes as ADAPT and *Skillnets*. The training of partnership facilitators has also become an important feature of partnership initiatives in areas like health and local government, commercial semi-state companies and the private sector. No systematic assessment has yet been undertaken, however, of training needs in support of partnership and of how training can best be resourced into the future.

2.3.3 Working time and working life flexibility

The increased labour-force inflows envisaged from those engaged on home duties and those in the other domestic categories, points, in particular, towards rising female participation in the workforce. Table A2.2.17 outlines the rapid rise that has occurred in the female participation rate over the past decade and Table A2.2.18 outlines the changing share of total employment represented by women. Already the Irish participation rate for women under 35 is high by EU standards. The major trends up to 2005 are likely to involve a major rise in participation rates for women in the 35-55 year age group. Among younger women the main trend is likely to involve rise in the participation rate of women with limited education. For older women whose families are reared, changes in the tax and welfare systems are likely to be key factors influencing labour supply. For younger women, the ability to participate in the labour force is likely to depend mainly on flexible working arrangements and the availability of childcare arrangements (Hughes *et al.* 2000: 17).

Projections of labour supply predict a continuing fall in participation rates for men over 55 up to 2011 and for women over 65 up to 2005 (Duffy *et al.* 1999: 56; Hughes *et al.* 2000: 17). As the workforce ages, the case has nevertheless begun to be made that age of retirement should also become more flexible, both on grounds of responding to labour shortages and on grounds of promoting a better work-life balance and quality of life for older persons (NESF 2000: 52-55).

The sharp growth in female participation, combined with a tight labour market and attempts to attract older persons back to work, have led to growing pressure on firms to provide more flexible working-time arrangements. Employees, both men and women, are also seeking more flexibility to enable them to achieve a better work-life balance. As the workforce ages and more employees acquire responsibilities of care for older family members, these pressures are likely further to intensify.

Studies of working-time flexibility in Ireland have concluded that:

- Levels of provision of various flexible working time arrangements in Ireland, like job sharing, flexitime, term-time working, career breaks and sabbaticals, personalised and flexible hours systems, are in general already significant (Coughlan 2000; Humphreys *et al.* 2000a and b; Fisher 2000).
- Formal policies and agreements covering these areas are more prevalent in larger companies. SMEs are more likely to seek to respond to employees on an ad hoc and case by case basis.

- Less evidence exists on levels of demand for flexible working time arrangements. What evidence there is has to be assessed in the context that employees may sometimes be fearful of seeking flexibility because they may perceive that it could adversely affect their career prospects (Coughlan 2000: 50). The evidence available points towards the potential for a substantially higher level of demand for flexible working options. Employers also report an increase in demand for flexible working from employees (Coughlan 2000: ch.7).
- Family-friendly policies can respond to employees' priorities and contribute to the recruitment and retention of staff, to increasing productivity and to enhancing business performance (Coughlan 2000: Fisher 2000; Humphreys et al. 2000a and b).

Pressures for more flexible working time arrangements, emanating from a tight labour market and the changing composition of the workforce, are becoming manifest at a time when many employers are also seeking to promote greater working-time flexibility to increase productivity and enhance competitiveness. Developments in manufacturing systems, in modes of service delivery and in ICT technologies are increasing the pressures on businesses to seek working time flexibility on competitive grounds. General competitive pressures, as well as innovations such as just-in-time production, lean production and associated manufacturing concepts are leading businesses to seek greater flexibility to adjust labour supply to demand over the production cycle. The increased provision of services outside the conventional working day and working week is having the same effect in service industries. In recent years, international reductions in standard working hours have also typically gone hand in hand with more flexibility in working time arrangements at the level of enterprises and workplaces (Fynes et al. 1997 ch.1).

The twofold imperative of responding to changes in the labour market and to new competitive conditions have meant that flexible working time arrangements have become, and are set to remain, a significant issue for enterprise and workplaces over the next decade. Among the specific implications of these trends and pressures for enterprise and workplace partnership, the following may merit particular attention.

- The current centrality of these issues is evidenced in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, where family-friendly policies are the subject of a national framework. The purpose of the framework is to identify actions to be undertaken by the social partners at national level that may support

the development of family-friendly policies in the workplace (*Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, 2000: 43).

- Enterprises and workplaces are the main arenas in which these pressures are played out and in which the parties to employment can find agreement on forms of flexibility that are mutually beneficial.
- The introduction of flexible working time arrangements requires careful planning and a systematic assessment of how new arrangements may impact on businesses, on competitiveness and on employees. The involvement of employees and their representatives in such deliberations is likely to increase the effectiveness and acceptability of new arrangements.
- The promotion of flexible working time may involve proposals for national-level changes in areas such as childcare provision, taxation, welfare and pensions. Deliberation on these policies may support the development of options at enterprise and workplace levels.
- Flexible working time arrangements also have implications for policies on the promotion of equality and equal opportunities and on labour market and social inclusion affecting older workers. This is evidenced in the integration of measures fostering working time flexibility in the context of promoting equal opportunities in the *National Development Plan* and National Employment Action Plans (see *Ireland's National Employment Action Plan 2000*).

2.3.4 Equal opportunities

The rising female participation rate reflects a progressive feminisation of the Irish workforce (O'Connor 1998). Women remain concentrated however in certain groups of occupations, particularly in clerical and service jobs (Table A2.2.19). On the whole this pattern has been projected to continue up to 2005 (Hughes et al. 2000: 30-33). ESRI data show that the average hourly earnings of women in 1987 were about 80 per cent of those for men. This ratio rose to 82 per cent in 1994 and again to about 85 per cent in 1997 (Barrett et al 2000: 21). Comparative data suggest that the Irish pay gap is second highest among a group of EU countries² (Barrett et al 2000: 70).

² The countries included in the comparison were Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, Luxembourg, Spain, Belgium, Greece, Denmark, Portugal and Italy.

The best data available suggest that the major factors that account for the male-female earnings differential in the 1990s are differences in the labour market experiences of men and women, especially accumulated work experience and time out of the workforce. Discrimination – i.e. the difference between the pay of women and men with similar labour market characteristics – was estimated at about 5 per cent of the pay gap, reflecting a significant fall from the 15 per cent estimated for 1987 and comparable now with the wider EU pattern (Barrett et al 2000: 40).

In identifying policy measures that might further close the pay gap and promote equal opportunities, the ESRI study proposes policies that tackle low pay; that enhance the human capital value of women's education that make it easier for women to remain in the workforce during child-bearing and child-rearing years (childcare facilities, and flexible working time options), and policies that counter the segregation of women into clusters of jobs at the lower levels of occupational hierarchies in all occupational groups (Barrett et al 2000: ch. 8). A series of these and related policies imply initiatives at enterprises and workplaces, including:

- Flexible working time arrangements;
- Guaranteeing equal access by women to training and development opportunities, including training and development geared to equipping women to move up organisational and occupational hierarchies and to enter management;
- Ensuring that recruitment and promotional policies are non-discriminatory;
- Undertaking positive action to remove existing barriers to equal opportunities;
- Tackling gender discrimination in the world of work in all its forms, including harassment, bullying and the effects of organisational cultures inimical to women;
- Undertaking equality audits of policies and practices and action plans to address problems with existing policies and practices.

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Framework I, Annex III) sets down a framework for the promotion of such policies at the level of the enterprise and explicitly identifies equality of opportunities as an area that might usefully be addressed on the basis of partnership. The Equality Authority has promoted

progress within this framework through national-level deliberations between the social partners and through the provision of guidance and support to enterprises and groups of enterprises committed to developing practical enterprise-based equality initiatives (*The Equality Authority: Annual Report 2000*: Key Objective 2).

2.3.5 Growing workforce diversity

The National Survey of vacancies in the private non-agricultural sector undertaken in late 1999/early 2000 indicated that some 16 per cent of all firms with current job vacancies were attempting to recruit abroad, compared with 13 per cent in an earlier survey conducted in 1998/99. The highest incidence of overseas recruitment activity occurred in high-technology manufacturing (30 per cent) and in transport, personal and other services (29 per cent) (Williams et al. 2001: 35).

Immigration accounted for only a small part of total labour force growth in recent years, adding 48,500 to the population of working age between 1994 and 2000 (NESF 2000: 29). Available projections of labour supply to 2005 point towards a significant dependence on continued immigration if projected labour force requirements are to be met (Table A2.2.20). The projected short-term downturn could temporarily end net immigration, but medium-term projections envisage a continuing but declining flow from this source of labour supply (*ESRI Medium-Term Review 2001-2007*: chs.4 and 5).

A gross immigration inflow of 162,000 was projected between 1998 to 2005 (Sexton et al. 2001: 31). The activities most dependent on immigration involve skilled occupational categories: managers, professionals, associate professionals, skilled manual workers and craft workers. Significant immigration flows are also projected to be required in sales and clerical activities. The more rapid economic growth and employment growth, the greater will be the dependence on immigration (NESF 2000: 33-4). It has been projected that it is unlikely that the other available sources of labour supply will be able fully to meet increased labour demand over the medium term, particularly in those activities where the most acute needs are likely to arise (Sexton et al. 2001: 39-40).

Irish nationals have typically accounted for about 50 per cent of annual migration inflows, although in recent years their share has fallen to 43 per cent. Over time as the available pool of potential Irish immigrants declines, the composition of immigration by country of origin can be expected to change

(NESF 2000: 29). No detailed data are available on the country or region of origin of immigrants, and hence on the composition of the immigration flow and changes therein. Nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA), comprising the EU plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are legally entitled to work in Ireland without prior authorisation. The granting of renewable work permits provides an indication of the trend in immigration among non-EEA nationals. These are granted in circumstances where employers establish that it has not been possible to fill vacancies with Irish persons or other persons for whom a work permit is not required.³ In 2000 the Government introduced a new Work Authorisation/Work Visa Scheme for qualified persons with an offer of a job in a designated occupation (NESF 2000: 106-7).

Data on work permits indicate the sharp rise that has occurred in non-EEA immigration since the mid 1990s, and, in particular since 2000 (Table A2.2.21). Data on work visas/authorisations also show growing numbers of immigrants joining the workforce from this programme, although the numbers are substantially smaller (Table A2.2.22). When viewed in the context of the data on immigration flows in Table A2.2.20, these data indicate that the flow of immigrants into the workplace has become more diverse (see also IBEC 2000: 4).

Data are available for a sample of 250 companies in sectors where the employment of non-EU immigrants or refugees was known or thought to be concentrated. This shows that in the region of 40 per cent of companies employed immigrants/refugees. Sixty-three per cent of these were in a range of services, especially hotels and catering. In manufacturing the largest concentration of companies (13 per cent) was found in electronics and telecommunications (IBEC 2000: 2).

These trends and migration projections point towards growing diversity in employment in enterprises and workplaces across a wide spectrum sectors and activities. Adapting to growing diversity represents a challenge, and one with little precedent in Irish employment relations. Among the specific challenges arising at these levels are:

- Developing policies to prevent discrimination or harassment on grounds of race in compliance with the Employment Equality Act of 1998 and the

³ Several categories of immigrants are exempt from this requirement. Employees of multinationals operating in Ireland posted on transfer and secondment are exempt for a fixed period, as are people granted leave to take up employment by virtue of being a spouse or parent of an Irish national, or allowed to remain in Ireland on humanitarian grounds.

Equal Status Act of 2000. The legislation covers discrimination in the areas of recruitment, as well as employment and training opportunities and general terms and conditions of employment.

- Developing policies to promote the integration of racial minorities in the workplace.
- Identifying best practice and models for the management of diversity and their dissemination across enterprises and workplaces.
- Developing an anti-racism policy and procedures for handling grievances and complaints of a race-linked nature.
- Developing training programmes addressing the implications of diversity for all human resource and industrial relations systems, policies and practices.
- Developing the potential of a diverse workforce for improving business performance and for enhancing the quality of working life of all sections of the workforce.
- Growing diversity in the workplace also raises a series of issues for deliberation at national level, some already subject to deliberation by the social partners. These include the operation and consequences of schemes permitting immigrants to avail of employment opportunities.

2.4 Developments at European Union Level

A range of EU directives and policies impact on enterprises and workplaces, or will do so in the near future. The focus here is not intended to be exhaustive but to present an overview of the main recent and current EU-level initiatives with significant implications for partnership and the conduct of employment relations at enterprise and workplace levels in the years immediately ahead. Technical details will be kept to a minimum.

Future initiatives will likely be pursued in the context of the new strategic goal for the European Union promulgated at the 2000 Lisbon Summit: 'to become 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.'

2.4.1 Information and consultation

The Directive on Informing and Consulting Employees in the European Community⁴ is likely to be adopted formally by the end of 2001.

- The Directive seeks to strengthen dialogue and promote mutual trust within undertakings in the European Union. This is being done with a view to improving their capacity to anticipate risk; to make work more flexible; to facilitate employees' access to training; to maintain security; to make employees aware of adaptation needs; to increase their willingness to undertake measures to increase their employability, and to promote employee involvement in the operation and future of the undertakings in which they work, thereby increasing their competitiveness.
- The Directive establishes minimum requirements for information and consultation with respect to recent and probable developments in undertakings or establishments, or their economic situation; information and consultation on the situation, composition and probable development of employment within undertakings or establishments, and on any anticipatory measures envisaged, in particular where there is a threat to employment. Establishments or undertakings must also inform and consult with respect to decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation, or in contractual relations.
- The Directive seeks to establish a general framework comprising principles, definitions and arrangements for information and consultation. It is for the Member States to comply with and adapt this framework to their own national situation. The process of compliance and adaptation should ensure, where appropriate, that management and labour play a leading role by allowing them to establish by agreement the arrangements for informing and consulting employees which they consider to be best suited to their needs and wishes.
- The scope of the Directive is restricted, according to the choice made by Member States, to undertakings with at least 50 employees or establishments employing at least 20 employees. Member States with no established statutory system of information and consultation, or of

⁴ Council of the European Union, *Common Position Adopted by the Council with a View to Adoption of a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a General Framework for Informing and Consulting Employees in the European Community*, Brussels 17 July 2001.

employee representation, have the possibility of further restricting the scope of the Directive as regards the number of employees on a transitional basis (as set down in article 10).

- Member States are obliged to adopt the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive, or to ensure that management and labour have introduced the required provisions by way of agreement, within 3 years of the Directive coming into force.

2.4.2 Employee Involvement in the European Company

The European Company Statute, currently under examination by the European Parliament, creates a uniform legal framework for the operation of multinational companies across Member States. In the case of companies opting to adopt the new structure, a Council Directive, currently under examination by the European Parliament, provides for the establishment of arrangements for the adoption of employee involvement.⁵

- The Directive provides for the creation of a Special Negotiating Body (SNB) to agree the form of involvement of employees in the European Company.
- The Directive regulates the composition and operation of SNBs. If agreement on arrangements for employee involvement cannot be reached through the SNB, standard provisions would apply in some circumstances.⁶
- These involve stipulations as to the structure and composition of representative bodies, management giving regular reports to employees on business plans, production, sales, management changes, mergers, divestments, potential closures and lay-offs.

2.4.3 European Works Councils

The EU European Works Council Directive was transposed into Irish law through the Transnational Information and Consultation Act 1996. The Directive and the

⁵ Council of the European Union, *Council Directive Supplementing the Statute for a European Company with regard to the Involvement of Employees*, Brussels 1 February 2001.

⁶ The main exceptions involve European Companies coming into being through mergers and changes to the status of existing companies, where other provisions are set down in the Directive.

Act set down provisions for the establishment of works councils (EWCs) in ‘community-scale’ undertakings with at least 1000 employees within EU member states and at least 150 employees in each of at least two different member states. EWCs are consultative forums in which employee or union representatives meet management on a regular basis to exchange information and consult on a range of stipulated transnational business issues and concerns. These include the development of the business; production and sales; the probable trend of employment and investments, and plans with respect to new working methods and production processes. Before the Act came into force, nearly 30 Irish-based multinationals had concluded voluntary agreements on works councils with their staff or unions. It is estimated that about 550 Irish-based operations are involved in works council arrangements.

While research on the operations and effects of EWCs is ongoing at a European level, little systematic research has been undertaken on EWCs in Irish-based operations.

2.4.4 Financial participation

A series of EU-level initiatives have sought to foster the development of employee financial participation and the inclusion of all categories of employees in financial participation schemes. A Commission Working Paper⁷, published in August 2001, seeks to build on existing initiatives and policies in this area and to begin a consultative process that might add impetus to the debate on financial participation at European level.

- The Working Paper notes that EU studies of financial participation in company profits have shown it to be associated with higher productivity. The goal of wider participation is shown to be consistent with a range of EU economic objectives, including the development of risk capital markets, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the modernisation of work organisation.
- General principles are set down that should guide progress on financial participation. Financial participation should be voluntary; should be open to all employees; involve pre-defined and clear, transparent plans and formulae linking financial returns to enterprise results; should operate

⁷ Commission of the European Communities, *Financial Participation of Employees in the European Union*, Commission Staff Working Paper, Brussels 26 July 2001.

consistently over time; should avoid employees assuming unreasonable risks, and should be complimentary to pay.

- Transnational barriers to financial participation are identified, in particular differences in tax incentives between Member States, and lack of legal clarity about payment of social security contributions on income from financial participation.
- The possibility is canvassed of Community-level actions to promote financial participation, including encouraging the introduction or refinement at national level of general principles that might be proposed by the Commission. Transnational obstacles to the more extensive application of financial participation within the European Union might also become the focus for Community-level actions.

2.4.5 EU policy and life-long learning

The EU has approached the case for life-long learning in terms of strengthening Europe's competitiveness, increasing the employability and adaptability of the workforce and promoting active citizenship in economic, social life and political life. At the 2000 Lisbon summit, the Heads of the Member States endorsed the importance of life-long learning by agreeing that in the next decade the EU should set an example in this area for the world.

Life-long learning is now seen to represent the common guiding principle for the new generation of Community education, training and youth programmes. Since 1998, EU Employment Guidelines, which set the parameters for Ireland's National Employment Action Plans, have stressed the importance of life-long learning for employment. The objectives of the EU with respect to life-long learning and the various strands of policy in the area are outlined in a Commission Working Paper, published in 2000.⁸ The purpose of the paper was to stimulate debate on life-long learning in the Community

The focus here is on reviewing the principles and policies advocated with respect to the enterprise and workplace and the role of the social partners.

- The Memorandum recognises that comprehensive strategies have yet to be developed by the majority of Member States. All recognised, however, that working together in a variety of partnerships was an essential means

⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Commission Staff Working Paper, Brussels, 30 October 2000.

of putting life-long learning into practice and that the social partners were central to the development and implementation process. One way forward, consistent with this overall approach, was for the social partners to establish framework agreements on life-long learning.

- It is emphasised that employers were increasingly demanding the ability to learn and acquire new skills rapidly and to adapt to new challenges and situations. The EU was thus faced with the challenge of visibly raising levels of investment in human resources.
- A series of challenges are outlined with respect to the incentives for learning at and for the workplace. These include adjusting the ways in which education and training are provided; adjusting the organisation of paid work, so that people can participate in learning throughout their lives and plan for themselves how learning can be combined with working and family life; developing ‘individual learning accounts’ funded by employees themselves, in conjunction with private and public sources; developing company schemes that give employees time or money to pursue learning of their own choice or agreed to be vocationally relevant, and negotiating rights to subsidised study. It is envisaged that the social partners might negotiate agreements covering the co-funding of learning for employees, and more flexible working arrangements that make participation in learning practically feasible.
- Education and training institutions needed to be encouraged to respond through a shift towards user-oriented learning systems with fluid and permeable boundaries across sectors and levels and that recognised non-formal and workplace-based learning.

2.4.6 Partnership and work reorganisation

In a 1997 Green Paper, *Partnership for a New Organisation of Work*,⁹ the Commission sought to stimulate a European debate on the need for new forms of work organisation based on high skill, high trust and the production of high quality goods and services. A follow-up Communication in 1998 stressed that the social partners could make progress in this area. The launching of a social

⁹ European Commission, *Partnership for a New Organisation of Work*, Green Paper, Brussels, 1997.

partner consultation process on the subject of the modernisation and organisation of work in June 2000 provides continuing focus on this area.¹⁰

- The Green Paper recognised that considerable scope existed for improving competitiveness and employment in the EU and for improving the delivery of public services through a better organisation of work in the workplace.
- It recognised that no one model of partnership suited all circumstances, but argued that the concept of partnership implied, in particular, the replacement of hierarchical and innovative work structures by more innovative and flexible structures based on high skill, high trust and the increased involvement of employees.
- A series of ‘policy challenges’ were identified. These include how partnership could be made to reconcile employment security for workers with the flexibility needed by firms; how training and skill formation could be enhanced, and how changes in wage systems, working-time arrangements and the mainstreaming of equal opportunities could be addressed within the ambit of partnership at work.

2.5 The Political, Social and Public Policy Environment

Consensus exists among the major political parties concerning the benefits of the social partnership model for Ireland. The extension of partnership to the level of enterprises and workplaces has also met with approval across much of the political spectrum. Where differences of viewpoint are apparent they relate mainly to two areas. Differences of emphasis are apparent across and within political parties as regards the benefits and attractions of the ‘European social model’ and the ‘US model’ of labour markets and enterprise, or as regards how strands of both models might best be combined for Irish conditions. Individual parliamentarians also sometimes question what they perceive to be a diminution in the status and powers of the Oireachtas under the model.

¹⁰ Developments following the publication of the Green Paper are outlined in Commission of the European Communities, *Financial Participation of Employees in the European Union*, Brussels, July 2001, p. 7.

Consensus exists around a vision of competitive strategy and industrial policy which sees Ireland competing primarily on the basis of skill, innovation, adaptability and flexibility – attributes of Ireland’s competitive advantage that can be supported by workplace partnership.

While the political impetus behind the objectives of reforming and modernising the public services and local authority services appears moderate at the present time, a more vigorous dynamic appears to be emerging in the health services and arguably in public transport.

The physical and social infrastructures in which work and employment are embedded are also imposing considerable strains on prevailing workplace models. Traffic congestion in major towns and cities and more remote commuting patterns, linked with house price appreciation, increase the value of flexible work patterns to employers and employees. An ageing population, involving a rising burden of care for those at work and a trend towards dual parent working also point to a growing demand for more flexible forms of work organisation.

Specific areas of public policy affecting enterprises and workplace are examined in other sections of this chapter. Here the general disposition of the political environment and public policy towards these areas might be portrayed as follows.

- The NCPP will be operating in a political environment with a high degree of general support for the partnership model and for a vision of national competitiveness and industrial policy that can be effectively supported by partnership at enterprise and workplace levels.
- Calls for greater accountability with respect to institutions linked with partnership may intensify and warrant a response focused around the provision of plans and progress reports to the relevant Oireachtas bodies.
- While the main agencies for dispute resolution sometimes comment on the trends and problems that come to light in the course of their work, such commentary has not been a central aspect of their remit. Their scope for comment is constrained by their core concern with facilitating dispute resolution. The agencies’ main focus is on industrial relations and their experiences are informed in the main by issues that emerge in the dispute resolution process.
- There are some indications of an appreciation that public policies affecting enterprises and workplaces, in particular their capacity to adapt to competitive challenges and to respond to new employee and social priorities, may require a new guiding vision and a coherent intellectual

framework to counter the danger that they might become disjointed across multiple frameworks, programmes and agencies.

- A lacuna exists with respect to the provision of leadership, debate, commentary and deliberation on the kinds of human resource and industrial relations practices warranted by new competitive imperatives and, more broadly, with respect to the basic institutional ‘architecture’ of human resources and industrial relations suited to an advanced and dynamic economy.
- Recognition of the need for a more coherent intellectual, deliberative and policy framework for measures and programmes concerned with the worlds of work and employment also represents a major challenge in the context of promoting partnership and performance.

2.6 Developments in Irish Industrial Relations

Enterprise and workplace partnership will be fostered in the context of the wider industrial relations system, and will be affected by changes in the climate and character of industrial relations. Currently industrial relations in Ireland are probably more turbulent and uncertain than at any time for more than a decade.

Two major aspects of the industrial relations system are of particular relevance for the context in which partnership will develop over the medium-term: the underlying climate of industrial relations in enterprises and workplaces and the future of pay determination.

2.6.1 The climate of industrial relations

Since the advent of social partnership in 1987 industrial relations in Ireland have been remarkably stable and free of conflict when judged in terms of the historical pattern (Figure A2.2.7). While factors other than the national agreements have been important in shaping the climate of industrial relations – in particular more intense international competition and, until the mid 1990s, serious recession – the stability and predictability afforded by national-level consensus were undoubtedly important. This was evidenced by the continuance of low levels of industrial conflict as the economy recorded unprecedented levels of growth, record levels of employment creation and a sharp reduction in unemployment from the second half of the 1990s.

More recently a number of serious disputes have raised the prospect that the underlying climate of industrial relations may again be changing in the direction of a higher level of adversarialism and rising industrial conflict (Figures A2.2.7 and A2.2.8). The most serious and prolonged work stoppages have, however, been concentrated in the public utilities, where in some cases major programmes of structural change have been in train, as well as in the public services.

Across the economy there are indications of considerable pressure on the pay norms set down in the current national agreement. This reflects demands on unions arising from rising inflation and rising expectations and the concern of employers to recruit, retain and motivate staff in a labour market with near zero unemployment (Williams et al. 2001: 52; LRC 2001: 9). The US downturn has put further strain on the national agreement as employers have indicated that the *PPF* clause covering below-the-norm pay rises may need to be invoked in firms adversely affected.

To this context can be added the unrelenting pressure in many sectors for continuous adaptation, flexibility and improvements in productivity in response to global trends and increasingly intense competition. In the exposed sector, pressures for continuous adaptation and flexibility emanate directly from market pressures. In the public sector, the ongoing process of deregulation and privatisation will continue to require levels of change in employment practices and industrial relations structures in public utilities greater than at any time in their history. The success of programmes of investment in the transport services will also be predicated on major changes in underlying industrial relations postures and practices. Major investment programmes in the health services will also require new ways of working for employers, unions and employees.

Should this underlying situation continue into the medium-term, the challenge will be to foster partnership in a context that will often be marked by immediate pressures on work organisation and productivity, as well as by pressures on pay. These pressures could in some sectors trigger the assertion or reassertion of traditional postures on the part of unions and employers.

2.6.2 The future of pay determination

A second major aspect of industrial relations bearing on the underlying climate in enterprises and workplaces concerns the future of pay determination. Until the recent emergence of pay drift, centralised pay determination had effectively removed pay fixing from industrial relations in the enterprise and workplace, or regulated the scope and character of pay bargaining at these levels through local

bargaining clauses. With pay taken out of the equation, space opened up for the handling of other issues at the workplace, including partnership, in line with the principles set down in the chapters and frameworks of the national agreements.

In outlining possible scenarios for pay determination, the new situation in the public service is first considered and then the question of the future of centralised pay bargaining.

The establishment of the Public Service Benchmarking Body and the move towards systematically comparing public service pay levels with the private sector represents the most significant change in public service industrial relations for more than half a century.

The consequences of benchmarking remain to be determined, as does any relationship that might exist between benchmarking and any future national pay agreement or framework. Under the *PPF* benchmarking is specified as a method for handling any outstanding claims or commitments in the public service in relation to pay, analogues or other reviews. Beyond the *PPF*, it would appear that benchmarking could in principle operate as a method for periodically fixing the pay levels of different public service groups on the basis of comparisons with private sector analogues, possibly leaving scope for the retention of national-level adjustments to pay on the current model. Alternatively, beyond the *PPF* if no national agreement emerges benchmarking could operate as an alternative to participation in a national agreement for public service groups.

The comparisons with private sector analogues at the core of benchmarking might reveal that pay and salary levels prevailing in different parts of the private sector reflect high levels of ongoing flexibility and adaptation, or that reward systems in the private sector are more commonly based on performance and gain sharing measures of various kinds. Should this be the case, stipulations with respect to co-operation and engagement with ongoing programmes of modernisation and adaptation might enter the equation of public service pay fixing in the context of the implementation of benchmarking awards. Pressure might further build up for a review of reward systems, industrial relations processes, and their linkage with modernisation and performance in the public services. In such a scenario, benchmarking could herald a profound reassessment of the basic architecture of pay, performance and industrial relations in the public services

Alternatively, the promotion of flexibility and adaptation in the public services might continue to be handled largely as at present: on the basis of local or

category-specific stipulations regarding change and attracting awards above and beyond basic pay adjustments arising from benchmark comparisons.

It will be necessary to prepare to foster and support partnership in the context of either scenario: the first involving the ‘mainstreaming’ of flexibility and adaptation within public service pay fixing and industrial relations; the second involving a larger measure of continuity with prevailing practices linking supplementary pay rises with commitment to deliver on programmes of agreed change.

Looking forward, three scenarios with respect to the future of centralised pay bargaining might be envisaged. Each has implications for the scope and nature of the initiatives and activities that might be undertaken in supporting workplace partnership. Two of these scenarios envisage substantially higher levels of flexibility in enterprises and workplaces with respect to the scope available for tailoring pay adjustments and pay determination on performance

1. *The continuance of national pay bargaining on the current model:* represents the first scenario. Such a scenario could arise in particular if a deep economic downturn or even crisis coincided with the final phase of the current national pay agreement. In this scenario pay increase norms would be centrally negotiated, most likely as part of a programme of measures covering economic and social policy. The scope for local pay bargaining would be restricted, although local bargaining clauses might provide some scope for additional pay rises within fairly tight centrally pre-determined parameters. Enterprise and workplace partnership might here be expected to receive encouragement, as at present, through ‘framework-type’ measures associated with pay agreements. These might continue to be differentiated in significant respects between the private and public sectors. Such a scenario would involve a large measure of continuity with the recent pay-fixing context of enterprise and workplace partnership. The fostering of partnership would largely be de-coupled from the basic process of pay adjustment, or coupled with supplementary pay bargaining activity. A national framework agreement might, as at present, provide guidance on the development and implementation of partnership and the role of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance therein. It is likely that any such framework agreement would take cognisance of the apparent slowing of momentum with respect to workplace partnership under the *PPF*, notwithstanding the more emphatic support for workplace partnership in the private and public sectors provided under the relevant *PPF* frameworks (see section 2.7 below).

2. *A national framework agreement providing substantial scope for pay determination at local level:* This scenario represents a half-way house between centralised pay bargaining as it has been known since 1987 and radically decentralised bargaining. It would involve an effective shift in the locus of pay adjustment towards local level, possibly within a national framework agreement possibly outlining agreed criteria for pay adjustment and procedures for conflict resolution.

In the European Union, a shift from tightly centralised pay determination towards sectoral and regional pay fixing, or the re-emergence of ‘social pacts’ involving pay fixing arrangements at these levels, represent central trends in pay fixing over the past decade. In the Irish case, most of the sectoral and regional bargaining units that had provided the basis for co-ordinated pay rounds in periods of free collective bargaining collapsed with the ending of national pay bargaining in the 1980s. It is not apparent in the light of competitive conditions and the diverse structure of the economy how they might re-emerge. In the private sector it appears more likely that pay determination would revert in most industrial sectors and for most groups to the level of the enterprise or the workplace. In the public sector, a national agreement covering the sector might emerge, or a national framework setting down agreed parameters for pay adjustment for different areas of the public service. This would need to articulate a relationship with benchmarking, should benchmarking continue beyond the current cycle.

In the scenario of ‘organised decentralisation’ pay adjustment might be coupled more directly with considerations of flexibility, productivity and adaptation within firms, workplaces and areas of the public service. It is conceivable that workplace partnership too might be directly coupled with the delivery of such objectives, and might thus represent a mainstream, as distinct from an add-on or supplementary methodology for delivering on improved performance and mutual gains within a new pay bargaining regime.

The basic institutional architecture linking central agreements with firms and workplaces and linking pay with performance and partnership within enterprises and workplaces would need to be rethought in the context of such a development

3. *A move to decentralised pay determination:* In this scenario pay adjustment in the private sector would occur at the level of firms and enterprises, largely unguided or unencumbered by central framework

stipulations. In the public sector a national agreement might be concluded, possibly in the context of a continuation of benchmarking. The climate of employment relations at the enterprise and workplace will likely be determined in major degree by the handling of pay fixing. In a best case scenario, partnership might provide a basis for coupling pay adjustment with organisational performance and mutual gains. In the worst case scenario, intensive and acrimonious negotiations surrounding pay fixing and a possible reassertion of traditional postures could displace partnership or dilute its appeal, at least in some sectors. With little support provided by central agreements or frameworks, and with pay fixed directly at the level of enterprises and workplaces, partnership and its advocates would have to establish directly its superior effectiveness as a mode of promoting higher performance, handling change and conducting employment relations. The postures of firms are likely to involve either the mainstreaming of partnership as an effective joint approach to the conduct of employment relations, or its displacement and the reassertion of traditional postures. Both outcomes could be anticipated and the balance between them would be significant for the future course of partnership.

The following conclusions regarding the changing context of industrial relations and pay determination can be summarised.

- Industrial relations are currently more turbulent and uncertain than at any time for more than a decade. Major pressures for change and adaptation exist in the private and public sectors, as well as pressures for higher pay and better conditions emanating from tight labour markets and high employee expectations. While these expectations might be dampened somewhat by an economic downturn they seem likely to remain strong.
- It seems apparent that if partnership is to develop and diffuse more widely in current circumstances, rather than being deflected or undermined, it will have to connect directly with responses to mainstream business pressures on employers and with employees' expectations with respect to pay and employment security.
- The future course of pay determination will influence the development of partnership. The public service benchmarking initiative could act as a catalyst for a reassessment of the links between modernisation and change programmes, pay, partnership and industrial relations institutions and processes.

- A vibrant and critical role exists for the National Centre for Partnership and Performance in the context of a move towards decentralised pay determination. A more decentralised model of pay determination, whether in the context of a new national agreement, or in the absence of a national agreement, would appear to require a more direct coupling of pay determination with performance at firm and workplace levels. Partnership could provide a means of effectively coupling performance with mutual gains in the context of local pay fixing, and represent an alternative to unilateral or adversarial approaches to pay fixing.

2.7 Progress and Current Momentum

The non-existence of a comprehensive, up-to-date, empirically-based review of partnership in enterprises and workplaces makes the task of assessing the current state of play difficult, and makes it even more difficult still to benchmark progress over time. From a synthesis of relevant studies and reports, the following broad conclusions nevertheless appear to be warranted.

- A significant level of innovation and experimentation with partnership-based approaches to decision-making and work reorganisation has been evident in recent years in the private and public sectors; in non-union and unionised organisations, and in foreign-owned multinationals as well as indigenous companies. Therefore the social partners and many firms, workforces and unions have already acquired significant experience with the operation of various modes and forms of partnership (McCartney and Teague 1997; Roche and Turner 1998; IBEC 1999; Roche and Geary 2000; Geary 2000; O'Donnell and Teague 2000).
- Notwithstanding the level of activity recorded, little compelling evidence can be found that Ireland can be viewed by international standards as a leader with respect to the diffusion and depth of workplace partnership (Roche and Geary 2000). Such comparative evidence as exists suggests that the opposite may be the case insofar as European benchmarks are concerned (Cahill 2000; Gill and Krieger 2000).
- A number of EU programmes have supported the development of partnership, the preparation of training and diagnostic materials and the dissemination of models and learning experiences. These are widely judged to have made an important contribution to diffusing partnership.

Initiatives like the joint IBEC-ICTU ADAPT Participation in Action at Enterprise Level (PACT) Programme, the IBEC-ICTU and IPC's New Work Organisation Programme and the SIPTU ADAPT Programme, made inroads in familiarising companies and unions with working through partnership (O'Donnell and Teague 2000).

- Networks of partnership facilitators, many of these ongoing, have been created in different sectors, particularly health, local government, in some public utilities and large private sector firms. These networks probably amount to several hundred persons, but little effort has been devoted to capturing, distilling and more widely disseminating their unique experience and expertise, their perspectives on the challenges of animating partnership and their assessment of its benefits and potential.
- Partnership has been more commonly applied to the resolution of operational challenges and problems than to the handling of strategic issues (Roche and Geary 2000).
- Based on such evidence as is available, Ireland may possess a number of exemplars and models of partnership of international significance in both the private and the public sectors.
- Partnership has been adopted as the main approach to handling major programmes of market-driven change or deregulation in a significant number of organisations, with consequences widely accepted as beneficial to management, staff, unions and customers (Roche and Turner 1998; Roche 2001; O'Dowd 1998).
- Assessments of partnership initiatives point to generally positive effects on performance, on employee attitudes and job satisfaction and on union representation (O'Dowd ongoing; Roche and Geary 2001; IPC 2001; O'Donnell and Teague 2000).
- In recent years there is some evidence that the momentum behind partnership initiatives may be waning in areas of the public service and in some public utilities, sometimes triggering reviews and reassessments of existing partnership arrangements. There is evidence also that the rate of adoption of partnership initiatives in unionised companies may have slowed in recent years (Higgins 2001; O'Dowd ongoing).
- The situation in non-union companies is less clear. There is little reason to suggest that non-union multinationals are any less wedded than in the past to modes of partnership based on the direct involvement of

employees. Nor is there any evidence that these modes of partnership are any less robust in the more difficult competitive and commercial circumstances being encountered currently. It is less clear that partnership has been diffusing significantly more widely among non-union companies in general.

Among the implications of these conclusions for the National Centre for Partnership and Performance the following might be highlighted.

- Little authoritative research is available against which progress with partnership can be benchmarked, making a reliable profile of development over time difficult to construct.
- While there has been considerable experimentation and experience with different modes of partnership, arising in different contexts and addressing different types of issues and challenges, with the exception of the ADAPT projects, little of this learning has been captured or distilled in a form that can assist organisations more generally to learn and make progress.
- Some exemplars of partnership of major significance can be found in Ireland's recent experience, but again very little of the learning that has been acquired by these has been captured for wider dissemination and application.
- Assessments of Irish partnership initiatives available report broadly positive effects on stakeholders, but little systematic research has been done on this critical issue, and the research that is available needs to be synthesised and disseminated.
- There are some indications of a loss of momentum and a slowing of diffusion of partnership in recent years. Why this should be the case remains unclear, as does any link there may be with more turbulent and uncertain industrial relations and pay bargaining arenas considered above.
- A research strategy to support partnership and performance needs to be developed in response to the main issues considered in this section.

2.8 Environmental Drivers

Trends in the external environment, reviewed in this chapter, constitute major drivers of the strategy and work of the National Centre for Partnership and

performance. These drivers will shape the context in which the Centre operates, framing its priorities and activities.

The key environmental drivers can be summarised in conclusion.

1. In the short-term businesses, their employees and trade unions face the challenge of adaptation and flexibility in the context of a sharp projected economic downturn. A rapid deceleration from exceptionally high growth to low growth takes businesses and Irish industrial relations into uncharted waters. The medium-term challenge involves building capacity and maintaining competitiveness in the context of a return to full employment and high growth, accompanied by rising costs pressures. The industrial development agencies have engaged these challenges by encouraging mandate renewal and higher value-added activities in multinational subsidiaries and by promoting initiatives concerned with capacity building in export-oriented indigenous firms. Some sectors face particularly difficult ongoing competitive pressures over the medium term in the light of a projected decline in cost competitiveness. Indigenous manufacturing firms appear particularly exposed to such pressures. In the indigenous sector as a whole there is a major imperative to drive productivity growth.
2. The public services are faced with the most significant programmes of modernisation and reorganisation in their history. The fiscal context of the reform programmes is projected to remain benign over the medium-term, assuming a neutral budgetary policy. The potential cost of the benchmarking initiative introduces another indeterminate element into this projection. The public utilities are also in the throes of the most significant programmes of restructuring in their history and will continue to face strong pressures for adaptation arising from deregulation, liberalisation and in some cases from major investment programmes.
3. Progressively growing numbers of people in employment value work that allows them scope to participate in various ways in job-based and organisational decision-making.
4. Developments in the labour market have given rise to multiple challenges within firms and workplaces. Developments in markets, production processes and technologies, changes in the structure of economic activity and changes in the basis of Ireland's competitive advantage have increased the premium attached to increasing and updating the skills of the workforce. Progress in promoting life-long learning requires the

development of workplace regimes permitting employees access to part-time, distance and block release programmes and responsive to workplace-based learning and programme delivery. Pressures have developed for flexible working options in response to competitive demands on employers, work-life balance issues affecting employees and changes in the physical and social infrastructure in which work and employment are enmeshed. The management of growing workforce diversity has become a pressing concern. Further progress in promoting gender equality is predicated on the 'mainstreaming' of equal opportunities in workplace processes and practices.

5. Policy initiatives are being undertaken by the EU in a number of areas impacting on workplace partnership, including information and consultation, financial participation, life-long learning and new forms of work organisation. Increasingly, EU policy appears disposed to allowing the social partners in Member States to find ways of implementing directives and policies which make sense in national conditions.
6. The general industrial relations climate is more turbulent and uncertain than at any time for more than a decade. Some have suggested that the current model of tightly centralised national pay agreements may be nearing the end of its shelf-life and that future pay fixing arrangements may need to provide for greater flexibility and closer links between pay determination and performance at enterprise and workplace levels. The advent of benchmarking in the public services involves the most significant change in public sector pay determination in half a century and may again trigger a review of the links between pay, performance, modernisation programmes and prevailing industrial relations processes and arrangements.
7. Arising from all these pressures and challenges there appears to be a growing sense among those centrally involved that existing policies, practices and institutions in the spheres of work, employment, industrial relations and dispute resolution, require a new guiding vision that can focus efforts to reconfigure the existing framework in support of competitiveness, better public services, higher living standards and new employee and social priorities.

The Strategic Planning Consultative Process

As part of the development of a strategic plan, the Centre engaged in an extensive process of consultation with the Social Partners and a wide range of national organisations that are involved in the relevant areas of partnership and performance.

3.1 Aims of the Consultation Process

The process of consultation sought to establish the expectations of the Social Partners and of key national organisations in relation to the Centre, to identify opportunities for collaboration and priority areas for action in the short and medium term. It was expected that the process would assist in the development of a clearer definition of the role, functions, priorities and operational programmes of the Centre. It would also help to define its role in relation to other organisations and to identify areas where there is an overlap in services and gaps in current provision, and where scope for strategic alliances and other forms of co-operation may exist.

In summary the aim of the consultation process was:

- To clarify the role and functions of the Centre and to provide a clear definition of its core business, to identify the key priorities, challenges and opportunities in deepening partnership in the workplace and in building organisational capability and to identify priority areas that might be addressed in the operational programmes of the Centre.
- To identify the expectations of the Social Partners and their vision for the NCPP and to identify areas in which the Social Partners and national bodies can contribute to the work of the Centre in strengthening partnership in the workplace and in helping organisations in the private and public sectors to adapt to change and improve performance.
- To identify opportunities for collaboration with the Social Partners and other national organisations.
- To gather information on current projects and activities in areas relevant to the work of the Centre.
- To identify possible areas and opportunities for research, project development, training and facilitation to be undertaken by the Centre.
- To identify the key challenges in relation to partnership at national level, particularly challenges with the greatest significance for promoting enhanced performance and mutual gains through partnership in the workplace and to identify areas in which the Centre can act as a catalyst and a facilitator in progressing policy at national level.

A background paper presented to those consulted is outlined in Appendix 3.

3.2 Organisations Consulted

The organisations invited to participate in the consultation process comprise six broad groupings as follows:

1. The Social Partners.
2. National industrial and economic policy agencies.
3. Agencies charged with dispute resolution.
4. Public sector bodies involved in education, health and local government
5. Private sector enterprises
6. Expert bodies

A comprehensive list of the organisations consulted is outlined in Appendix 4.

3.2.1 The Social Partners

The consultation process included discussions with Government departments, employers, trade unions, and the community and voluntary sector. The following were consulted: the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Finance, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, The Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), and representatives from the community and voluntary sector organised through the secretariat for the sector at the National Women's Council of Ireland. In addition to the national federations of employers and trade unions a number of the individual trade union and employer organisation were also consulted. The Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) and Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Unions, (IMPACT) were interviewed as trade unions representing large numbers of workers across diverse sectors. A number of individual private companies were also consulted and these were selected as exemplars of best practice in union and non-union settings.

3.2.2 Industrial and Economic Policy Community

The Centre held discussions with a number of key national agencies involved in industrial and economic policy development and also with those involved in promoting and supporting improved organisational capability and performance. Among those interviewed were the following: Forfás, the

Industrial Development Agency (IDA Ireland), Enterprise Ireland, FAS, the Training and Employment Authority, the Health and Safety Authority, The Equality Authority, the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) and the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF).

3.2.3 Agencies involved in Dispute Resolution

The Labour Relations Commission (LRC), including the LRC Advisory Service and the Labour Court participated in the process of consultation.

3.2.4 Public Sector Bodies

The consultation process included discussions with a number of key organisations responsible for developments in the public sector. The Department of Health and Children, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Public Enterprise were consulted as well as the Local Government Management Services Board. The Centre also met with the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG) and the Health Services National Partnership Forum. These two bodies have specific responsibility for promoting and supporting partnership in the local government and the health sectors respectively. In addition the Centre consulted with individual organisations from the public sector, that had demonstrated considerable progress in the development of partnership: The Western Health Board and Meath County Council.

3.2.5 Private Sector Enterprises

The Centre consulted with a small number of private companies who have substantial experience and recognised success in relation to partnership and innovative human resource management practices in both union and non-union settings. The companies included were Waterford Crystal, Bausch and Lomb, Aughinish Alumina and Intel Ireland.

3.2.6 Expert bodies

A number of key national organisations involved in the promotion of progressive human resource management in areas of partnership and performance were included in the process of consultation: The Irish Management Institute (IMI), The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), The Irish

Productivity Centre (IPC), Education and Training Services (ETS) and John O' Dowd, Consultants Ltd. The main purpose of these discussions was to explore opportunities for collaboration and possibilities for future strategic alliances with the Centre.

3.3 Issues Emerging from the Consultation Process

The process of consultation has yielded a rich and diverse range of issues for consideration by the new National Centre for Partnership and Performance. While some differing opinions were expressed relating to the nature of partnership and the role of the Centre, a number of themes emerged repeatedly. Most notably, the lack of a clear definition of partnership and of a coherent rationale behind the promotion of partnership were universal concerns.

Because of the multiplicity of issues raised it will be helpful to present the feedback by distinguishing between the following broad groups of issues:

- Issues relating to partnership and performance.
- Pointers to a role for the NCPP.

3.4 Issues Relating to Partnership and Performance

3.4.1 Definition and perceptions of partnership

Arising from the process of consultation it is evident that there are many differing interpretations of the nature of partnership and a lack of a clear definition of its role. A common theme is that while there is widespread support for the principles of partnership, the concept itself has been overly used and has become so all embracing that it is difficult to extract and convey its real meaning with respect of concrete arrangements, practices and processes.

The lack of clarity in the understanding and definition of partnership can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, partnership has become synonymous with social partnership and national partnership agreements and there has been very little articulation of the dynamic of partnership in the workplace or

indeed of its benefits. Secondly, in some instances there is a perception that partnership is an ideology and inevitably scepticism results about which agenda it is serving. Thirdly, there is a perception that partnership is only effective in times of economic growth and prosperity and that it is a luxury that must be abandoned in slowdown or downturn situations. This perception is related to the belief, held by some, that partnership as a methodology slows down the process of decision-making and inhibits managers ability to manage, particularly when a quick response is required in tough situations. It is also perceived by some that, almost by definition, partnership, involving as it does consultation, problem solving and consensus building towards mutual gains is not suited to decision-making in adverse or crisis situations. In essence it is argued that partnership, as a methodology is incapable of finding solutions that adversely affect one or other of the partners. Finally, at times the image of partnership is seen to be overly linked to structures. Allied to this concentration on structures, is the impression conveyed by some that partnership is best suited to certain low-level issues rather than those of strategic importance to the organisation.

There is a need, therefore, to define more clearly what partnership is, to articulate its value and its meaning and relevance in the context of the modern workplace. The general principles of partnership need to be identified and articulated in order to demystify the concept, and challenge current perceptions and misinterpretations. Concrete examples of the benefits of partnership in various settings need to be collated and widely disseminated, particularly its contribution to performance and the realisation of mutual gains. Equally, there is an urgent need for widespread dissemination of case studies of instances, in which partnership has succeeded in order to allay the scepticism and fears, which has been outlined above.

3.4.2 The 'business case' for partnership

The need for a crystallisation of partnership has been a recurring theme in the process of consultation. However, perhaps the single, most striking message arising from the process, particularly in the eyes of employers, is the need to 'make the business case' for partnership in the workplace. There is a need for evidence based analysis which will show the links between partnership and performance and promulgate the successes in ways that are meaningful and relevant to a variety of audiences and settings. The National Centre for Partnership and Performance needs to create and lead a debate about the

benefits of partnership in order to build a vision of its role in the workplace of the future.

It is evident from the consultation process that the Centre will also be in a position to contribute to wider industrial policy objectives. The focus of industrial policy is to build Ireland's national competitive advantage on the basis of the adaptability, flexibility, creativity and high skills of its enterprises. Much effort is now directed towards renegotiating current mandates from multinational parent companies and enabling these companies to move up the value-chain. Parallel efforts are underway in building competitive capacity in indigenous enterprises. In discussions with the industrial policy community, it became clear that partnership could play a very important role in advancing these goals, provided again that a strong enough business case could be identified.

3.4.3 Union perceptions and concerns in relation to partnership

In the consultation process unions expressed a number of specific concerns. Firstly, they felt that partnership ought to encompass strategic areas and that employees and unions needed to be brought more fully into core decision-making processes in the enterprise. Secondly, many expressed the view that union members did not possess a sufficient understanding of what partnership was about, what it can achieve and what their role in the process should be. There was a need for awareness raising and for the Centre to address union executives and work with union officials. Some noted that there is a considerable challenge in encouraging employees to accept the need for flexibility and in convincing managers of the need to look to the longer-term rather than the short-term. Thirdly, the need for training in partnership was emphasised repeatedly. Training was needed for management and unions, preferably joint training in how partnership works, in the processes underpinning partnership, such as group dynamics, communication and interpersonal skills etc. and in understanding the elements that underpin successful partnership in differing contexts.

It was felt that special consideration needed to be given to how union officials, professional and lay, represent their membership and participate in partnership fora. There is some concern that even standard negotiating skills may have deteriorated in recent times due to the existence of national agreements and that a different skills-set is now needed for effective participation and representation through partnership. Business training for union representatives and employees is also seen to be a prerequisite to successful participation.

Finally, one union in the consultation process noted that there was an imbalance in the availability of partnership training as between unions and management, and that this imbalance should be addressed by the NCPP. While management have access to training and facilitation and have resources to engage private consultants, unions do not have the same resources or opportunities. In this context it was felt that the Centre, as a national resource, should provide operational support to individual companies and unions and so redress the imbalance.

3.4.4 Promoting good practice

In emphasising the desirability of the Centre articulating a vision for the future, many respondents cited the need for a review of the relationship between current industrial relations practices and dispute resolution procedures and partnership, particularly in the context of handling and promoting change. While the mechanisms in place for dispute resolution are seen to be effective, there is seen to be no correspondingly effective mechanism to support and promote dispute avoidance and the propagation of good practice. Current dispute resolution procedures are primarily reactive in nature and are there to respond to and resolve problems. There is seen to be a need for proactivity to support, affirm and disseminate models of good practice in building relationships in the workplace and putting in place mechanisms for dispute avoidance. Current procedures are sometimes seen to encourage 'bad behaviour' and, as a result, a culture is seen to be emerging in which deals are not being honoured and in which those who 'shout loudest get the greatest reward'. Similarly there is seen to be a gross under-utilisation of the knowledge accumulated in dispute resolution institutions. This intelligence should be harnessed to assist in the identification of emerging trends and issues in the workplace, and used to develop preventative measures and future policy directions and initiatives.

A major problem identified by both unions and management was the difficulty of sustaining relationships in the current tight labour market, where there is increased labour force mobility. It was proving difficult to develop and sustain partnership in the enterprise when key actors and participants have moved on. This climate of flux was also evident to some in the wider union environment, at both full-time union official and shop steward levels, and indeed in the dispute resolution agencies.

The Centre is regarded as well placed to address some of the problems highlighted by identifying and articulating the relationships and dynamics that

should characterise the modern workplace. It may also be well placed to lead a debate on the need to modernise industrial relations practices and to assist in the development of policies which support and reward good practices in the workplace and foster a culture characterised by trust and mutual respect.

3.4.5 Partnership and industrial relations

Those consulted sometimes held strong views regarding the appropriate relationship between partnership and industrial relations, but more often identified this as a difficult issue and one on which advice, case study-based models and facilitation might be helpful. The issue emerged as particularly challenging in circumstances where major organisational change programmes were pending or underway. Respondents held differing views on the question of dealing with industrial relations issues in the partnership arena. Some were adamantly opposed to this idea and felt that industrial relations should be kept entirely separate from partnership processes. Others expressed the view that industrial relations were a natural part of the partnership process. It seemed evident, however, that where partnership approaches were seen to be working successfully in an organisation, this distinction became less marked. Industrial relations issues and processes seemed to be aligned in various ways with discussions in the partnership forum and gradually the interface between the two became more seamless and difficult to recognise.

3.4.6 The focus of partnership and elements underpinning success

No single valid starting point can be identified for the development of a partnership approach. Sometimes partnership embraces major strategic issues from the beginning, particularly in circumstances of crisis or major imminent commercial change. Sometimes, partnership begins around operational or even 'soft' issues such as communications. Some of those consulted made clear that what they viewed as viable and successful models of partnership stopped short of embracing key strategic issues – not in any event seen as amenable to decision at the local or subsidiary level of multinational corporations – and focused mainly around operational issues, some of these very significant. Partnership, as they saw it, could effectively address the 'how rather than the why' of the business and of its operations.

Throughout the consultation process, it became apparent that the most successful examples of partnership were those in which it was embraced holistically and was embedded in the culture of the enterprise with

commitment and conviction. Indeed, the major potential benefits of the partnership approach were seen to lie in its usefulness in gaining consensus on issues of operational and strategic importance and in facilitating and managing major processes of change.

The general feedback suggests that partnership to become viable in the long term had to engage 'big issues' in the organisation and to become central to any process of organisational change, whether in the public or private sectors. The perception that a partnership approach is useful, mainly or only, in handling 'softer issues' such as communications, health and safety or absenteeism, needed to be overcome. Similarly, the over-concentration on structures, which seems in some context at least to be the result of the need to meet targets for partnership set in previous and current national agreements, must be addressed.

Throughout the consultation process a number of factors emerged repeatedly as providing the underpinnings for successful partnerships. The commitment of senior management, particularly at chief executive level, to a partnership culture was seen to be of over-riding importance. The enthusiasm of key participants and those occupying leadership positions, such as chairpersons of partnership committee, as well as the composition of committees and working groups, were also viewed as significant determinants of success. The leadership and cultures of trade unions were also identified as important factors that had to be aligned with a partnership ethos if progress was to be made possible.

The importance of placing partnership at the heart of the decision-making process within the organisation was a common theme from those who have achieved recognised success. Partnership, in their eyes, becomes part of the way of life of the organisation and becomes the means by which, and through which, decisions on multiple issues, big issues and often strategic issues are made. If the issues handled by partnership are not related to the core business of the organisation and fail to become an integral part of the strategic and operational day to day business, the partnership process may end up being of little relevance, especially in any long-term or in any ongoing sense. In such circumstances, it appeared inevitable that the partnership process would be difficult to sustain as it becomes peripheral to the real business of the organisation. A further contributor to success might be the use of technology as a tool to support the process of partnership. Some saw technology as having enormous potential to support information sharing, good communication and consultation processes that might underpin partnership.

It would seem that the challenge for the National Centre for Partnership and Performance therefore is to demonstrate how partnership, when adopted successfully, becomes not only an integral part of an organisation's culture and business approach but becomes vital to successful organisational change. Repositioning partnership in this way will require the Centre to link partnership with performance and to articulate a vision that places partnership at the centre of organisational change. Many expressed the desire to move away from previous, and indeed current, perceptions which associate partnership with 'soft topics' and to move to the next stage which is focussed on adopting a partnership approach to achieve better performance in the context of organisational change.

3.4.7 Challenges in deepening and strengthening partnership

The key challenges in deepening and embedding partnership in the workplace were identified again in terms of creating a clearer overarching vision linking partnership to organisational change and improved performance. A big challenge concerns the way partnership is perceived and the need often to counter scepticism and even cynicism and resistance on the ground. In respect of the Centre's role, many of those consulted believed that these perceptions will only be overcome by disseminating appropriate evidence based research on what partnership can achieve and making cases studies widely available on how partnership has succeeded in bringing about organisational change and improved performance. A key challenge is also to overcome the perception that partnership only works in good times. There is a need to advocate and demonstrate the value of partnership in difficult times and to articulate the rationale for partnership in slowdown/downturn situations, backed by appropriate case studies.

3.4.8 Change in major organisations and entire sectors

A number of the organisations consulted were faced with major and far-reaching programmes of organisational change, some involving the restructuring of entire sectors. Even where senior managers were well disposed towards partnership, they faced doubts and dilemmas as to how such programmes might or should be linked to ongoing partnership initiatives. There appeared to be an understandable tendency to proceed cautiously and ensure that existing partnership initiatives and structures were 'on side' in relation to such programmes. Less thought appeared to be given to the option of

‘mainstreaming’ partnership into such change programmes, with little evidence of any systematic assessment as to whether such a course might be feasible or advisable. Those major sectors, like for example electricity and communications, had pursued radical change through partnership initiatives did not appear salient to those charged with the task of leading change.

Sometimes similar concerns were apparent among the immediate champions of partnership in these same contexts. Champions were prepared to admit that even highly active and engaged partnerships might require a clearer sense of strategic direction and a well-thought out way of achieving alignment with major change programmes.

Some partnerships appear very active and engaged but admit that a clearer sense of strategic direction was required to focus efforts and objectives. In other instances a loss of momentum seemed in evidence and a need was articulated for taking stock. A general theme that emerged was the value of a credible independent agency providing an external ‘audit’ facility that might review and benchmark progress in partnerships over time.

3.4.9 The civil service

A number of the bodies consulted made specific comments concerning partnership in civil service departments and to the Strategic Management Initiative. Progress across the sector and with respect to the SMI was seen to be uneven. Structural arrangements were seen to dominate the partnership model. The formulation of joint agendas for partnership at different levels was seen to require better planning, as did the ways in which partnership might be aligned with management systems in general and performance management in particular. It was pointed out that unlike local government and the health service civil service partnership initiatives were not supported by dedicated facilitators. This was seen by some to be a significant constraint on progress.

3.4.10 Involvement of the Centre in areas of chronic industrial relations difficulty

Several of those interviewed raised the issue of what role, if any, the Centre might play in dealing with major industrial relations problems in some sectors and in assisting in areas of chronic industrial relations difficulty. A number of those interviewed expressed the view that partnership offered a viable way forward in such circumstances and that the Centre should have something to contribute to the resolution of such serious problems. However, it was also felt

that the Centre needed to examine its role in such areas carefully. If the Centre were to become operationally involved, there may be a risk that in time it would become part of the dispute resolution machinery and would be perceived as such. Because of the need to commit resources to such activities, the Centre could very quickly become displaced into operational and resource-intensive activities. However, it was seen to be important for the Centre to provide leadership and to play a proactive role even in these contexts. It could exercise such a role by acting as a strategic facilitator and by seeking to channel strategy and action plans towards a partnership approach. This would be particularly apposite in times of review and major change and such an approach would further establish the vital role that partnership can play in effecting organisational change.

3.4.11 Partnership in the education and training curriculum

The view was expressed that an important priority for the Centre should be to ensure that partnership is mainstreamed in the education and training curriculum. For example, university undergraduate business courses, such as the Bachelor of Commerce (B Comm) degree, and the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) degree, and post-graduate and post-experience business courses, such as the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and Diploma in Business Studies (DBS), should include lecturing materials on partnership. Management and union training should also include modules on partnership.

3.4.12 Priority areas for deliberation

The process of consultation identified a number of issues that should receive particular attention when the Council begins to prioritise areas for deliberation. Among the most significant areas identified by those interviewed was the need to develop and gain agreement on more flexible systems of financial reward such as gain-sharing. Many also raised the question of developing performance-related pay in the public services. Other priority areas identified were the need for a better balance between work and life and for the development of more family friendly policies. Respondents felt that the Centre should capture and respond to the issues emerging from a new type of economy and consequently help foster a new dynamic in the workplace. These issues are wide-ranging but crucially revolve around relating employment security to the development of skills, the transferability of these skills and the promotion of training and lifelong learning.

A further challenge is that of meeting the needs of many organisations not directly involved in the social partnership arena, gaining feedback from this community, and creating structures to enable this group to be represented and heard. Equally, the Centre will need to find ways of channelling the experiences of non-union companies and learning from their approaches to partnership and organisational change. Many of those interviewed expressed the need for the NCPP to promote the human resource management function in a general sense, as it was felt that it was given a low priority relative to other functions such as finance and marketing.

3.4.13 The resources of the NCPP

A number of those involved in the consultative process expressed concern that the Centre should be sufficiently well resourced to have a real impact on the major issues identified as needing to be tackled. Their fear was that while the Centre needed to develop a bold and ambitious vision of its role in deepening partnership and improving performance, such a vision could only be given effect through significant resources. It was pointed out that Ireland had designated significant budgets to support industrial development, research and development and science, technology and innovation, and that significant resources also needed to be devoted to driving organisational change, adaptation and higher productivity through partnership.

3.5 Pointers to a Role for the National Centre for Partnership and Performance

The role for the National Centre for Partnership and Performance emerging from the process of consultation is one that is more challenging and ambitious than perhaps envisaged at the outset of the process. The most strident concern of those interviewed was that the Centre would begin to develop an overarching vision for partnership and provide leadership in defining the ‘workplace of the future’. The absence of what many called ‘the bigger picture’ was a constant strand and it was felt that the Centre was well placed to play this path-finding role. The role for the Centre that emerged from the consultation process can be outlined under the following broad categories:

3.5.1 Leadership

The clear expectation and desire of those interviewed was that the Centre would begin to scope out a new direction and develop new models of participation and practice in the workplace. This groundbreaking role is needed for a number of reasons. There is evidence of fatigue and frustration at what is perceived as the rigidity in some critical respects of the current model of social partnership and of national partnership agreements, as currently structured. It would seem that, for many, such a model does not offer the degree of flexibility and adaptability required at enterprise level to meet the changes and demands of a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive national and international environment. Traditional models of industrial relations are seen not to be sustainable in the context of the workplace of the 21st century, where agility, versatility and rapidity of response are the keys to competitive advantage.

There is, therefore, a clear challenge awaiting the Centre in articulating an overarching vision for and developing a new model of a workplace congruent with the demands of the society of the 21st century and the marketplace of the future. In taking up this path-finding role the Centre will need quickly to establish credibility as an independent, authoritative voice. It will need to build the road to the future on solid evidence-based research and analysis. It will need to make the link firmly between partnership and performance and to situate the future direction of partnership on sound business and mutual gains principles.

3.5.2 Responding to major change and policy initiatives

Contributors to the consultation process expressed a need for direction and proactive planning with respect to partnership as organisations begin the process of major change and restructuring. If one were to place the machinery for dispute resolution at one end of a continuum, characterised by problem solving and reacting to problems which have arisen, there is a need to foster good practice, prevention and forward planning at the other end of this continuum. The Centre could provide the necessary impetus and input required at this end of the spectrum by guiding organisations towards a partnership approach at the initial stages of organisational restructuring and change.

In linking partnership with performance and organisational change the Centre will need to identify organisations in the private and public sectors where this strategic role can be most usefully applied. Indeed its success will depend on achieving some early success and building concrete case studies of the application of this new role. Throughout the process of consultation a number

of possibilities have emerged. At the present time a number of organisations in the public sector are beginning the process of major organisational restructuring. One of these organisations is a government department, the Department of Education and Science. Also in the context of the preparation and imminent launch of a new Health Strategy, it would seem appropriate for the Centre to suggest that a partnership approach be adopted in managing this process of change, and indeed to provide assistance as appropriate.

This strategic role, involving engagement with the Centre in the early stages of change programmes, might also include the brokering of agreements between parties such as IBEC and ICTU. It could also extend to facilitating the roll-out of EU directives, such as the Directive on Information and Consultation and other EU-level developments related to the workplace. Success in this role will depend on the Centre's ability to develop expertise and to establish itself as a neutral, independent and respected facilitator.

3.5.3 Highlighting partnership in the workplace

In articulating the value of partnership at enterprise level, many respondents were concerned to emphasise that the Centre should not be seen as the body responsible for sustaining national agreements. Much of the confusion about partnership resides in the association of workplace partnership with the national partnership structures and procedures. The distinct role of the Centre in deepening partnership and performance at enterprise level should be clearly articulated.

3.5.4 Supporting partnership in a diverse economy

A particular challenge posed for the Centre was that of embracing increasingly diverse workplaces across the economy. It was emphasised that there was no one model of partnership and that the Centre will need to address the needs of different constituencies and to foster a series of models both unionised and non-union. Equally, the voluntary nature of partnership was emphasised. It has been noted that in the consultation process a large community of organisations and workplace participants may perceive the Social Partners and social partnership to be of little relevance to their immediate affairs and concerns. The Centre needs to establish contact with these organisations quickly, to identify their needs, embrace their issues and concerns and articulate their viewpoints. Similarly, the need to accommodate and learn from the experiences of non-union companies in deepening partnership will be an important issue for the Centre.

3.5.5 A partnership fund

Funds to support partnership initiatives had been made available in local government and health, and this funding was seen to be of importance in allowing for the deployment and training of partnership facilitators and in supporting the initiation of partnership projects. A number of bodies consulted were aware of the existence of a national partnership fund in the UK and supported a similar initiative for Ireland. The availability of a national fund in support of partnership was seen as an effective means of priming the pump of innovation on the ground. The value of such a fund in providing resources for companies and unions to acquire expertise and training to initiate partnership projects may need to be examined.

3.5.6 Research

The consultative process underscored the importance of research, analysis and policy development. The Centre will need to direct its resources towards high-quality research and analysis. This will provide the foundation for the identification of best practice in the workplace, for establishing a sound business and mutual gains rationale for partnership, and for developing guidelines for the adoption of a partnership approach. Such guidelines should address the needs of particular industries and sectors, and should provide support for the introduction and adoption of a partnership approach *ab initio*, situations where partnership needs to be rejuvenated and indeed situations in which partnership has become displaced. The role of the Centre in developing and making available such guidelines is paramount, not only to begin the process of deepening partnership but in order to crystallise what partnership is and to concretise its benefits.

3.5.7 Avoiding intensive operational involvement

Most, but not all, interlocutors felt that the resources of the Centre would not be best employed in supporting individual companies and organisations through the provision of direct training and facilitation support on an enterprise basis. This level of operational involvement would be impossible to sustain and would require the Centre to make choices in serving some requests at the expense of others. It was pointed out that many of these supports were now becoming available in different areas of the public sector and were also available through private consultants. The health sector now has a National Partnership Forum, supporting a considerable number of trainers and facilitators and the Local Authorities provide support and backup through the newly formed Local

Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG). A strong training and consultancy sector is developing in support of partnership and a number of those interviewed commented favourably on the skills of those involved.

3.5.8 Supporting facilitators and trainers

It is evident that facilitators and trainers play a pivotal role in strengthening partnership. In recognition of this, the Centre should support facilitators and trainers. This could be done in a number of ways. The Centre needs to develop a national training strategy that would identify areas of strength and weakness and gaps in current delivery and availability of trainers. The Centre might work with facilitators and with the training sector to identify priorities for further professional development. The Centre could build on work already done by updating and relaunching some useful materials produced through previous initiatives such as the PACT and ADAPT programmes. Standards, guidelines and some system of quality assurance, could be developed especially as many participants in the process were emphatic that the quality and experience of the trainers and facilitators was a very important determinant of success in sustaining a partnership approach in an organisation. The issue of certification might also be considered as an aspect of a training strategy. The Centre might choose in this regard to draw on the expertise of other agencies, for example Fás, and the new National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). Increasing the number of trainers nationally and providing for training of trainer programmes might also be addressed in the context of supporting facilitators and trainers.

3.5.9 Collaboration with other agencies

One of the primary aims of the consultation process was to identify opportunities for collaboration with organisations that have a complementary brief to that of the Centre. Many opportunities for collaboration emerged from the discussions and the possibility of future alliances was welcomed, without exception, by the organisations consulted. The potential for collaboration exists within all six groupings interviewed, the Social Partners, the Industrial and Economic Policy Community, Agencies charged with dispute resolution, Public Sector Bodies and Expert Bodies.

In the first instance, the Centre will work in close collaboration with the Social Partners at multiple levels of its activities. Operational programmes relating to key areas such as research and policy development, training, facilitation and project development will take account of the identified needs of the Social

Partners. The Centre will work closely with the Social Partners, in particular IBEC and ICTU, in the development of materials and case studies to concretise the benefits of partnership and to provide support for its implementation. An assessment of the scope for updating and relaunching of existing materials will also be a priority.

The possibility of co-operation between the Centre and the industrial and economic policy community was welcomed by the organisations consulted. Much of the effort of the industrial policy community is now directed towards increasing organisational flexibility, innovation, capacity building and competitiveness. In the case of multi-national companies the focus is on renewing existing mandates and moving these companies higher up the value chain. Clearly, the role of the Centre in promoting partnership and facilitating organisational change and improved performance is complementary to these goals. The work of the Centre in providing evidence-based analysis of the role of partnership in organisational change management and improved performance will be crucially important to organisations such as Forfás, IDA and Enterprise Ireland in their efforts to improve competitiveness and support enterprises in competing in a global marketplace. The Centre will benefit from liaising with executives from these organisations who are in direct contact with national and multi-national companies and using these channels and networks to promote partnership and to identify opportunities for case studies of best practice and project development.

The agencies charged with dispute resolution were concerned that the Centre would work with them in analysing current trends and in identifying a new way forward. They envisaged a co-ordinating role for the Centre, working with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, in focusing the efforts of the different agencies and government departments towards an effective system of relationship management and dispute avoidance in the workplace. They offered assistance to the Centre in the development of a clear vision of partnership in the context of a new model of industrial relations for the future.

These agencies also expressed a willingness to collaborate with the Centre in utilising their intelligence more fully, particularly in identifying emerging trends and patterns and inputting into policy development and implementation. This knowledge and expertise may also assist in the identification of sectors and organisations that may benefit from a partnership approach and equally in the identification of organisations where best practice can be observed. In addition, in discussions with the Advisory Service of Labour Relations Commission, it was suggested that there was a need for collaboration with the Centre in developing

an operational model of partnership intervention that could guide the work of the Advisory Service in fostering partnership and that could also be of more general applicability.

In consulting with bodies involved in health, education, and local government the main focus was on establishing progress made to date and on identifying how the Centre might assist in accelerating the pace of organisational change through partnership. In the course of these discussions opportunities for collaboration also emerged. Organisations such as LANPAG and the Health Services National Partnership Forum were concerned that the Centre should develop criteria for benchmarking progress in respect of their initiatives, as well as developing a national standards framework, particularly in the areas of training and facilitation. The experience and expertise of these groups will be invaluable to the Centre, as will their networks of trainers and facilitators. LANPAG and the Health Services National Partnership Forum were eager to work in close collaboration with the Centre in furthering the work of both organisations and in contributing to the development of a national benchmarking framework and national standards.

The need for achievement skills training for partnership trainers and facilitators was also identified. In this, as in other areas where expertise and particular competitiveness are required, the Centre will identify opportunities and explore priorities with major providers such as ETS, IPC and the training and consulting sector.

Challenges, Opportunities and Threats

The analysis of environmental trends, presented in Chapter 2, and the consultative process outlined in chapter 3, point towards a series of challenges, opportunities and threats that provide focus for the strategic response of the NCPP. These are outlined in this chapter and they inform the proposals presented in chapter 5 in relation to the positioning, mission and strategic priorities of the Centre.

4.1 Responding to the Economic Downturn

A major immediate challenge facing the National Centre for Partnership and Performance is to make the business case for partnership by demonstrating the ways in which partnership can assist firms, employees and unions to achieve higher performance and joint benefits in the context of growing economic uncertainty which may now involve a sharp short-term downturn. As outlined in chapter 2, a sharp deceleration from circumstances of exceptional growth to low growth and rising unemployment represents uncharted waters in Irish business and Irish industrial relations. Some of the organisations involved in the consultative process were very concerned as to how such an adjustment might best be accomplished.

The Centre faces the challenge of countering any perception there may be that partnership is suited only to conditions of economic buoyancy or to issues where both parties stand to gain new and additional benefits. Such a perception emerged from the consultative process, as did examples where the converse was shown to be the case and where partnership proved robust and effective when handling significant business threats and setbacks.

The Centre faces the challenge and opportunity of leading deliberation among the social partners on appropriate responses and strategies in firms and workplaces that are based on partnership principles.

4.2 Adapting to Economic Change and Promoting Mutual Gains

Beyond the downturn, as the economy recovers the Centre needs to demonstrate the centrality of partnership to the task of improving productivity, building competitive advantage and delivering mutual gains in the context of rising cost pressures and a return to full employment and high levels of growth.

It was clear from the consultative process that only if partnership can be shown to make a demonstrable contribution to performance and only if concrete cases exist to show how this outcome can be achieved, will it become a central aspect of the process of adaptation to new economic pressures over the medium term. Again a business case will need to be demonstrated. It was also clear that co-operation by employees, union members and unions will be predicated on an assurance of mutual gains and genuine involvement.

4.3 Improving Public Services

The critical challenge in the public sector is finding ways of ‘mainstreaming’ partnership into programmes of modernisation and change aimed at improving performance in central and local government, health, education and the public utilities. The opportunity of forging a closer link between the SMI and partnership initiatives arises in particular in this context. Economic projections suggest that these programmes face a context marked in the main by a continuation of the benign fiscal conditions of recent years.

Progress to date points to the need for a reassessment of how programmes of modernisation and adaptation might better link with partnership processes, industrial relations processes and reward systems. This emerged clearly from the consultative process, which showed the extent to which those involved in leading major change programmes, as well as champions of existing partnership initiatives, were seeking ways of bringing both areas into closer alignment. Opportunities arise here in relation to major change programmes underway or imminent in such organisations as Iarnród Éireann and the Department of Education and Science and in the context of the new Health Strategy.

Current partnership processes and structures in the public service appear in need of a sharper strategic focus and purpose. The Centre enjoys an opportunity to contribute to the imminent review and reassessment of partnership in the civil service and to help shape a response and its implementation. Similar stocktaking exercises are imminent or underway in partnership initiatives in health and local government, again providing an opportunities for involvement by the Centre.

The public service benchmarking initiative could intensify the case for a reassessment of pay regimes and their linkage with performance, change and modernisation programmes. Any such reassessment would have significant implications for partnership. The role of partnership in such a context, the relationship between partnership and industrial relations processes, and how any new role for partnership might be supported, need to be considered systematically.

The Centre faces the challenge and opportunity of contributing in a central way to the reassessment of core aspects of change management and prevailing industrial relations and partnership structures and processes in the public sector. In making such a contribution the Centre has an opportunity to assist in sustaining the momentum for modernisation and in rebuilding the momentum behind partnership in areas where it might have flagged.

4.4 Building a New Industrial Relations Model

The consultative process revealed widespread concern about the current industrial relations model and some were of the view that it no longer served the Social Partners or the country well. The Centre has an opportunity to demonstrate how industrial relations might be reconfigured or reconstructed on the basis of partnership and to work with other agencies to develop a model of good industrial relations and to assist with its implementation. Addressing the problems of conflict-prone organisations also represents a challenge as a number are located in essential services and have a major impact on the economy and on the lives of many people.

4.5 Responding to New Workforce Priorities

Since the second half of the 1990s a series of economic, labour market and social trends have begun to impact profoundly on firms and workplaces. These include pressures for more flexible working arrangements, the promotion of equal opportunities, growing workforce diversity, an increased demand for skill formation and for skills upgrading and for continuing education and life-long learning.

Growing numbers of people at work express a preference for jobs that allow scope for participation in job-based and organisational decision-making. These preferences seem set to intensify. Pressure for more flexible work options and for better work-life balance will also intensify as the level of female activity in the workforce rises, putting pressure on established patterns of work involving all sexes. As the workforce ages, more people at work will be faced with a rising burden of care and pressure will continue and possibly intensify for the blurring of the distinction between participation in the workforce and retirement.

Many of the challenges arising in these areas have been regarded in particular as amenable to solutions based on partnership principles and arrangements. Demonstrating this to be the case and providing models of best practice are challenges for the Centre. In particular, identifying ways in which business imperatives for flexibility and responses to new workforce priorities can be made mutually reinforcing represents a challenge for the Centre.

4.6 Responding to EU Policy Initiatives

As outlined in chapter 2, at the level of the European Union a series of initiatives are in train in the broad area of partnership, as well as in areas closely linked with partnership-based solutions. Increasingly EU policy is disposed towards providing flexibility for Member Countries and their social partners to find ways of implementing directives and policies that make sense in their national circumstances. The consultative process showed this to be a major concern, especially of business.

This opens up an opportunity for the NCPP to make itself available to the social partners as a facilitator of solutions and of agreements that might effectively implement EU directives and policies focused on partnership and related areas.

4.7 Providing a Guiding Vision

A large measure of political consensus exists with respect to the value of the partnership model and with respect to the changing basis of Ireland's competitive advantage in the global economy. This consensus provides a major opportunity for the Centre to link up with core areas of public policy.

There is a growing appreciation of the degree to which public policy could benefit from a guiding vision for a series of policy initiatives being undertaken across multiple agencies, frameworks and programmes.

Such an awareness emerged strongly in the consultative process and the issues that were raised dovetailed with the public comments of some key agencies questioning the continuing advisability and effectiveness of existing arrangements and processes in the industrial relations and wider human resources arenas.

The need for a more coherent intellectual and policy framework in which the combined effects of public policies might be assessed in the context of performance, adaptation and new economic realities, opens up an opportunity for the NCPP to provide leadership in an area of major national strategic importance.

4.8 Responding to Growing Uncertainty and Regaining Momentum

The Centre faces the challenge of finding a path and developing a voice in an increasingly difficult and uncertain economic and industrial relations climate. Two main types of challenges arise. First, the Centre needs to advocate appropriate responses to uncertainty at the level of firms and workplaces. Second, the Centre needs to consider the implications of alternative scenarios with respect to future pay fixing arrangements for the promotion of workplace partnership.

In the light of available indicators, it must address the possibility that the rate of progress in developing partnership may have slackened and that there may be a loss of momentum in partnership initiatives in some key areas. The reasons for this need to be established and should inform measures for supporting partnership in conditions of growing uncertainty.

It will also be important to find ways of countering the threat that employers and unions across a broad economic front might revert to adversarialism, or to solutions implemented on a unilateral basis, if uncertainty deepens and existing agreements come under further strain.

Indications from the consultative process that the case for partnership may not have been demonstrated with sufficient rigour provide a starting point for such a response. So too do indications from the process that employers and unions may often lack the knowledge and skill to opt for partnership when dealing with difficult issues and uncertain business conditions.

These problems are compounded in the context of a downturn by the tendency of organisations to revert to traditional postures, to listen less to new messages or to engage less in innovative approaches in their concern to focus on survival.

If a new national agreement on the current model is concluded on the expiry of the *PPF*, it will be important for the Centre to consider ways of strengthening workplace partnership under such an agreement. To this end the Centre needs to reflect on the level of momentum achieved under the *PPF*, given that this agreement provided the strongest endorsement to date for progress with respect to partnership in firms and workplaces.

The Centre will need also to assess the consequences for workplace partnership and for its own role should pay fixing change beyond the current national

agreement. A move towards more decentralised pay determination, following the expiry of the current national agreement, opens up an opportunity to forge more direct links between pay, performance and partnership in firms and workplaces. At the same time if the case for workplace partnership is not sufficiently well demonstrated, such a trend poses a threat that traditional postures could be reasserted, leading to the derailment of partnership in many workplaces, or to the relegation of partnership activities to the handling of minor issues.

The Centre could respond to these challenges by being prepared to lead debate. In the context of a new national agreement on the current model, the challenge will be to learn from experience under the *PPF* and to find ways of strengthening the foundations of partnership. Should a modified model emerge, the challenge will be to find a path to the development of new institutional and workplace-level arrangements, linking partnership and performance in the context of more decentralised pay determination.

4.9 Responding to Fast-moving Change Programmes

A major threat faced by the Centre arises from its need to start virtually from scratch with respect to the development of models, cases and new ways of configuring partnership in the context of change processes and programmes, often of a complex kind. A slow build up is inevitable in at least some of these areas, but it is occurring in a fast-moving and even fast-shifting world. The Centre needs to respond in appropriate ways to the challenge and opportunity provided by major change programmes that have begun or are imminent in areas of critical national importance.

4.10 Countering Negative Perceptions of Partnership

The centre faces a significant threat arising from the fact that organisations that might benefit from partnership are disinclined to engage in partnership initiatives because they perceive it simply as an ideology of which they are sceptical; equate it with national agreements; associate it with the handling of soft issues; believe that it only works in times of prosperity, or that it slows

decisions and disempowers managers, particularly middle managers. The Centre will need to counter such perceptions by clearly identifying the key constituencies that need to be influenced, by focusing on clear and easily understood messages and by engaging in experience-based and evidence-based advocacy.

4.11 Locating Partnership in the Mainstream

More difficult economic conditions and a further worsening of the industrial relations climate pose the threat of a growing perception that workplace partnership may be becoming less relevant or increasingly difficult to sustain. Any such perception will need to be countered. If national pay bargaining were to end at the expiry of the current agreement, the Centre might also be seen by some to have a less secure mandate. This threat will also need to be countered.

The more significant threat the Centre faces, however, is that an inability to engage the big issues of capacity building, workplace change, modernisation and institutional redesign could result in its playing a residual role in the spheres of business, work and industrial relations. The only viable long-term course for workplace partnership, as for the Centre, is to be found in the mainstream of national deliberation, addressing these strategic issues.

Positioning, Mission and Strategic Priorities

This chapter presents a series of proposals with respect to the positioning, mission and strategic priorities of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. These proposals reflect the challenges posed by the external environment the main themes emerging in the consultative process. The first section considers how the Centre can best be positioned. The second section considers the mission of the Centre. The third section considers the strategic priorities to be addressed by the Centre and the final section identifies the main constituencies or 'markets' that the Centre should serve.

5.1 Positioning

The task of positioning the Centre concerns identifying the 'space' it should occupy in support of partnership and performance in the light of the external challenges that have emerged, the issues that surfaced during the consultative process and the work being undertaken by agencies and organisations with complimentary concerns.

It is proposed that the Centre can best be positioned in terms of the following set of 8 major attributes.

5.1.1 Repositioning partnership

The NCPP should refocus and revitalise the concept of partnership and re-establish momentum by repositioning partnership around key national strategic priorities. These involve adaptation to the economic downturn, responding to the changing basis of competitive advantage in the context of economic recovery and rising costs, and improving organisational flexibility and adaptiveness on an ongoing basis.

Partnership in the public sector should be repositioned around modernisation, adaptation and restructuring and major initiatives to improve performance. The identification of mutual gains should also animate the repositioning of partnership. Partnership needs to be revitalised and refocused by demonstrating its links with gain-sharing, work-life balance, equality and diversity in the workplace, with the upgrading of skills and life-long learning, and with the value placed by growing numbers of people on participation in job-based and organisational decision-making.

The NCPP should promote partnership by consistently and emphatically identifying the contribution it can make to the realisation of national strategic priorities.

In so doing it should position itself as an agency of national strategic importance in the context of addressing responses within firms and workplaces to the economic downturn, promoting competitiveness, improving the quality of public services and improving the quality of working life and work-life balance for a large section of the population.

This implies that the NCPP should promote the 'mainstreaming' of partnership, wherever possible, into the core operations of businesses and public service

organisations, as well as into the design of work, reward systems and organisational processes and structures.

5.1.2 Path-finding and leadership

Many of the parameters that defined the Irish industrial relations and social partnership models appear no longer to be fixed or durable in the longer term. The economy is faced with the task of adjusting to a slow-down from exceptional growth rates, to be followed by a return to high growth. The future of the pay determination arrangements in place for more than a decade is uncertain. Major programmes of change and restructuring in the public sector are posing profound questions regarding how prevailing institutional arrangements linking pay with performance and industrial relations may need to change. The effects of public service pay benchmarking remain to be determined but may pose similar questions. Pressures for more flexible work patterns are growing. Partnership in firms and workplaces may be losing momentum. Industrial relations are more turbulent than at any time in a decade. The emphasis in industrial policy is shifting from job creation to improving the quality of jobs, and the basis of competitive advantage is altering towards innovation, high value-added and skill-intensive activities.

Agencies centrally involved in the fields of employment, industrial relations and human resources sense that the ground is crumbling away under the prevailing model and that a coherent vision of a new model or models needs to be developed to inform policy and practice.

The NCPP should therefore seek to adopt a path-finding role, to provide leadership and to develop a vision of the future of work, employment and industrial relations in the context of Ireland's economic circumstances and prospects and its social objectives.

Such a vision can provide a coherent intellectual and policy framework for policies concerned with competitiveness, work, employment and industrial relations and being pursued across multiple agencies, frameworks and initiatives.

5.1.3 Making partnership practical

The NCPP must be both visionary and practical. In the latter respect it should aim to influence developments on the ground in significant ways. The ways in which the Centre can provide practical support for partnership and higher

performance will be outlined below in more detail and mainly involve the development and dissemination of case studies of best practice; support for training, the provision of facilitation in circumstances where partnership is being linked up with change programmes of national significance and by assistance in benchmarking progress.

5.1.4 Strategic focus

The NCPP will have a small human resource compliment and must marshal its overall resources, human, financial and deliberative to best effect in order to achieve maximum leverage in support of partnership and performance. It inhabits a world in which a series of organisations, consultants, trainers and facilitators now work in support of partnership.

The NCPP should therefore seek mainly to 'steer' rather than to 'row'. Its primary emphasis should be strategic rather than operational. It should be concerned with path-finding and leadership, with identifying priorities, with developing programmes to assist those directly involved in promoting partnership and improving performance, and with providing guidance and resources for significant partnership initiatives.

It should not seek to become involved, on an intensive or ongoing basis, with facilitating partnership initiatives in firms or workplaces. Such a role would consume its resources in an inappropriate and unsustainable manner. It would also involve duplicating the expertise and services of others currently operating effectively in these areas. The challenge is to support and add value to the efforts and work of other organisations and of providers active in the field.

5.1.5 Developing a broad appeal

The mandate and support provided for the Centre by the Social Partners will be critical to its success. However the Centre must distinguish its mandate and focus from national-level social partnership. Only in this way can it overcome the confusion, communicated by many in the consultative process, regarding how the Centre is aligned between the concerns of national-level social partnership and partnership in firms and workplaces.

At the same time, the Centre should support progress in the areas identified as amenable of partnership under the current agreement or any subsequent agreements. It should also be willing to become involved in deliberations

surrounding a successor to the current agreement should it be called upon to play such a role with respect to partnership in firms and workplaces.

It came clear in the consultative process that the Centre must also develop a broad appeal. It must link directly with the parties and organisations concerned with challenges and concerns that extend beyond the agenda of social partnership.

Arising here are issues of *perception*, of *substance* and of *representation*.

The issue of *perception* arising is that the Centre must be seen to enjoy scope to define its own agenda and to possess scope for independence in its programmes, deliberative activities and advocacy. The *substantive* issue concerns the Centre being in a position to capture and support models of good practice across the economy, including models developed by organisations that would not regard social partnership as reference point. The issue of *representation* involves finding ways to include the broadest possible range of experience and expertise in the governance and support structures of the Centre.

5.1.6 Evidence-based advocacy

The consultative process indicated that too often people felt that the case for partnership in firms and workplaces was being advanced on a normative or ideological basis, or on the premise that partnership was self-evidently good. Simply linking partnership and performance at a general conceptual level did little to challenge this view. People sought evidence that partnership could improve performance and insisted on the ‘business case’ for partnership. In many ways union support for partnership was also presented as being predicated on its effectiveness in delivering gains for members.

At another level the consultative process carried injunctions as to the importance for the Centre of honesty, integrity and the avoidance of rhetoric in its advocacy of partnership, in its research and in its analysis and commentary. The Centre should therefore seek to engage in evidence-based and experience-based advocacy of partnership and its role in improving performance and delivering mutual gains. Generalised or normative advocacy will simply meet with scepticism, cynicism or disinterest. Research should be independent and rigorous and geared to assessing the situation with respect to partnership as it exists.

5.1.7 Supporting multiple models

The Centre must recognise and accept that often strongly held views exist among the social partners and more widely with respect to the merits of different models of partnership and with respect to how partnership should be defined.

Union-based and non-union models of partnership exist. Models exist based around representative structures and also based mainly around processes and practices. Some models focus mainly on operational issues and others extend to strategic issues. Some models are based on joint decision-making and others are based more on information exchange and consultation.

The Centre's role is not to support or privilege any particular model or models but to support multiple models where these can be shown on the basis of evidence and experience to contribute to performance and the achievement of mutual gains.

This does not mean that an indiscriminating approach should be taken towards supporting partnership activity. Partnership arrangements of various kinds should give expression to widely respected generic principles, such as those outlined in the *PPF*. Research provides pointers to the features that make partnership arrangements more or less successful. The Centre should use evidence and experience to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of different models and their relative effects on performance and mutual gains.

5.1.8 Funding

The Centre's funding requirement needs to be commensurate with the strategic position it proposes to adopt in the mainstream of the national effort to promote adaptability, competitiveness, better public services, higher living standards and better and more fulfilling jobs.

5.2 Mission in the Context of Positioning

The NCPP should refocus partnership and re-establish its momentum around key national strategic priorities. These involve adapting to ongoing competitive challenges and the new challenges involved in the economic slowdown, modernising the public services, creating competitive advantage and promoting

work arrangements that are flexible and responsive to changing employment and social priorities. The Centre should be path-finding, pointing the way to new models of employment, work and industrial relations better suited to Ireland's current circumstances and prospects and to its social objectives. It should adopt a strategic focus, set priorities, guide change and facilitate partnership-based initiatives. It should seek to develop a broad appeal across Irish business and employment. The Centre should support multiple models of partnership and be guided by evidence and experience in its assessment and demonstration of their contribution and effects.

The mission of the Centre should reflect the core contribution it can make in the 'space' in which it will be positioned and should guide the Centre's strategic priorities and programmes. The Centre's mission should be to contribute to competitiveness, better social services, higher living standards and the quality of work life by supporting organisational change and transformation aimed at improving performance and achieving mutual gains through partnership. These objectives can best be supported by a guiding vision of the workplace of the future, adaptive to new and ongoing competitive challenges and responsive to new workforce priorities; by disseminating best practice; by facilitating major change programmes in the context of partnership; by improving skills and expertise through training, and by fostering knowledge and debate through research and analysis.

5.3 Strategic Priorities

Consistent with its positioning and mission, a series of strategic priorities should guide the work and operational programme of the Centre. These should influence the design of its organisational and support structures, provide focus for its operational programmes and be underpinned by the Centre's management systems.

5.3.1 Identifying and disseminating best practice

The Centre should concretise partnership and its benefits for the parties directly engaged in organisational change through the development and dissemination of case studies and learning materials. These should illustrate best practice, partnership-based solutions to problems and the ways of responding to environmental challenges on a partnership basis.

The Centre should consider initiating and supporting innovative partnership-based projects with manifest potential for wider learning, dissemination and use.

In developing case studies and learning materials, the Centre should ensure that the models provided cover a range of *contexts, issues and approaches*.

Contexts:

Among the contexts that should be incorporated into case development are:

- Private and public sectors.
- Unionised and non-union workplaces.
- Crises, setbacks, business turning points and steady-state conditions.
- Manufacturing and service industries.
- Large businesses and SMEs.

Issues:

Among the issues that might inform case development are:

- Partnership in the context of major programmes of change and restructuring.
- Partnership and incremental organisational change.
- Alternative ways of effectively linking industrial relations processes and structures with partnership in unionised firms and how such linkages may evolve over time in organisations.
- The contribution of partnership to mandate renewal and bids for major investment programmes in multinational subsidiaries.
- The contribution of partnership to capacity building and the development of competitive advantage in firms.
- Strategic and operational decision-making and problem solving.
- Gain-sharing and financial participation programmes.
- Flexible work arrangements, responses to diversity, the promotion of gender equality, skills upgrading and life-long learning.

- Alternative modes of conflict resolution and grievance handling.

Approaches:

A series of approaches to partnership might inform case development:

- Comprehensive partnership arrangements and problem-focused partnership initiatives.
- Models of partnership built around structures and models reliant mainly on processes and practices.
- Models focused around exploration, consultative processes and joint decision-making.

Materials developed under past initiatives involving the National Centre for Partnership and the social partners should be reviewed to determine whether they might usefully be adapted or updated and reissued.

In developing case-based learning materials the Centre should ensure that case analyses and presentations are expertly scripted and produced; that the emphasis is on learning and problem resolution as distinct from generalised or normative advocacy; that standards of production are world-class and incorporate multi-media ICT, and that the materials produced are disseminated effectively and widely used.

5.3.2 Deliberative priorities

The NCPP should establish itself as an independent and authoritative voice with respect to the future of work, employment and organisational change in Ireland.

The Centre should engage in proactive deliberation in two respects: the first addressing the broader canvas of work, employment and organisational change in Ireland in the context of competitive pressures, national objectives with respect to improving public services and changing workforce priorities; the second addressing more specific ways in which the foundations of partnership in firms and workplaces can be strengthened.

The path-finding role of the Centre should involve it in deliberation and commentary aimed at promulgating a guiding vision of work, employment and organisational change and the implications for practices, institutions and public policies across the economy.

The Centre should also deliberate with respect to the foundations of partnership activity in firms and workplaces, with a view to influencing public policy and practice in ways that deepen partnership and widen its appeal.

The consultative process and environmental trends point towards the following as examples of areas in which deliberation might helpfully be undertaken:

- Forms of gain-sharing and their tax implications.
- The practical effects of EU directives and policies.
- Reward systems and performance in the public services
- Models of work, employment and dispute resolution in essential services.

5.3.3 Proactive facilitation

In circumstances deemed to be of national significance, where partnership initiatives affect the economy as a whole, arise in key sectors, companies, organisations, or in the context of major and radical changes programmes, the NCPP should be available to play a proactive facilitation role.

Such a role would involve the Centre in providing assistance to the parties directly involved to enable them to proceed on a partnership basis, to assess how partnership might support the achievement of the objectives animating change programmes and might be made dovetail with existing representative arrangements and management processes. Among the ways in which proactive facilitation might be provided are the following:

- Assisting with the design of partnership arrangements and processes in the context of major change programmes.
- Assisting the parties to revitalise partnership initiatives that have lost momentum.
- Assisting the parties to operate on a partnership basis around major turning-points in organisations such as a large-scale investment programme, major commercial problems or changes in market circumstances.
- Assisting the social partners in negotiating national framework agreements on partnership, covering specific areas encompassed by partnership, or geared to strengthening the foundations of partnership in firms and workplaces.

- Assisting the social partners to implement major EU policy initiatives involving partnership, such as the Directive on information and consultation and policies in areas such as life-long learning and financial participation.

In providing proactive facilitation the Centre must not replicate the role of the national agencies involved in dispute resolution and the promotion of good industrial relations. Nor must it become a step in the dispute resolution process, a fire-fighting service or a provider of crisis intervention. Nor must the Centre become involved in the provision of *operational facilitation* on an intensive or ongoing basis.

Proactive facilitation might be undertaken in alliance with other agencies that have an operational remit, or in co-operation with internal or external facilitators working in the sectors or organisations involved.

5.3.4 Supporting innovation through a national fund

It has been proposed that the Centre should seek the establishment of a National Partnership and Organisational Change Fund. Such a fund could support significant initiatives where partnership is being adopted to promote higher performance and to achieve mutual gains. The fund could become an integral part of the national effort to support innovation, adaptation and the updating of skills in the context of increasing the competitiveness of the Irish economy and improving living standards. The case for a national partnership fund should be examined.

5.3.5 Developing a national training strategy

Considerable experience has now been gained with respect to working through partnership, both internationally and in Ireland. In Ireland training has commonly been provided on a case-specific basis for some of those directly involved in partnership initiatives, in particular partnership facilitators. Other parties to partnership, such as trainers, consultants, managers and trade union officials, professional and lay, appear to have been subject to much less or more uneven training provision.

The NCPP should develop a national training strategy in support of partnership. This should be aimed at increasing the skills and competencies of those directly involved in introducing and managing partnership initiatives and those involved in facilitating such initiatives. Such a strategy should address inter alia:

- Training needs of the key groups involved in animating partnership initiatives.
- The focus and content of partnership training curricula.
- Possible accreditation of partnership trainers and consultants.
- Possible accreditation for those who have undertaken training in partnership
- Ways of resourcing and delivering training for different groups.
- ‘Mainstreaming’ partnership into the core curriculum of business schools at undergraduate, graduate and post experience (especially MBA) levels and into training for trade union officials and activists.
- The incorporation of partnership and new ways of working into the curriculum at second-level education.

5.3.6 Auditing and review

As experience with partnership grows, it is becoming clear that assistance is commonly needed with respect to taking stock of the progress, achievements and problems encountered by partnership. An opportunity periodically to ‘audit’ partnership initiatives provides a sound basis on which partnership can be refocused and further progress achieved.

A respected external body can best oversee the provision of assistance of this kind.

The NCPP should develop a programme aimed at the provision of an auditing and review facility for ongoing partnership initiatives. This should identify an appropriate methodology for assisting the parties to partnership to assess its contribution and effects. It should identify how such a programme can best be delivered, whether by external consultants or other facilitators, or through an alliance with an existing agency or agencies.

5.3.7 Assisting conflict-prone organisations

The improvement of organisational performance and industrial relations in conflict-prone organisations, especially in key public utilities, holds the potential to have a major beneficial impact on the national economy and on the convenience of large numbers of consumers. At the same time, such industrial

relations ‘hotspots’ are often subject to intensive ongoing intervention by other agencies concerned with dispute resolution.

Involvement carries the risk of displacing the NCPP’s role towards intensive ongoing engagement of a kind that would be inconsistent with its strategic focus. The Centre must also be mindful of avoiding becoming a standard staging-post in conflict resolution processes and of the hazards of encroaching the domains of other agencies, particularly in the context of demands for crisis intervention triggered by serious disputes.

The challenge is to find ways of providing assistance with the potential for significantly improving conflict-prone organisations over the medium-term and long-term; adding value to the work of other agencies, and avoiding displacement both with respect to the work of other agencies and with respect to the Centre’s own strategic remit.

Among the ways in which new forms of assistance could be provided, consistent with these principles, are the following:

- Working with the parties directly involved and with other agencies to design and set in train partnership-based approaches to organisational transformation.
- Assisting the parties to take stock of existing partnership initiatives and to refocus these if warranted.
- Developing a guiding vision of how industrial relations, partnership and dispute resolution processes might best be reconfigured in utilities entrusted with the provision of essential services in a modern economy.

5.3.8 Analysis and commentary

Evidence-based advocacy has been identified above as an attribute of how the NCPP should be positioned. The case for partnership should therefore be supported through authoritative research and high quality data.

The Centre should conduct or commission a review of international and Irish studies dealing with the contribution of partnership to performance and mutual gains across a wide range of organisational contexts.

The Centre should also examine how progress nationally can best be benchmarked over time, whether through participation in the proposed Irish Workplace Employment Relations Survey, through a study focused directly on

the current state of play across the economy with respect to partnership, or in both these ways.

Studies of the genesis, dynamics and effects of partnership in different contexts should also be supported with a view to adding to knowledge of the areas and to supporting the development of case-based learning materials, as outlined above.

The NCPP should engage in regular commentary, analysis and review to promulgate the case for partnership, to raise consciousness of the area and to stimulate debate around a vision of how workplaces are best able to compete and perform in the context of new competitive challenges and changing employment priorities.

To incorporate these specific objectives and to provide focus for this strategic priority, the Centre should develop a national partnership research strategy in dialogue with external researchers and with research agencies active in the field.

5.4 Key Constituencies

If the Centre is to be positioned in the way outlined and to pursue the mission and strategic priorities described, its success will be predicated on influencing a number of key constituencies. These can be thought of as the main 'markets' for the services to be provided by the Centre.

5.4.1 Public policy community and expert public agencies

The path-finding and deliberative activities of the NCPP involve bringing influence to bear on public policy makers in order to focus attention on the future of work, employment and industrial relations institutions in Ireland and in order to encourage policy initiatives to strengthen the foundations of partnership.

The NCPP must work with and through a variety of public policy and expert agencies. These include government departments, agencies directly involved in advising on economic and social policy, agencies involved in dispute resolution and the promotion of good industrial relations, agencies concerned with upgrading skills, furthering equality and safeguarding health and safety in the workplace.

5.4.2 Chief executives and senior managers

Chief executives and top-level line managers in private sector firms and their equivalents in public service organisations, such as county managers and chief executives in health boards, are known to have a profound impact on decisions to opt for partnership and on the success of partnership initiatives.

It will be important to raise consciousness of practical and viable partnership models among this group and to acquaint senior managers with the contribution partnership can make to organizational transformation and to efforts to build capacity and secure competitive advantage.

5.4.3 The industrial policy community

The contribution partnership initiatives have made and can make to efforts by multinational subsidiaries to renew their mandates and move higher up the value chain needs to be communicated to executives charged with promoting industrial development in the FDI sector. Development advisers charged with capacity building in Irish firms also represent a key group and could assist clients in assessing whether partnership initiatives might be undertaken to enhance business performance. Complementary or overlapping models, like world class manufacturing and business excellence, are already supported under existing programmes and could usefully be introduced, extended or deepened through partnership

5.4.4 Parties directly involved in organizational transformation and change

A number of groups occupy critical front-line roles in programmes of change and transformation. Front-line groups need to be influenced by the Centre's initiatives in order for these to inform and shape the handling of change and transformation.

5.4.5 Partnership champions

Partnership champions are responsible for initiating and leading partnership initiatives and for assessing their progress and effects. Commonly operating on the basis of 'co-chair' roles, their vision, resilience and strategic capabilities have a major impact on the success of partnership initiatives.

5.4.6 Human resource managers and union officials

Human resource managers, or sometimes change managers, provide critical guidance and expert advice to change programmes and partnership initiatives.

National and branch-level trade union officials represent their members and safeguard their interests in partnership initiatives. They also commonly occupy roles on steering committees and equivalent structures.

Both groups need to be equipped with a good understanding of partnership and its potential for handling different sets of issues and challenges. They also need to be equipped with the skills and expertise to work on an ongoing basis through partnership processes and arrangements.

5.4.7 Middle-level and supervisory managers and lay representatives

Being able to generate support for change programmes and partnership initiatives among middle and supervisory managers is widely seen to be an important influence on their success. The specific postures, experiences and skills of these groups need to be addressed in the development of case-based learning materials and in the national training strategy.

In many ways shop stewards occupy parallel roles as the immediate representatives of union members participating in partnership initiatives. The new role of shop stewards in the context of partnership will need to be addressed, as will the provision of the skills required to perform new roles.

5.4.8 Partnership facilitators

Partnership facilitators carry day-to-day operational responsibility for the workings of partnership structures and processes. Their skills and training are a prerequisite for the vibrance of partnership and its perceived relevance and effectiveness in the eyes of employees.

5.4.9 Educators and trainers

Business and trade union educators play a role in shaping opinion and developing expertise. They can locate partnership very effectively on the wider canvas of priorities for management and union education in the changing worlds of business and employment. It will be important for its long-term success that partnership becomes part of the core curriculum in business

schools and trade union education, and that research and analysis on partnership is widely disseminated through mainstream education.

Partnership trainers are also a key group, as their expertise and knowledge will influence the skills and ultimately the probability of success of the parties directly involved in organisational transformation and change through partnership.

5.4.10 Opinion formers

The Centre needs to promote partnership and its link with performance and mutual gains to the wider public. Ways need to be found to tackle the confusion that arises as between national social partnership agreements and workplace partnership, and to locate workplace partnership in the context of major economic pressures and trends, some of these affecting national social partnership and possibly changing its character in the period ahead. The Centre needs to animate debate on new ways of working and on new forms of involvement in jobs and organisations. An effective means of informing public opinion is to forge ongoing dialogue with key opinion formers, particularly economic commentators and journalists, employment and industrial relations correspondents and columnists engaged in providing analysis, reflection and commentary on trends in economics, organisations and work and their implications for people's work life and for their life beyond the world of work.

A Business Model for the NCPP

This chapter outlines a business model for the work of the NCPP in the light of the mission and strategic priorities outlined in the last chapter. It begins by identifying the core business of the Centre and then identifies the core competencies required to support the core business. It then addresses opportunities for strategic alliances, joint ventures and outsourcing. Finally it identifies the structures, roles and relationships to be established to support the Centre's strategy, priorities and operational programmes.

6.1 The Core Business of the NCPP

The identification of the core business of the NCPP is important in defining the focus of the Centre's professional staff and in addressing options for alliances, joint ventures and outsourcing.

Consistent with its positioning, mission and strategic priorities, the core business of the NCPP can be portrayed as follows:

- Articulating a vision of the workplace of the future, in dialogue with stakeholders to such a vision, indicating how labour market, public and industrial policy and industrial relations institutions might be mobilised to bring about changes consistent with this vision.
- Working with the Social Partners and with agencies in cognate areas to develop a coalition and range of initiatives in support of partnership and performance.
- Leading deliberative processes and driving policy development in support of partnership and performance.
- Influencing organisational change and innovation based on partnership.
- Providing the intellectual capital to support the development of learning and training materials, focused on the key constituencies involved in animating partnership.
- Engaging in proactive facilitation in support of major programmes of change and restructuring and major national and EU initiatives in partnership.
- Supporting training and contributing to professionalisation by identifying training priorities, resources for associated programmes and models of programme delivery.
- Contributing to strategic reviews of ongoing partnership initiatives by providing benchmarking expertise.
- Engaging in commentary and review based on research evidence and experience.

6.2 Core Competencies of NCPP

The core competencies of the NCPP should drive a range of HR policies, in particular, staff selection and human resource development, and performance management.

The core human resource competencies required to transact the core business of the NCPP involve:

- Experience, skill and reputation in promoting deliberative processes and proactive facilitation, mediation and review.
- Advocacy and negotiation skills aimed at reaching agreements and influencing policy and practice.
- Technical knowledge of partnership combined with a strategic understanding of how it can be promoted through learning materials, training, review and research.
- Technical knowledge of training and facilitation processes and of adult learning combined with a strategic understanding of how these processes can be animated and developed.
- A capacity to build coalitions, to work through joint ventures and to develop initiatives in co-operation with the social partners and a range of agencies.
- A capacity to think holistically about work, business, employment and industrial relations and to identify changes that would support the achievement of major change in policies, practices and institutions.
- Skill in understanding research processes, identifying research priorities, commissioning and managing projects and in applying results to influence policy, practice and public perceptions.
- Skills in project management and assessment.
- A capacity to maintain focus around an ambitious strategy and to motivate and harness the complementary skills of colleagues.

6.3 Alliances, Joint Ventures and Outsourcing

In the light of strategic priorities, core business and core competencies, the Centre should give consideration to possible opportunities for alliances, joint ventures and the procurement of services and expertise on an outsourcing basis.

6.3.1. Strategic Collaborators

While it is not possible at this stage to be definitive, the Centre should ask whether a small number of strategic alliances or clearly focused links with strategic collaborators might be advisable in mission critical areas of its proposed strategy.

Strategic collaborators might have the following features and attributes:

- Skills and competencies that are complementary to those of the NCPP and channels of distribution that are pivotal to the success of its programmes.
- Strategic priorities that are complementary to the NCPP and a resource capability in areas of shared priority.

Five areas arise in respect of which the Centre should explore scope for possible strategic alliances.

6.3.1.1 Strengthening the foundations of workplace partnership

The Social Partners, particularly IBEC and ICTU, have provided leadership in the development of workplace partnership through their individual and joint initiatives. They enjoy well-established channels of distribution and influence for the dissemination and implementation of partnership-based innovation. The Centre should explore with them the development of a strategic agenda aimed at strengthening the foundations of workplace partnership.

6.3.1.2 Building capacity and developing competitive advantage

The Centre might explore the possibility of developing strategic collaboration with Forfas and its major agencies, IDA and Enterprise Ireland, focused on harnessing workplace partnership in support of organisational change and the aims of industrial policy. Programmes and executives in Enterprise Ireland and IDA could be supported through identifying ways in which partnership could be used to build the capacity of indigenous firms to compete internationally and to support the efforts of the Irish subsidiaries of multinational companies in mandate renewal.

6.3.1.3 Aligning partnership and industrial relations

The Centre might consider linking with the Labour Relations Commission, the Labour Court and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with a view to analysing trends in industrial relations, work, employment and human resource management and deliberating with respect to the contours of a new model providing a better alignment between partnership and industrial relations and more suited to Ireland's economic and social priorities.

6.3.1.4 Modernising and improving public service delivery

The Centre might collaborate with the Strategic Management Initiative with a view to promoting the mainstreaming of partnership in core programmes of public service modernisation in central government departments and in local government, health and education.

6.3.1.5 Development of learning and training materials

This has been identified as a key strategic priority of the NCPP. The NCPP's core business involves the provision of intellectual resources and expertise to design case studies and learning materials for use in supporting partnership initiatives and in partnership facilitation and training. The resources required and the skills involved in producing these cases and materials, using multi-media ICT, might best be sourced through collaboration with outside bodies with a mission to promote training or to supply leading edge education and training materials.

Possible alliance partners might involve TV or multi-media producers, involved in the education and training market, Fas and other national training initiatives and funds, or a consulting house with an exemplary track record in this area.

In choosing partners for strategic collaboration the Centre should be highly discriminating in seeking to join with organisations that have a proven track-record in the specific areas of complimentary expertise required, or that can facilitate the Centre's work in a major way.

Simply being involved in partnership in some other way or being a major player with respect to partnership should not be viewed as criteria for choosing a strategic partner.

6.3.1.6 Mainstreaming partnership into the curriculum

This is another strategic priority area that has been identified for the Centre. Among the possibilities that should be considered here are the formation of an alliance with a single major business school with experience in management and trade union education, or forming an alliance with a consortium of business

schools, such as the business schools in the Conference of the Rectors of Irish Universities (CRI).

The focus would be on developing curricula and learning materials for use in mainstream management and trade union education in relevant institutions.

6.3.2 Joint Ventures

Joint ventures provide a means of promoting project specific co-operation in areas where the parties share an interest and can share resources. A range of joint venture possibilities arise in the light of the consultative process and in response to the environmental challenges examined earlier.

No comprehensive opening list of possible joint ventures need be attempted in the strategic plan. However, an outline of what might be called 'indicative' joint ventures might focus further planning in this area:

6.3.2.1 With LANPAG and the Health Service Partnership Forum

Scope exists here for the development of a methodology for reviewing progress against objectives in partnership initiatives and its application to drive forward partnership initiatives in health and local government.

6.3.2.2 With the Advisory Service of the LRC

Scope exists here for the joint development of an intervention model to guide the initiation of partnership in LRC client organisations.

6.3.2.3 With the Equality Authority

Scope exists for developing and strengthening the partnership basis of equality audits and action plans, with a view to the joint promotion of equality proofing with respect to business and human resource policies and practices.

6.3.2.4 With the Social Partners

Scope exists for reviewing and updating partnership training models and diagnostic tools developed under the ADAPT Programme and in co-operation with the National Centre for Partnership.

6.3.2.5 With the Health and Safety Authority

Scope exists for joint research examining whether the adoption of a partnership approach towards the work of health and safety managers and safety representatives may be associated with a better health and safety record,

particularly in high-risk industries. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be the case.

6.3.2.6 With the Training and Consulting Sector

Scope exists for a joint venture focused on the development of advanced skills training for experienced partnership trainers and facilitators, covering areas not commonly accessed at present and learning for experience in other countries where voluntary partnership arrangements are well developed. The Centre should explore priorities in this area with major providers such as ETS, IPC, John O'Dowd & Associates and with other providers.

6.3.3 Outsourcing

Given the ambitious strategy envisaged for the Centre, it is imperative that it should focus on its core business and on the application and development of its core competencies. Non-core areas of its business should be outsourced wherever possible.

Among the areas in which the Centre might consider outsourcing arrangements are the following:

- Research studies and services should be outsourced from multiple providers, leaving the Centre free to focus on identifying research priorities, commissioning projects and disseminating and applying research results.
- NCPP projects in such areas as training, accreditation, benchmarking, review and support for innovation based on partnership may be conducted on an outsourcing basis.
- Library and information services could be outsourced through access to database providers and through an appropriate relationship with a major university library.
- Marketing and communication services could be outsourced.
- Conference organisation and management services could be outsourced.

6.4 Structures, Roles and Relationships

The strategic priorities of the Centre as outlined in the previous chapter can be summarised as follows:

- Identifying and disseminating best practice.
- Pro-active deliberation.
- Pro-active facilitation.
- Developing a national training strategy.
- Auditing and review.
- Assisting conflict prone organisations.
- Analysis and commentary.

In addressing these priorities, the Centre will put in place a small, but high calibre executive staff. Secondly, it has established a Council and substructures to carry out its deliberative and policy development functions. Thirdly, it is seeking to harness the support of other agencies with similar goals and objective through strategic collaboration and joint ventures (as outlined in section 6.3 above) and also through participation in the Centre's support structures, as will be outlined in this section.

6.4.1 NCPP Executive Staff

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance is currently in the process of recruiting senior professional staff in the following key areas:

- Research, analysis and policy development.
- Training, facilitation and support.
- Project initiation, development and support and monitoring and review.

It is expected that additional professional staff will be required in the near future to fulfil the role of the Centre arising from the strategic planning process and to address the strategic priorities as outlined.

6.4.2 Research, analysis and policy development

A national co-ordinator of research, analysis and policy development will be appointed to provide background analysis and support for the process of deliberation and building consensus and to co-ordinate the promotional activities of the centre. This person will have a strong research background. Arising from the strategic planning process it is clear that a key priority for the national co-ordinator will be the development of a better definition of partnership, its constituent elements, the issues and contexts in respect of which partnership approaches can be developed, factors which are necessary to underpin the success of partnership initiatives, the diverse organisational structures which can support partnership, the gains for the organisation and ultimately the rewards for employers and employees resulting from partnership. This will be achieved by identifying and analysing research findings at national and international levels which examine the benefits of partnership, and which explore the link between partnership and performance. Equally studies relating to building organisational capability, modernisation and organisational change in the private and public sector organisations will be an important focus.

Deliberative priorities, as outlined in chapter 5, will include gainsharing, systems of reward and performance for public service organizations and models of work, employment and dispute resolution in essential services.

The development and dissemination of case studies and learning materials will be a priority. These will illustrate best practice in the use of partnership to assist in the management of change and in responding to changing economic circumstances.

6.4.3 Training and facilitation

A national co-ordinator will be appointed to progress the work of the centre in training and facilitation. One of the key goals of the NCPP will be to deepen partnership and enhance organisational capability through training and facilitation. An initial priority will be to develop a national training strategy to support partnership and to provide coherent direction for the many agencies and personnel who are currently active in the area. This role will involve working with the Social Partners and expert bodies in developing and delivering appropriate training and facilitation programmes. There is also an urgent need to design and deliver training of trainer programmes and to increase the number of skilled trainers and facilitators. This work will build on progress made in recent years through joint initiatives of the Social Partners in training,

diagnostics and facilitation. The Centre will also develop criteria for the validation and registration of trainers and facilitators and supporting the expansion of existing of national and regional networks.

6.4.4 Project development, monitoring and review

A project officer will be appointed to oversee the work of the centre in project initiation and support and to develop a framework and procedures for monitoring and reviewing partnership activities in the private and public sectors. The Centre will initiate and support the development of innovative projects with potential for wider learning and application both in the public and private sectors. This function will require the initiation and incubation of projects in key strategic areas, monitoring such projects and disseminating results. Initiating and supporting projects is important in a number of respects. It will form part of the Centre's action research programme and will facilitate the development of best practice in different sectors. As there is no one model of partnership it will also enable the Centre to gather and promote a diversity of approaches to partnership, organisational change and continuous improvement.

6.5 Structures

6.5.1 NCPP Council

The establishment of a Council underlines the importance of the Centre's role in gaining agreement on issues of national importance among the social partners. The Council will have clear independent decision-making powers and will be served by the NCPP executive.

The Council will fulfil a number of overarching responsibilities and it will act as the forum for discussion and deliberation on key strategic issues relating to partnership and performance. It provides for a supportive national framework to deepen partnership and build organisational capability and increased flexibility at enterprise level. Agreement is needed at national level to provide a supportive climate for moving forward on a range of issues including new work practices, increased organisational flexibility, work-life balance issues, childcare, life-long learning, new systems of reward and developing new ways to improve

performance and competitiveness at enterprise, industry and national level.

Nominees to the Council will largely be representatives of the Social Partners comprising employers, trade unions, government and independent nominees. IBEC representatives include the modern indigenous sector as well as representation from more traditional sectors. Non-union companies, the ICT sector and the construction sector are also included. ICTU representation includes public and private sectors as well as manufacturing and services sectors

Independent experts in human resource management, industrial relations issues and partnership and academics and practitioners with expertise in organisational change and performance have also been included.

6.5.2. Council Substructures

The positioning, mission and strategic priorities of the NCPP require the creation of a knowledge-intensive organisation, capable of drawing on the expertise and experience of a range of agencies and groups. This capability will be developed through the substructures envisaged for the Centre.

The substructures will involve three main streams of activity and expertise. It is envisaged that the streams will meet to provide advice and support within their specific areas of expertise. It is also envisaged that groups from across the streams may be convened, as appropriate, to provide multi-specialist guidance for major initiatives by the Centre.

6.5.2.1 Expert Group

The NCPP will work closely with a number of national organisations. In particular, IBEC, ICTU, LRC, LRC Advisory Service, Labour Court, Forfas, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Fás, NESF, NESF, Equality Authority, Health and Safety Authority, IPC, ETS, CIPD. In particular, the work of the Labour Relations Commission, the Labour Court, Forfás (IDA and Enterprise Ireland), and the Irish Productivity Centre have particular relevance to the work of the Centre. The Centre will be a national resource drawing on the expertise of these organisations and facilitating their ongoing work in strengthening partnership and supporting organisational change. It is envisaged that the Centre will establish a High-Level Expert Group as a substructure of its Council to harness the expertise of these organisations and to provide a forum for collaboration and planning.

6.5.2.2 National Forum on Partnership and Organisational Change

In providing support for organisations in strengthening partnership and increasing organisational capability, the Centre will establish a National Forum on Partnership and Organisational Change with representation from the key organisations in the private and public sectors with experience of promoting organisational change through partnership. The forum will comprise representatives from the public sector including Health, Education, Local Government and Civil Service sectors and will bring together key actors in the area of partnership and modernisation. The private sector will include representatives from unionised companies, non-union companies, small and large enterprises, indigenous and multi-national organisations, services and manufacturing sectors and traditional and newly formed enterprise. This forum will provide an opportunity for representatives from the different sectors to share ideas, to consider different approaches, to address barriers to progress and to identify the factors, which will lead to success.

It will aim to provide support for partnership committees and forums in each sector and will help to co-ordinate the work of the many partnership bodies that already exist. The forum will work with the National Co-ordinators to identify and prioritise the centre's support activities in training and facilitation, project development and research. It will also help to promote best practice, to disseminate information and to develop a review framework to enable the centre to monitor developments.

6.5.2.3 Research Network

The Council will also create a Research Network drawn from universities and other organisations to advise on and participate in the Centre's research activities, to identify suitable areas for research and determine priorities. The network will assist the executive and will work with the National Co-ordinator for research and policy development in commissioning and conducting research and collaborating with the Social Partners and relevant agencies in various research initiatives. It will also be the forum for analysing, and deliberating on relevant findings from new and existing studies at national and international levels.

The composition of the Council and support structures is outlined in Figure 6.1

Figure 6.1

National Centre for Partnership and Performance: Council and Enabling Structures



Next Steps

This document is intended as a discussion document. It presents a background analysis and develops proposals for a strategy for the NCPP. The strategy, as outlined, reflects major trends in the external environment and the themes and issues that arose in an extensive consultative process.

The NCPP is faced with significant challenges and commensurately enjoys major opportunities to support the realisation of national strategic priorities for business, employment, work and industrial relations.

The vision of the Centre's role set out in the document is bold and ambitious. But such a vision appears warranted in the light of external challenges and was urged on the Centre by many of those involved in the consultative process.

This chapter outlines the steps that might be taken following the issuing of this document to the Council of the NCPP.

1. The Council's reflections on the document and their feedback and recommendations are important in shaping the strategy to be formally adopted by the NCPP. Early meetings of the Council will be focused on discussing the document and agreeing the content of the strategic plan.
2. When the Council has issued its recommendations on the strategy, it is envisaged that the next phase of its work will be to consider an operational plan and work programme in support of the strategy.
3. The Executive will also present proposals concerning the management systems to be adopted to support the implementation of the plan. These will also identify performance indicators, which can be used to assess progress under the strategic plan.
4. The substructures outlined in chapter 6 of the document will also be established and the three groups identified will be convened to support the work of the Council and Executive.
5. The NCPP will seek to recruit more professional staff in the light of the strategic priorities outlined in chapter 5. The recruitment and deployment of new staff will reflect the core business of the NCPP, as outlined, and the human resource competencies and roles identified in chapter 6.
6. It is expected that the NCPP's Strategic Plan will be formally launched early in 2001, and the Centre will then proceed with the work programme developed to support the strategic priorities contained in the plan.

Context: The PPF and Evaluation of Progress Under Partnership 2000

1. Enterprise and Workplace Partnership in the PPF

Framework 1 of the PPF outlines the wider context for the promotion of enterprise partnership. The NCPP is expected to provide institutional support for progress within this framework. Enterprise partnership is defined in the following terms:

An active relationship based on a recognition of a common interest to secure the competitiveness, viability and prosperity of the enterprise. It involves a continuing commitment by employees to improvement in quality and efficiency; and the acceptance of employees as stakeholders, with rights and interests to be considered in the context of major decisions affecting their employment.

Partnership involves common ownership of the resolution of challenges involving the direct participation of employees/representatives and an investment in their training, development and working environment.

A set of principles underpinning the framework for deepening workplace partnership was also promulgated in Framework 1:

1.1 A focus on competitiveness

A focus on competitiveness that includes the means by which organisations can be made more flexible, adaptable, and innovative.

1.2 Building on progress to date under Partnership 2000

Building on progress already made under *Partnership 2000* to develop the partnership approach at enterprise level through participation to further enhance both the competitiveness of firms and the quality of working life.

1.3 No one model of partnership

A range of models and means may be used to design partnership approaches appropriate to the needs of the individual enterprise.

1.4 Employer and trade union support

IBEC and ICTU are committed to encouraging and supporting the development of appropriate initiatives at enterprise level.

1.5 Voluntary nature of the process

Participation by employers and unions in partnership activities, arising from discussion on topics in paragraph 16, will take place on a voluntary basis.

1.6 Evaluation and monitoring

Ongoing joint monitoring and evaluation as implementation progresses are recognised as key determinants of the effectiveness of improving workplace relations.

1.7 ‘Partnership topics’

Framework I of the PPF further identified a series of ‘partnership topics’ that might provide a basis for discussion and possible partnership initiatives, activities and arrangements at enterprise level:

- Competitiveness, adaptability, flexibility and innovation in the enterprise;
- Better systems of work organisation;
- Training and personal development which is linked to lifelong learning;
- Measures to promote equality of opportunity and family friend working arrangements;
- Problem solving and conflict avoidance;
- Occupational safety, health and welfare issues, including physical environment improvements;
- Information and consultation;

- Time off, facilities and training for staff representatives;
- Forms of financial involvement.

1.8 Partnership in the Public Service

Framework I of the *PPF* noted that progress to date in modernising the public service had been driven by the sectoral strategies developed under the Strategic Management Initiative. It was observed that these sectoral strategies were now being advanced through the participative structures put in place under *Partnership 2000* to involve all public servants in the change process. In this way, partnership was assigned a key role in the dynamic of change and adaptation in the public service and the NCPP was in turn assigned a central role in providing institutional support for partnership in the context of the programme of public service modernisation.

2 Providing Institutional Support: the Role of the NCPP

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance was assigned the role of providing institutional supports for partnership. A key objective for the Centre was to encourage organisations to achieve the highest possible standards within their chosen approaches to partnership and involvement. More generally, the Centre was expected to support the deepening of partnership through:

- Deliberation, consensus building and dissemination;
- Monitoring;
- Research and analysis;
- Training and facilitation.

In undertaking these activities the Centre was required to work with the relevant Government Departments and agencies with a role in the development of enterprise performance and to have regard to other organisations in the private and public sectors with roles involving a contribution to partnership development.

3 Role and Activities Set out in Review of Progress Under P2000

The review document, *Partnership at Work in Ireland*, examined the progress achieved with respect to partnership at work under Partnership 2000 and also addressed the specific role and activities of the NCPP. The report urged that the improvement of performance should become a major concern of partnership at work, a recommendation given expression in the name of the new agency.

The core activities outlined above received endorsement as the main ways in which the Centre might provide institutional support for deepening of partnership. It was further proposed that the Centre:

- Should have responsibility for the promotion of partnership and performance in the private and public sectors;
- Should be the over-arching body that ensures that all agencies promote partnership;
- Should do much of its work with and through existing public and private organisations;
- Should be the conduit through which public financial support for partnership is provided.

Appendix 2

The External Environment: Tables and Figures

Table A2.2.1
ESRI MTR ‘Benchmark Forecast’, Growth in Major Aggregates

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| | Per Cent | | | | | | | | Annual Average % Growth | | | | |
| GNP | 9.9 | 6.0 | 5.4 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 8.4 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 2.9 |
| GNDI (incl. Capital Transfers) | 6.6 | 4.7 | 5.4 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 2.7 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 7.6 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 2.5 |
| Consumption Deflator | 5.8 | 4.8 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 3.6 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Employment, April | 4.8 | 4.3 | 2.2 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 4.9 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 0.7 |
| Real After Tax | 2.1 | 5.2 | 5.8 | 4.2 | 2.8 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| Non-Agricultural Wage | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Balance of Payments Surplus | 0.7 | -0.9 | -1.7 | -1.5 | -1.0 | -0.8 | -1.1 | -1.4 | 2.1 | 3.2 | -0.7 | -0.8 | -1.5 |
| Debt-GNP Ratio | 42.1 | 34.5 | 29.0 | 24.3 | 20.9 | 18.3 | 15.7 | 13.2 | 100.0 | 83.5 | 42.1 | 18.4 | 7.1 |
| General Government | 5.4 | 4.2 | 3.3 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 5.4 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Balance | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Per Cent of Labour Force | | | | | | | | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 |
| Unemployment Rate | 4.3 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 5.3 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 12.9 | 2.2 | 4.3 | 5.8 | 4.0 |
| (ILO basis) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: ESRI MEDIUM-TERM REVIEW, 2001-2007, p.44.

Table A2.2.2

'Sharp Slowdown Scenario': Major Aggregates

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 1990 -95 | 1995 -00 | 2000 -05 | 2005 -10 | 2010 -15 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Per Cent | | | | | | | | Annual Average % Growth | | | | |
| GNP | 9.9 | 6.0 | 1.8 | 4.2 | 5.1 | 5.3 | 6.1 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 8.4 | 4.5 | 4.7 | 2.8 |
| GNDI (incl. Capital Transfers) | 6.6 | 4.7 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 4.8 | 4.4 | 5.8 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 7.6 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 2.8 |
| Consumption Deflator | 5.8 | 4.8 | 2.2 | 2.5 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 3.8 | 2.7 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.1 |
| Employment, April | 4.8 | 4.3 | -0.9 | 0.2 | 2.0 | 2.9 | 3.4 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 4.9 | 1.7 | 2.4 | 0.6 |
| Real After Tax | 2.1 | 5.2 | 5.8 | 3.8 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 3.9 | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| Non-Agricultural Wage | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Per Cent of GNP | | | | | | | | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| Balance of Payments Surplus | -0.7 | -0.9 | 0.0 | 0.4 | -0.8 | -1.4 | -2.1 | -1.9 | 3.2 | -0.7 | -1.4 | -1.2 | 2.2 |
| Debt-GNP Ratio | 42.1 | 34.5 | 32.0 | 29.6 | 26.8 | 23.6 | 19.8 | 16.2 | 83.5 | 42.1 | 23.6 | 6.9 | -6.7 |
| General Government | 5.4 | 4.2 | 2.5 | 0.1 | -0.3 | 0.1 | 1.1 | 1.6 | -2.5 | 5.4 | 0.1 | 1.8 | 2.7 |
| Balance | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Per Cent of Labour Force (ILO Basis) | | | | | | | | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 |
| Unemployment Rate | 4.3 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 7.6 | 7.4 | 6.5 | 5.1 | 4.6 | 12.2 | 4.3 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| | Share of Value Added | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Labours' Share | 50.4 | 50.3 | 52.4 | 52.8 | 52.3 | 52.3 | 52.1 | 52.8 | 57.4 | 50.4 | 52.3 | 54.4 | 56.4 |

Source: ESRI MEDIUM-TERM REVIEW, 2001-2007, p.99.

Table A2.2.3

Level of Competition in Product Markets of Establishments

| | % Establishments |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Very Intense | 60.7 |
| Somewhat Intense | 34.1 |
| Not Intense | 4.4 |
| No Competition | 0.8 |

Note: Based on a sample of 450 establishments (workplaces) in Ireland in enterprises with 20 or more employees in the private and commercial semi-state sectors. The data were collected in 1996-97 and was reweighted to ensure representativeness with respect to the sector and size composition of the survey population.

Source: IRISH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE CHANGING MARKETPLACE: THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IRELAND, *Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin.*

Table A2.2.4

Trend in the Level of Competition

| | % Establishments |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Increased Significantly | 68.5 |
| Increased Slightly | 17.4 |
| Stayed the Same | 11.8 |
| Decreased Slightly | 2.3 |

Note: See note to table A2.2.3.

Source: IRISH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE CHANGING MARKETPLACE: THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IRELAND, *Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin.*

Table A2.2.5

Expectations with Respect to Future Intensity of Competition

| | % Establishments |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Expected to Increase | 75.3 |
| Expected to Stay the Same | 21.9 |
| Expected to Decline | 2.7 |

Note: See note to table A2.2.3.

Source: IRISH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE CHANGING MARKETPLACE: THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IRELAND, *Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin.*

Table A2.2.6

Indicators of Product and Process Dynamism in Establishments

| | Decreased Substantially % Establishments | Increased Substantially % Establishments | Increased Somewhat % Establishments | Remained Stable % Establishments | Decreased Somewhat % Establishments |
|---|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Rate of change in production technology | 29.7 | 49.5 | 20.1 | 0.8 | 0.0 |
| Rate of innovation in operating processes | 22.2 | 50.8 | 25.7 | 0.5 | 0.8 |
| Rate of innovation in new products | 22.6 | 42.1 | 34.0 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| R&D activity | 15.8 | 44.2 | 35.0 | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| Diversity needed in production methods | 21.0 | 34.5 | 40.0 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| Technical barriers to entering sector | 11.9 | 25.7 | 53.3 | 8.3 | 0.8 |

Note: Based on responses from operations managers in a sample of 273 establishments (workplaces) in enterprises employing 20 or more employees in the private and commercial semi-state sectors. The data were collected in 1998-97 and were reweighted to ensure representativeness with respect to the sectoral and size composition of the survey population.

Source: IRISH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE CHANGING MARKETPLACE: THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IRELAND, *Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin.*

Table A2.2.7

The Incidence of Change Issues Affecting Establishments

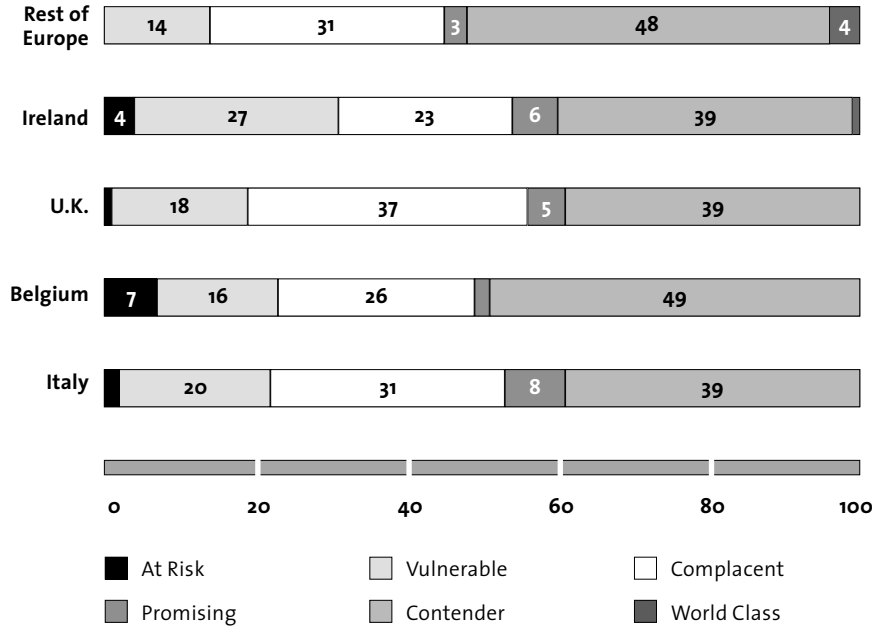
| Operational Issues | % Establishments | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Unionized Workplaces | Non-Union Workplaces |
| Changing pay levels | 80 | 89 |
| Changes in payment systems | 59 | 53 |
| Introduction of new plant and technology | 78 | 72 |
| Changes in working time arrangements | 64 | 61 |
| Changes in working practices (e.g. multi-skilling, work re-organisation, teamworking) | 67 | 61 |
| Changes in numbers employed | 86 | 92 |
| Introduction of initiatives to involve employees (e.g. quality circles, suggestion schemes, team briefing) | 58 | 70 |
| Revision of promotional structures and criteria | 41 | 49 |
| Strategic Issues | | |
| Introduction of new products/product ranges/services | 76 | 84 |
| Setting business targets for this workplace | 78 | 83 |
| Identifying ways of realising targets for this workplace | 76 | 83 |
| Formulating plans with respect to mergers/acquisitions/divestments | 39 | 47 |

Note: See note to Table A2.2.3.

Source: IRISH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE CHANGING MARKETPLACE: THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN IRELAND, *Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin*.

Figure A2.2.1

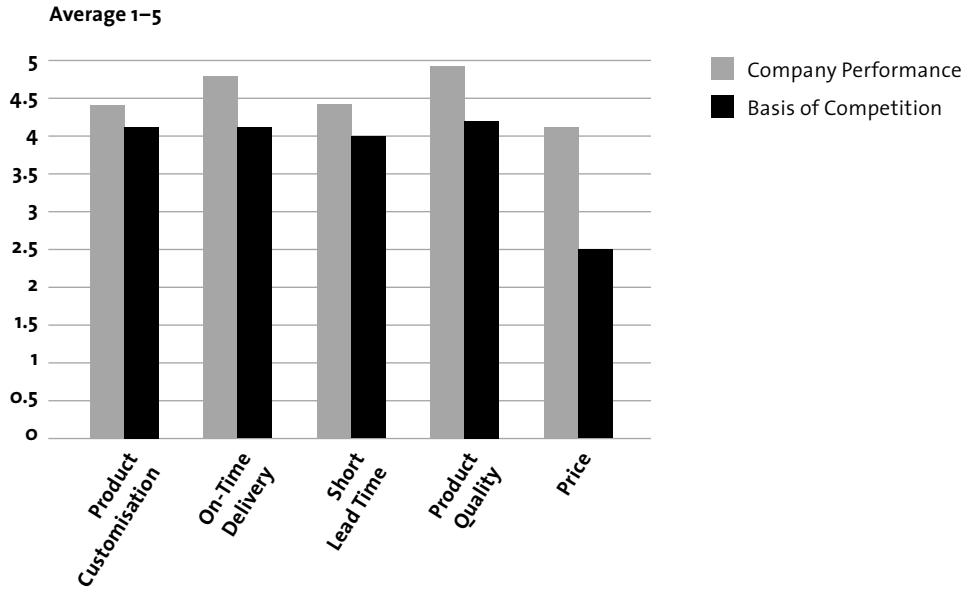
How Ireland Compares on Practice and Performance



Source: Keegan, R., McSherry, R., Fynes, B., Roche, E. and De Burca, S., MADE IN IRELAND: BENCHMARKING IRELAND'S SMEs. AN IRISH-EUROPEAN STUDY, Enterprise Ireland, 2001, p. 19.

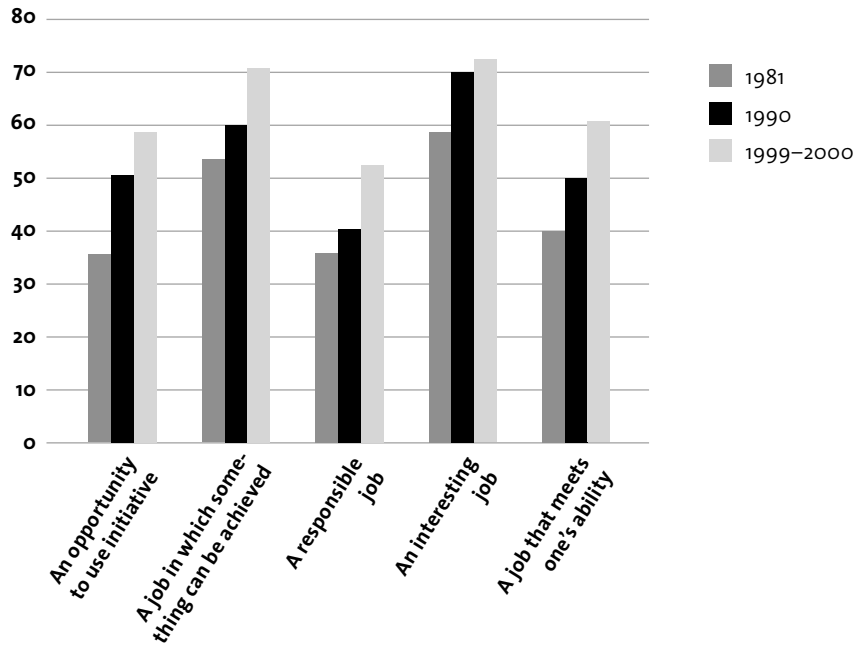
Note: Irish results based on a sample of 170 indigenous Irish manufacturing firms employing from 1 to 200 people. European results based on sample of 988 SMEs.

Figure A2.2.2
Ratings of Competitiveness Dimension for Irish SMEs



Source: 'Made in Ireland' Database, Enterprise Ireland and Graduate School of Business, University College, Dublin

Figure A2.2.3
Trend Over Two Decades (1981–2000) in Ireland with Respect to Attributes of Jobs that People Think are Important



Note: Based on national probability samples of the adult population (Ns 1981: 1217; 1990: 1000; 1999–2000: 1012).

Source: EUROPEAN VALUES SURVEYS

Table A2.2.8

Ranking by People in Employment of Issues which will be Most Important to Them in the Future

Ranking from a Choice of Options Presented

| | |
|--|----|
| More involvement in decisions concerning my job | 56 |
| More involvement in decisions concerning the future of the organisation I work for | 39 |
| The opportunity to perform a greater variety of tasks at work | 35 |
| More flexible work practices and arrangements | 47 |
| Negotiation of individual employment contracts | 17 |
| Greater autonomy at work | 26 |
| In-work training | 43 |
| How to develop personal career | 42 |

Note: Survey based on probability sample of 1000 Irish adults, aged 18 and over, undertaken in 1998.

Source: WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF UNIONS: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY CONDUCTED BY RESEARCH & EVALUATION SERVICES FOR THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS, *ICTU*, 1998, p.19.

Table A2.2.9

Priority Areas for Unions to be Involved with in the Future

| | % |
|--|----|
| More involvement in decisions concerning my job | 58 |
| More involvement in decisions concerning the future of the organization I work for | 50 |
| Getting 'family friendly' working conditions | 33 |
| Developing my personal career | 28 |
| More flexible work practices and arrangements | 28 |
| Negotiation of individual employment contracts (instead or in addition to collective ones) | 20 |
| Greater autonomy at work | 18 |
| The opportunity to perform a greater variety of tasks at work | 13 |
| In-work training | 13 |
| Other | 50 |

Note: Survey based on probability sample of 1000 Irish adults, aged 18 and over, undertaken in 1998. Responses in Table based on replies of respondents who identified aspects of their work that they felt it may be important for unions to be involved with in the future.

Source: UNIONS AND WORK: HIGHLIGHTS OF A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES CONDUCTED BY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SERVICES FOR THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS, ICTU, 2001, p.2.

Table A2.2.10

The Best Way to Pursue Issues of Concern in the Workplace

| | |
|--|----|
| Joint partnership agreements | 50 |
| Head-to-head negotiations by unions on behalf of members | 29 |
| Negotiating as individual worker | 16 |
| House committees/associations | 5 |

Note: Survey based on a probability sample of 1,000 Irish adults, aged 18 and over, undertaken in 2001.

Source: UNIONS AND WORK: HIGHLIGHTS OF A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES CONDUCTED BY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SERVICES FOR THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS, ICTU, 2001, p.2.

Table A2.2.11

Total Gross Labour Force Inflows, 1990–2005

| Year Inflow | Education | Immigration | Home Duties | Other | Total |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1990 | 38.4 | 18.3 | 9.0 | 1.7 | 67.3 |
| 1991 | 37.0 | 20.4 | 10.6 | 2.4 | 70.3 |
| 1992 | 37.1 | 20.9 | 10.4 | 2.5 | 71.0 |
| 1993 | 36.5 | 17.1 | 10.6 | 3.0 | 67.2 |
| 1994 | 39.6 | 14.8 | 11.1 | 4.2 | 69.8 |
| 1995 | 44.6 | 15.7 | 12.0 | 3.8 | 76.1 |
| 1996 | 40.8 | 18.2 | 13.8 | 4.6 | 77.3 |
| 1997 | 44.7 | 21.1 | 14.6 | 3.5 | 83.9 |
| 1988 | 45.9 | 21.1 | 14.6 | 4.8 | 86.4 |
| 1999 | 46.6 | 22.8 | 15.2 | 5.2 | 89.8 |
| 2000 | 46.8 | 21.0 | 15.9 | 5.6 | 89.3 |
| 2001 | 46.6 | 19.0 | 16.6 | 5.9 | 88.1 |
| 2002 | 46.0 | 19.0 | 17.2 | 6.3 | 88.5 |
| 2003 | 45.1 | 19.0 | 17.9 | 6.7 | 88.7 |
| 2004 | 44.0 | 19.0 | 18.6 | 7.0 | 88.6 |
| 2005 | 42.8 | 21.0 | 19.2 | 7.4 | 90.4 |
| 1990-1997 | 318.7 | 146.4 | 92.1 | 25.7 | 582.9 |
| 1998-2005 | 363.8 | 161.9 | 135.2 | 48.9 | 709.8 |

Source: Sexton, J.J., Hughes, G., McCormick, B. and Fin, C., ESTIMATING LABOUR SOURCE FLOWS, JOB OPENINGS AND HUMAN RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS, 1990-2005, FÁS/ESRI MANPOWER STUDIES, April 2001, p.31.

Table A2.2.12

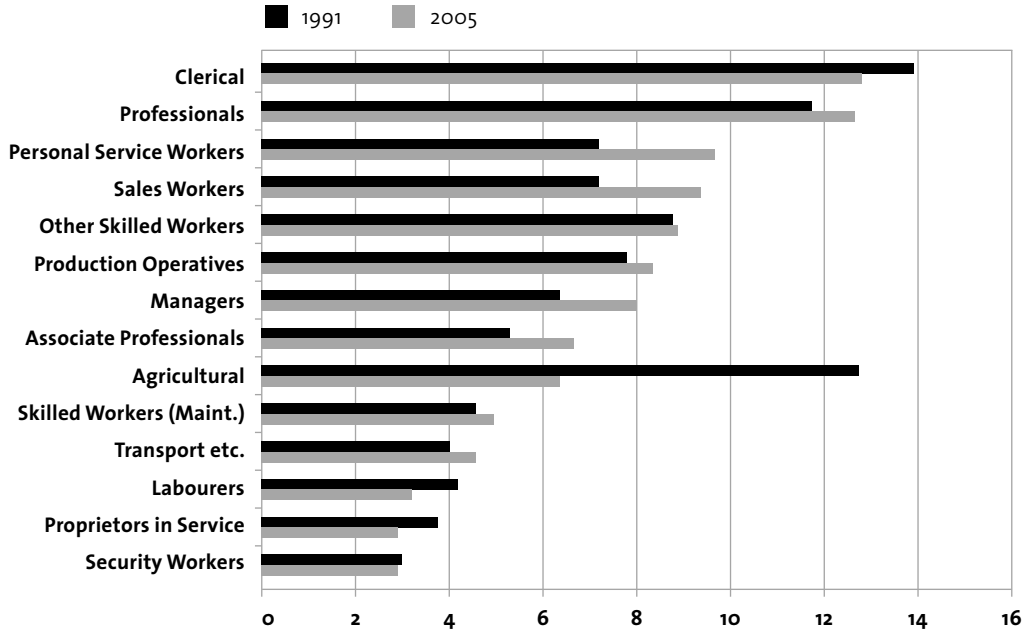
**The Changing Occupational Composition of Employment
1991–2005**

| | 1991 Share % | 1997 Share % | 2005 Share % |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Agricultural | 12.7 | 9.8 | 6.4 |
| Managers | 10.0 | 9.9 | 10.7 |
| Professional | 16.7 | 18.4 | 19.1 |
| Clerical | 13.9 | 13.3 | 12.6 |
| Sales | 7.3 | 7.8 | 9.2 |
| Service workers | 10.1 | 11.0 | 12.1 |
| Skilled manual | 17.3 | 17.7 | 18.4 |
| Production workers | 7.8 | 8.6 | 8.5 |
| Unskilled manual | 4.2 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Sources: O'Connell, P.J., 'THE DYNAMICS OF THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE', in Nolan, B., O'Connell, P.J. and Whelan, C.T. eds., *BUST TO BOOM: THE IRISH EXPERIENCE OF GROWTH AND INEQUALITY*, Institute of Public Administration, 2000, p.76, and Hughes, G., McCormac, B. and Sexton, J.J., *OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS 2005*, FÁS/ESRI, 2000, p.36.

Figure A2.2.4

Distribution of Total Employment (%) Across Occupations 1991 and 2005



The occupational categories are shown in descending order of share in 2005.

Source: Hughes, G., McCormick, B. and Sexton, J.J., OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS 2005, FÁS/ESRI Manpower Forecasting Studies, April 2000, p.ii.

Table A2.2.13

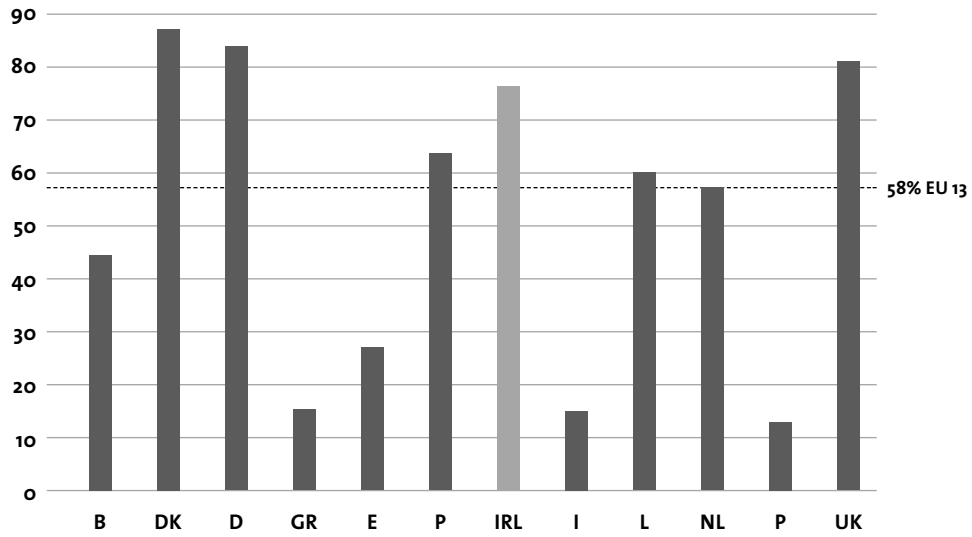
Estimated Human Resource Requirements by Occupation in 1989–1997 and 1997–2005

| Occupation | Total Human Resource Requirement (THR) | | | THR Annual Averages | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | 1989-1997 (000) | 1997-2005 (000) | Change | 1989-1997 (000) | 1997-2005 (000) | Change |
| Agricultural | 11.7 | 3.3 | -8.4 | 1.5 | 0.4 | -1.0 |
| Managers | 22.9 | 33.6 | 10.7 | 2.9 | 4.2 | 1.3 |
| Proprietors in services | 4.3 | 9.9 | 5.6 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 0.7 |
| Professional Occupations | 40.7 | 78.3 | 37.6 | 5.1 | 9.8 | 4.7 |
| Associate Professionals | 27.4 | 31.4 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 3.9 | 0.5 |
| Clerical Occupations | 48.2 | 65.1 | 16.9 | 6.0 | 8.1 | 2.1 |
| Skilled workers (maintenance) | 16.9 | 29.3 | 12.4 | 2.1 | 3.7 | 1.5 |
| Other skilled workers | 25.3 | 46.4 | 21.1 | 3.2 | 5.8 | 2.6 |
| Production operatives | 39.5 | 37.2 | -2.3 | 4.9 | 4.6 | -0.3 |
| Transport/Communication | 10.9 | 11.4 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 0.1 |
| Sales workers | 32.9 | 61.2 | 28.3 | 4.1 | 7.6 | 3.5 |
| Security workers | 4.9 | 17.8 | 12.9 | 0.6 | 2.2 | 1.6 |
| Personal service workers | 26.5 | 27.1 | 0.6 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 0.1 |
| Labourers | 8.1 | 17.9 | 9.8 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 1.2 |
| Total | 320.2 | 470.0 | 149.8 | 40.0 | 58.7 | 18.7 |

Source: Sexton, J.J., Hughes, G., McCormick, B and Finn, C., ESTIMATING LABOUR SOURCE FLOWS, JOB OPENINGS AND HUMAN RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS, 1990-2005, FÁS/ESRI MANPOWER STUDIES, April 2001, p.XIV.

Figure A2.2.5

Percentage of Enterprises (10+ employees) Providing Training in EU Member States, 1993



Source: Eurostat: CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING SURVEY, 1994, p. 68.

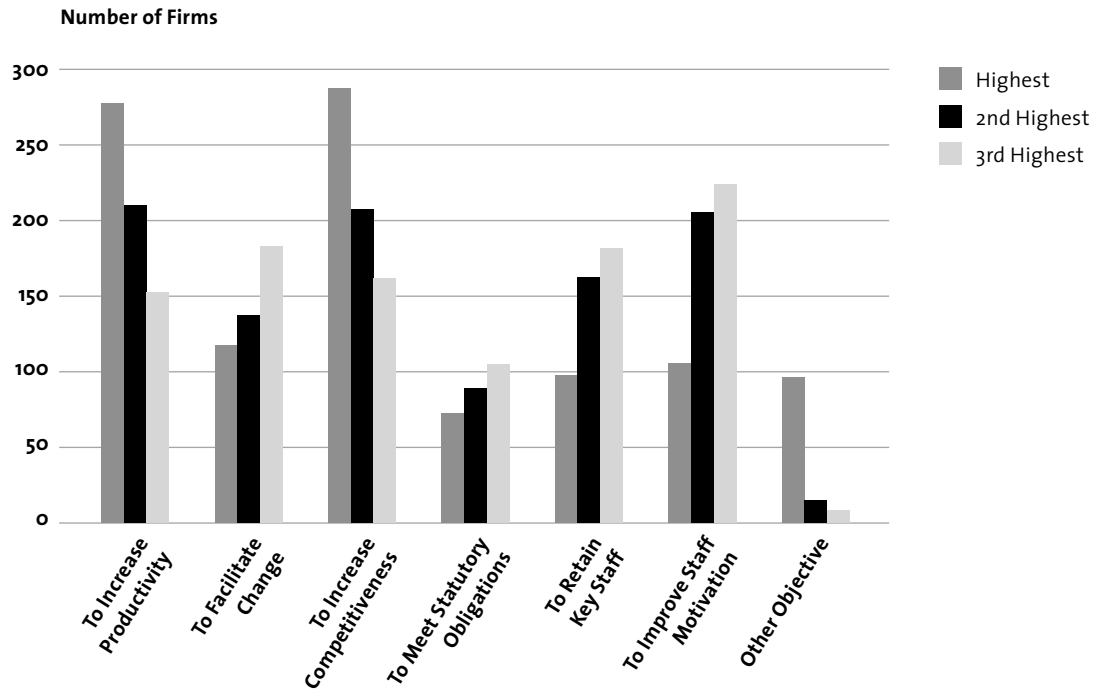
Table A2.2.14

Participation and average duration of job-related training undertaken by employed adults aged 25–64, 1994–1995

| | Rate of participation in training % of all employed | Average duration in weeks per trainee |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Australia | 38.1 | 11.1 |
| Belgium (Flanders) | 20.0 | 12.5 |
| Canada | 37.5 | 11.1 |
| Ireland | 23.4 | 15.0 |
| Netherlands | 32.5 | 20.9 |
| New Zealand | 46.9 | 13.9 |
| Poland | 16.5 | 9.9 |
| Switzerland | 31.7 | 12.0 |
| United Kingdom | 51.9 | 11.0 |
| United States | 45.6 | 8.2 |
| Unweighted Mean | 34.4 | 12.5 |

Source: Adapted from O'Connell, P., 'ADULTS IN TRAINING: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING', Paris: OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, April 1999, p. 18.

Figure A2.2.6
Importance of Training Objectives



Source: Adapted from IBEC NATIONAL TRAINING SURVEY, March 2000, p. 31.

Table A2.2.15

**Details of Areas where Training is Expected to Increase
Over Next 3 Years**

| Type of Training Expected | Increase Expected Total No. (%) of Companies |
|---|---|
| Computer Related/IT | 414 (43%) |
| Management/Leadership | 244 (25%) |
| Environment/Health & Safety | 188 (19%) |
| Customer Service/Relations | 112 (12%) |
| Soft Skills and Self Study/Personal Development | 104 (11%) |
| Basic Skills/Operator Training/general/production | 94 (10%) |
| Technical Skills | 88 (9%) |
| Sales/Marketing | 76 (8%) |
| Formal Training | 55 (6%) |
| Team Skills/Teambuilding | 46 (5%) |
| Quality | 33 (3%) |
| Informal Training | 32 (3%) |
| Business/Industry Related Skills | 24 (2%) |
| Induction Training | 20 (2%) |
| In-house Training | 20 (2%) |
| Product Knowledge | 20 (2%) |
| Administration/Clerical/Accounts | 19 (2%) |
| Skills/Competency Training | 18 (2%) |
| Human Resources/Employment Law/Industrial Relations | 17 (2%) |
| Nursing/Healthcare Related | 15 (2%) |
| Further (Professional) Training/Apprenticeships | 16 (2%) |
| Law/Legal/Statutory Compliance | 12 (1%) |
| Multiskilling/Cross Training | 11 (1%) |
| Euro Awareness | 10 (1%) |
| External Training | 10 (1%) |

Source: IBEC NATIONAL TRAINING SURVEY, March 2000, p. 40.

Table A2.2.16

Perceived Reason for Increases in Required Skill Levels

| Reasons for Increases in Required Skill Levels | % of All Firms | |
|---|----------------|---------|
| | 1998/99 | 1999/00 |
| 1. Technology | 41.3 | 35.4 |
| 2. Product | 8.1 | 7.2 |
| 3. Competitive Position | 12.4 | 12.9 |
| 4. Customer/Market | 20.5 | 21.2 |
| 5. Quality Requirement | 8.0 | 3.8 |
| 6. Legislation | 4.0 | 2.7 |
| 7. Efficiency | 5.2 | 9.1 |
| 8. Staff | 3.5 | 2.5 |
| 9. General Training | 3.9 | 1.4 |
| 10. Business Levels | 17.1 | 12.6 |
| 11. Other | 6.0 | 15.3 |

Source: Williams, J., Blackwell, S. and Hughes, G., NATIONAL SURVEY OF VACANCIES IN THE PRIVATE NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTOR 1999/9000, Economic and Social Research Institute, 2001

Table A2.2.17

Female Participation in the Force

| | Participation Rate | Employment Rate | Unemployment Rate |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1994 | 39.0 | 33.3 | 14.8 |
| 1995 | 39.7 | 34.8 | 12.2 |
| 1996 | 41.4 | 36.5 | 11.9 |
| 1997 | 42.0 | 37.7 | 10.3 |
| 1998 | 44.0 | 40.7 | 7.4 |
| 1999 | 46.0 | 43.4 | 5.5 |
| 2000 | 46.7 | 45.4 | 4.2 |

Source: National Economic and Social Council, ALLEVIATING LABOUR SHORTAGES, November 2000, p. 30; QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, February 2001, Table 1

Table A2.2.18

Women as a Proportion of Total Employment, 1988–2005

| | % |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1988 | 32.8 |
| 1993 | 36.7 |
| 1999 | 40.5 |
| 2005 | 41.0 |

Source: O'Connell, P.J., 'THE DYNAMICS OF THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE', in Nolan, B., O'Connell, P.J. and Whelan, C.T. eds., *BUST TO BOOM: THE IRISH EXPERIENCE OF GROWTH AND INEQUALITY*, Institute of Public Administration, 2000, p. 66, and Hughes, G., McCormac, B. and Sexton, J.J., *Occupational Employment Forecasts*.

Table A2.2.19

Proportion of Women in Major Occupational Groups

| Occupation | 1984 % | 1993 % | 1997 % |
|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Farmers | 4.8 | 6.62 | 6.6 |
| Other agricultural, forestry and fishery | 22.8 | 12.29 | 14.9 |
| Electrical and electronic | 16.8 | 21.98 | 25.3 |
| Engineering and related trades | 7.0 | 7.26 | 5.3 |
| Woodworkers | 1.0 | 3.19 | 2.9 |
| Leather, leather substitute, textile and clothing | 63.6 | 58.47 | 59.9 |
| Paper and printing | 22.4 | 21.88 | 27.2 |
| Workers in other products | 15.8 | 28.13 | 33.3 |
| Building and construction | 1.0 | 2.56 | 2.8 |
| Foremen and supervisors of manual | 10.1 | 17.36 | 22.5 |
| Labourers and unskilled | 1.4 | 3.79 | 4.6 |
| Transport and communications | 10.9 | 7.74 | 7.6 |
| Warehouse staff, storekeepers, packers and bottlers | 22.4 | 22.01 | 23.8 |
| Clerical workers | 72.2 | 78.23 | 79.9 |
| Proprietors and managers | 20.0 | 26.84 | 28.0 |
| Shop assistants and bar staff | 56.3 | 59.59 | 64.3 |
| Other commercial | 6.4 | 17.94 | 22.0 |
| Professional and technical | 47.5 | 50.89 | 53.1 |
| Service workers | 53.8 | 57.98 | 62.9 |
| Administrative, executive and managerial | 11.0 | 18.95 | 27.4 |
| Others (including not stated) | 7.8 | 9.38 | 19.7 |
| Total | 30.6 | 35.79 | 38.3 |

Source: Barrett, A., Callan, T., Doris, A., O'Neill, D., Russell, H., Sweetman, O. and McBride, J., *How UNEQUAL? MEN AND WOMEN IN THE IRISH LABOUR MARKET*, Oak Tree Press in association with the ESRI, 2000, p.60.

Table A2.2.20

Total Gross Labour Force Inflows, 1990–2005

| Year Inflow | Education | Immigration | Home Duties | Other | Total |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1990 | 38.4 | 18.3 | 9.0 | 1.7 | 67.3 |
| 1991 | 37.0 | 20.4 | 10.6 | 2.4 | 70.3 |
| 1992 | 37.1 | 20.9 | 10.4 | 2.5 | 71.0 |
| 1993 | 36.5 | 17.1 | 10.6 | 3.0 | 67.2 |
| 1994 | 39.6 | 14.8 | 11.1 | 4.2 | 69.8 |
| 1995 | 44.6 | 15.7 | 12.0 | 3.8 | 76.1 |
| 1996 | 40.8 | 18.2 | 13.8 | 4.6 | 77.3 |
| 1997 | 44.7 | 21.1 | 14.6 | 3.5 | 83.9 |
| 1988 | 45.9 | 21.1 | 14.6 | 4.8 | 86.4 |
| 1999 | 46.6 | 22.8 | 15.2 | 5.2 | 89.8 |
| 2000 | 46.8 | 21.0 | 15.9 | 5.6 | 89.3 |
| 2001 | 46.6 | 19.0 | 16.6 | 5.9 | 88.1 |
| 2002 | 46.0 | 19.0 | 17.2 | 6.3 | 88.5 |
| 2003 | 45.1 | 19.0 | 17.9 | 6.7 | 88.7 |
| 2004 | 44.0 | 19.0 | 18.6 | 7.0 | 88.6 |
| 2005 | 42.8 | 21.0 | 19.2 | 7.4 | 90.4 |
| 1990-1997 | 318.7 | 146.4 | 92.1 | 25.7 | 582.9 |
| 1998-2005 | 363.8 | 161.9 | 135.2 | 48.9 | 709.8 |

Source: Sexton, J.J., Hughes, G., McCormick, B. and Fin, C., ESTIMATING LABOUR SOURCE FLOWS, JOB OPENINGS AND HUMAN RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS, 1990-2005, FÁS/ESRI MANPOWER STUDIES, April 2001, p.31.

Table A2.2.21

**Work Permits Issued to Non-EEA Persons
1996– 2001**

| | Number | Increase |
|-----------------------|--------|----------|
| 1996 | 3,730 | |
| 1997 | 4,476 | 746 |
| 1998 | 5,630 | 1,154 |
| 1999 | 6,264 | 634 |
| 2000 | 18,000 | 11,736 |
| 1 Jan to 27 July 2001 | 19,000 | 1,000 |

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

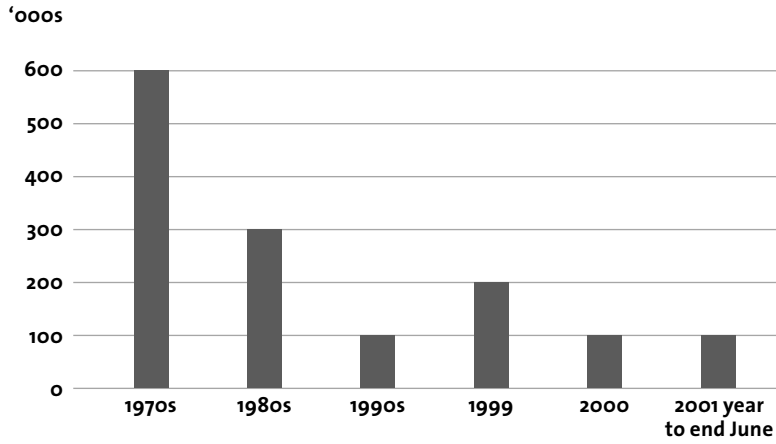
Table A2.2.22

**Work Visas / Authorisations Issued,
June 2000 – July 2001**

| | Number |
|------------------------|--------|
| June – December 2000 | 1,387 |
| January – 27 July 2001 | 2,112 |

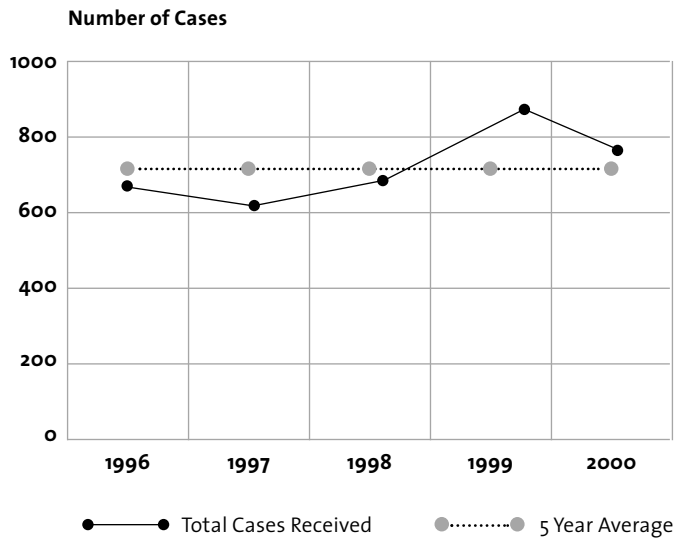
Source: Department of Foreign Affairs

Figure A2.2.7
Annual Working Days Lost Due to Industrial Disputes



Source: Central Statistics Office, INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES SERIES

Figure A2.2.8
Trend in Referrals to the Labour Court 1996–2000



Source: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LABOUR COURT 2000, p.28

Consultative Process Background Paper

1. Context

The establishment of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance is one of the key recommendations in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) which has been agreed by the Social Partners. The new Centre has been established to promote and deepen partnership in the workplace and to support organisations in the private and public sectors in adapting to change and improving performance. A key challenge is to place performance and partnership at the heart of national policy, as this will be critical to the success of social partnership and indeed the wider economy in the future.

The ambitious range of roles and functions of the NCPP are set out in the documents *Partnership at work in Ireland: An evaluation of progress under partnership 2000*, and the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* which have been agreed by the Social Partners. In summary the role of the centre, as set out in these documents, is to place organisational adaptability and competitiveness at the heart of national policy, to promote and strengthen partnership in the workplace, and to enable organisations in the private and public sectors to respond to change, to build capability and to improve performance.

In fulfilling its role, the NCPP will be engaged in research and analysis, facilitating discussion, deliberation and agreement among the Social Partners. It will provide institutional support for strengthening partnership and improving performance through training and facilitation, project initiation and development and through promotion and widespread dissemination of best practice. It will also monitor developments in the private and public sectors and will develop a framework for monitoring and review.

The centre's main areas of work are;

- Analysis and research

- Training and facilitation
- Deliberation and consensus building
- Advocacy and dissemination of best practice
- Project initiation, development and support
- Monitoring and review

2. Strategic Plan

As a new organisation the National Centre for Partnership and Performance is currently developing a strategic plan. As part of this process the Centre is engaging in a process of consultation with the Social Partners and a number of key bodies that are involved in the relevant areas of partnership and performance.

The process of consultation will seek to establish the expectations of the Social Partners and key national organisations in relation to the Centre, to identify opportunities for collaboration and priority areas for action in the short and medium term. This process will assist in the development of a clearer definition of the role, functions, priorities and operational programmes of the Centre. It will help to define its role in relation to other organisations and will identify areas where there is an overlap in services and gaps in current provision, and where scope for strategic alliances and other forms of co-operation may exist.

In summary the aim of the consultation process is :

- To clarify the role and functions of the centre and to provide a clear definition of its core business
- To identify the expectations of the Social Partners and their vision for the NCPP
- To identify the key priorities, challenges and opportunities in deepening partnership in the workplace and in building organisational capability
- To identify the key challenges in relation to partnership at national level, particularly challenges with the greatest significance for promoting enhanced performance and mutual gains through partnership at the workplace

- To identify areas in which the Centre can act as a catalyst and a facilitator in progressing policy at national level
- To identify priority areas that might be addressed in the operational programmes of the Centre
- To identify opportunities for collaboration with the Social Partners and other national organisations
- To identify areas in which the Social Partners and national bodies can contribute to the work of the centre in strengthening partnership in the workplace in the private and public sectors
- To identify areas in which the Social Partners and national bodies can contribute to the work of the Centre in helping organisations in the private and public sectors to adapt to change and improve performance
- To gather information on current projects and activities in areas relevant to the work of the Centre
- To identify possible areas and opportunities for research and project development to be undertaken by the Centre
- To identify possible areas and priorities for training and facilitation to be undertaken by the Centre.

The overall aim of the consultation process is to better clarify the role of the centre and to identify opportunities, challenges and priority areas for action in the short and medium term.

3. Questionnaire

This questionnaire *is indicative only* and will be used as a guide by the interviewees in the consultation process. The questions relate to five broad areas as follows:

- The nature of partnership and the role of the NCPP
- Your organisation and its role
- The contribution the NCPP can make to furthering your organisation's goals

- Opportunities for collaboration between the NCPP and your organisation and the contribution your organisation can make to the work of the Centre
- Priorities for policy development at national level.

1. Your organisation

1. Partnership

1. What is the role of your organisation in deepening partnership as a means of improving performance at enterprise level?
2. How does your organisation fulfil that role?
3. In what partnership activities/projects is the organisation currently engaged?
4. How can these systems and structures be strengthened?
5. What partnership systems and structures are in place in your organisation?

2. The NCPP

2.1. Role of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance

1. What is your understanding of the brief of the NCPP?
2. What are your organisation's expectations of the NCPP?
3. What is your vision for the Centre?
4. What do you consider to be the core business of the centre?
5. What services should the Centre be providing for your organisation?
6. What are the priorities in service provision?
7. How can it provide that service?

2.2. Key challenges, opportunities and priorities

1. What are the key challenges facing the Centre?
2. What are the key challenges in strengthening partnership at national level?
3. What are the key challenges in deepening partnership and improving performance at organisational level?
 - In the public Sector?
 - In the private Sector?

What are the priorities in the following areas

 - Research and analysis
 - Training and facilitation
 - Project development
 - Policy development

2.3. Key Priorities

1. What should the main priorities of the Centre be with regard to encouraging partnership?
 - Priorities for the private sector
 - Priorities in the public sector

3. NCPP contribution to your organisation

1. How can the NCPP facilitate your organisation in further developing and deepening partnership
 - In your own organisation?
 - In the sector?
 - At national level?
2. If your organisation has a role in deepening partnership and improving performance, how can the NCPP facilitate your organisation in fulfilling this role?
3. What are the priority areas for action?

4. Opportunities for collaboration with NCPP

1. What are the opportunities for collaboration between your organisation and the NCPP?
2. How can your organisation contribute to the work of the NCPP in fulfilling its brief
 - In relation to partnership
 - In relation to performance
 - In the private sector
 - In the public sector?

5. Policy development at National level to support Partnership

- In creating a supportive environment at national level to deepen partnership and improve performance and competitiveness
- What are the key priorities for policy development from your organisation's viewpoint?
 - What are the major barriers to success?
 - How can these barriers be overcome?
 - How can the Centre help eliminate these barriers and progress policy?

Participants in the Consultative Process

1. Social Partners

Department of the Taoiseach

Department of Finance

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)

Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Unions (IMPACT)

Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU)

Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)

Social, Community and Voluntary Sector

2. Industrial and Economic Policy Community

Forfas

Industrial Development Agency (IDA)

Enterprise Ireland

FÁS

Health and Safety Authority (HAS)

National Economic and Social Council (NESC)

National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)

3. Agencies charged with Dispute Resolution

The Labour Relations Commission

The Labour Court

4. Public Sector Bodies

Department of Health

Health Services National Partnership Forum

Western Health Board

Department of Education

Department of Public Enterprise

Local Government Management Services Board (LANPAG)

Meath County Council

5. Private sector enterprises

Intel

Waterford Crystal

Bausch & Lomb

Aughinish Alumina

6. Expert Bodies

Irish Productivity Centre (IPC)

Education and Training Services (ETS)

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

Irish Management Institute (IMI)

John O'Dowd Consultants Ltd.

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