THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORUM

Foram Náisiunta Eacnamaíoch agus Sóisialach

National Development Plan 1994-1999 - the proposed Local Development Programme

Forum Report No. 2

November 1993

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Under its present structures and working arrangements, the Forum will debate and adopt, at its Plenary Sessions, Reports which have been prepared by its two Standing Committees. Its Executive Committee is responsible for co-ordination and consideration of all such Reports by the Standing Committees, before transmitting these to the full Plenary Session for their formal adoption.

In the present instance, there were severe time constraints imposed for the Forum to make a timely input on the Operational Programmes which are at present being finalised for EC funding purposes. In the circumstances, the present Report, which had been prepared and agreed unanimously by the two Standing Committees, was adopted on an exceptional basis by the Forum's Executive Committee.

An Executive Summary, which has been prepared by the Forum's Secretariat, is included at the beginning of the Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1. The Forum welcomes the Local Development Programme (LDP) initiative as an important extension and development of the Area-based Partnership approach which was initiated under the PESP.

2. This Report contains over 60 recommendations which are based, in particular, on the experience on the ground of many of its Members in this area. They are practical and operational in nature and specifically designed to influence the structure, thrust, and detailed policy content of the Operational Programmes which are at present being drawn up for EC funding purposes.

3. The recommendations are wide-ranging in addressing key issues involved such as:

° Operational targets should be accompanied by performance indicators with specific reference to social exclusion, gender balance and environment considerations; the voluntary and community sector should be consulted in the selection of these indicators (Section I).

° The remit of the County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) is too narrowly concentrated on enterprise development and should be strengthened to cover also community development, as was the original intention (Section I).

° The delivery of services at local level by the CEBs, Partnership Companies and the Local Authorities should be integrated, including also their integration with EC Initiatives and mainstream national Programmes (Section II).

° This should be underpinned by effective co-ordination arrangements at national level; a Ministerial group, chaired by the Taoiseach, is recommended; the staff of the National Co-ordinating Team should be strengthened as well as the level of representation from the voluntary and community sector (Section III).

- Recommendations are made to enhance the structures and effectiveness of the Partnership Companies and the CEBs, ensure equality between all sectors and interests concerned, flexibility in approach with the use of a variety of models, consultations at all stages and specific mechanisms and supports for the effective representation and participation by the voluntary and community sector (Section IV).

- Guidelines for Partnerships should contain a requirement to include the needs of particularly disadvantaged and sectoral groups in all the work and deliberations of Partnership Companies (Section IV).

- Decisions on extension of the Partnership Companies to new areas should be transparent, based on objective criteria and reflect community and administrative entities; all indicators of poverty and social exclusion should be used; community organisations and local representatives should be consulted before final decisions are taken; too many areas should not be selected (Section V).

- The current LEADER Programme is too narrowly focused on enterprise development and would need to be radically recasted, were it to be used as the Partnership Approach in rural areas; this will involve renegotiation at EC level (Section V).

- Flexibility in the requirement for matching funds is essential for Partnership Areas and a number of approaches are recommended for this purpose (Section VI).

- A number of mechanisms, in terms of financial resources and training, are needed to support the development needs of the voluntary and community sector and the Partnership Companies, with built-in flexibility to reflect different needs (Section VI).

- The Department of Social Welfare's Community Development Programme needs to be strengthened (Section VI).

- The CEDP should replace the SES as soon as possible, conditions in respect of both these Schemes should be standardised to eliminate inequalities - these particularly discriminate against women, exemption of employers' PRSI should be maintained and the one-year duration under the CEDP should be reviewed; assistance should be provided for voluntary groups and CEDP sponsors in respect of training and their participation on official bodies (Section VII).

- Given the complexity of structures and the range of support services, information needs to be provided on an understandable and accessible basis; responsibility for the co-ordination of all such information at national level might be given to the National Co-ordinating Team; all official bodies should be involved and be specifically resourced for this purpose; at local level, the ideal would be to have One Stop locations; resources and assistance need to be provided for the voluntary and community sector in this area (Section VIII).

- The LDP should be reviewed at regular intervals; the Forum specifically requests that, given its remit and composition, it should be consulted and its views taken into account in this process (Section IX).

4. Finally, the Forum emphasises that the LDP is insufficient in itself to solve all problems of disadvantaged communities. It underlines the importance, therefore, of national economic and social policies and mainstream Programmes being specifically tailored to complement the strategies for local development under the LDP. Specific measures are needed also to tackle the problems of disadvantaged communities in areas outside those covered by the Partnership Companies (Section X).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Forum welcomes the Local Development Programme (LDP) initiative in the Government's recently-published National Development Plan. Its overall emphasis on a "bottom-up" and integrated approach to harnessing local and community leadership and development and targeting communities characterised by social exclusion, marks an important extension and development of the Area-based Partnership approach under the PESP as well as a desirable and innovative departure in our use of EC funding over the period of the National Plan.

2. The Forum, at very short notice, submitted last August preliminary views and comments on the LDP component when the Plan was being finalised. These focused in particular on the need to:

* Set clear objectives, supporting strategies and indicators of performance.

* Maintain a broad focus on the concept of sustainable local development and capacity building, encompassing social, economic and environmental dimensions.

* Ensure complementarity between the LDP and mainstream national Programmes, with specific targeting of marginalised groups.

* Provide for strong local input and involvement in deciding on the structures, strategies and the measures to be implemented; local consultation is crucial in the selection of Partnership Areas.

* Install effective mechanisms to evaluate local experience and feed-back into the central policy-making process.

* Ensure adequate funding of the voluntary and community sector; the requirement on matching funding could perpetuate disadvantage and social exclusion.

* Clarify the roles and functions of the multiplicity of organisations now involved in local development so that the initiative is not stifled by inter-agency rivalries.

* Address the limitations of an area-based response in tackling the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

3. With the four elements of the LDP - namely the County Enterprise Boards, the Partnership Approach, the Community Employment Development Programme and the Urban Renewal Programme - now being developed at inter-Departmental level into Operational Programmes for EC funding purposes, the Forum appreciates this opportunity provided by the Government to convey its views on the detailed content and elements of these Programmes before their finalisation. The Forum considers that it is well placed to do this, given the very wide spectrum of interests which it represents and the practical experience on the ground of many of its Members in this area. For this purpose, the main issues which the Forum examines in this Report are classified under the following Section headings:-

* Objectives and performance indicators;

* Integrated mechanisms for delivery at local level;

* Co-ordination arrangements at national level;

* Effectiveness of Partnership Structures;

* Criteria for selection of Partnership Areas;

* Resourcing and support mechanisms;

* Community Enterprise Development Programme;

* Information requirements; and

* Monitoring and review arrangements.

4. This Report does not cover the Urban Renewal sub-Programme of the LDP as to do so would have required more detailed information on the measures and new initiatives envisaged. In the circumstances, the only point which the Forum wishes to particularly emphasise is that, as experience in this country and elsewhere has shown, active and meaningful local consultation and involvement is crucial for the success of Programmes in this area.

SECTION I: OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

5. The National Plan sets out objectives in relation to each of the four elements of the LDP, projected levels of expenditure (public and EC) together with estimated levels of associated private sector expenditure and estimates of the employment impact of the Programme. While these objectives are very general and aspirational in nature, nevertheless, they are broadly acceptable. However, the Forum wishes to express its concerns that the objectives set for local enterprise should not be too narrowly defined and too rigidly evaluated by reference to economic criteria solely.

6. These objectives need now to be translated into specific operational targets which, in turn, should serve as a basis for decisions on financial allocations, area planning and strategies and the setting of performance indicators. Job-creation targets should not be the only focus of attention. As part of a longer-term strategy of self-sustaining community development, the Forum wishes to strongly emphasise that the Area Action Plans and multi-dimensional strategies should cover comprehensively all other elements such as initial contact, training and education, strengthening of community development, infrastructure and physical development, equality of opportunity, redistribution of job chances to the long-term unemployed and all other factors affecting disadvantage and social exclusion. Sectoral groups such as women, lone parents, travellers, the disabled and vulnerable age groups and children should be specifically targeted. In addition, these Plans should also work towards a strategy for environmentally sustainable development, with an emphasis on local participation and community involvement in the development process as part of that strategy.

7. More specifically, the Forum recommends that the Guidelines for Partnerships, which were drawn up in 1991, should now be reviewed and updated in the light of experience. The voluntary and community sector should be consulted in this process, particularly in the selection of performance indicators to measure not only economic performance but also to assess the effectiveness of measures to tackle social exclusion. For this purpose, a clear distinction should be made between Partnership Areas as a whole and pockets of extreme disadvantage within these Areas.

8. In areas outside those designated as disadvantaged under the Area-based Approach, the Forum notes that the mechanism for local development will be focused through the County Enterprise Boards (CEBs). However, the remit of the CEBs is too narrowly concentrated on enterprise development. The Forum, therefore, strongly recommends, and as was the original intention, that this should be strengthened to cover also community development, in co-operation with other public agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare. In many areas, this will be a necessary precondition to underpin and provide the conditions necessary to support and encourage local development. Also, the CEBs should take particular care to avoid job displacement and, for this purpose, designate liaison officers to co-ordinate with the other public agencies concerned.

SECTION II: INTEGRATED MECHANISMS FOR DELIVERY AT LOCAL LEVEL

9. The Forum wishes to emphasise the crucial importance of integration and coherence to ensure the success of the LDP. This needs to be undertaken at three levels and the Forum's main recommendations under each are outlined below.

(i) Integration of the Local Development Programme

10. The Forum's recommendations are:

° CEBs should, where possible, consult and co-ordinate with Partnership Companies on their enterprise development plans for the Partnership Areas and integrate these with the Partnerships' own enterprise initiatives.

° Partnership Companies should identify opportunities and devise strategies to enhance the opportunities for the long-term unemployed to participate in enterprise developments sponsored by the CEBs.

° Partnership Companies should be consulted by the Local Authorities on projects under the Urban Renewal Sub-Programme; local workers should be employed as far as possible; Partnerships should identify and arrange appropriate training programmes for the different sectors of the long-term unemployed and put in place Community Employment Development Programmes to combine training and work experience on these projects.

° CEBs should assist Partnership Companies in creating local enterprise awareness and in developing an enterprise culture to ensure community-based enterprise activity; for this purpose, CEBs should in conjunction with the Partnerships influence the allocation of resources for small enterprises from the European Community and from private and public funding sources.

- In the implementation of enterprise initiatives, Partnerships should be able to act on an agency basis for the Boards. Similarly, Partnerships should act on an agency basis or, in partnership with Local Authorities for urban renewal projects, and their related training and work experience measures.

- In some cases, Local Authorities should undertake joint sponsorship of urban renewal projects with local community groups and implement Community Employment Development Programmes on behalf of Partnership Companies.

11. Liaison and interaction with the Local Authorities will have a critically important role in ensuring the success of the LDP. Because of time constraints the Forum did not, however, have an opportunity to consider and put forward specific recommendations on a more dynamic and fuller commitment by Local Authorities in this area.

(ii) **Integration with E.C. Initiatives**

12. The Forum's recommendations are:

- The LDP should be integrated with E.C. Initiatives at local level and specifically with the LEADER Programme.

- Partnership Companies should be involved with the organisation of training programmes identified by the LEADER Groups as being necessary for the implementation of their business plans.

- CEBs and Partnership Companies should liaise with Leader Groups in the targeting of grant aid to projects involving job creation in areas of greatest need and refer promoters of projects to the LEADER Groups for consideration of grant aid.

- CEBs and Partnership Companies should also be eligible to seek support under the LEADER Programme and undertake local development initiatives complementary to their dual remit.

13. The Forum's concerns and recommendations, should the LEADER Programme be used as the vehicle for the Partnership approach in rural areas, are contained in paragraph 22 below.

(iii) **Integration with Mainstream Programmes**

14. The Forum's recommendations are:

° Initiatives under the LDP should be designed to complement and enhance the effectiveness of mainstream Programmes at local level so as to achieve an equalisation of the benefits of the National Development Plan to all areas and communities. Partnership Companies should, therefore, be consulted and have an input in the design and implementation of such Programmes in their local areas. In this context, see also the comments made in paragraph 33 below.

° More specifically, CEBs should operate in harmony and maintain close liaison with all State Agencies, Local Authorities, Partnership Companies and non-government organisations within their area to ensure maximum benefit and contribution to the local community through co-ordination of local development efforts.

SECTION III: CO-ORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

15. The recommendations in the previous Section on integration at local levels need to be underpinned and supported by effective co-ordination arrangements, structures and mechanisms at national level which have the agreement, support and involvement of all the interests concerned. The Forum's recommendations in this area are outlined beneath.

(i) Ministerial Group

16. Given the complexity of structures, the variety and range of measures proposed and the need to ensure that resources are targeted on an integrated and sustained basis to the most disadvantaged areas, the Forum recommends that an inter-Ministerial Group involving key Ministers concerned, and under the Chairmanship of the Taoiseach, should be established to provide the necessary political leadership, direction and on-going commitment to ensure the success of the LDP. This level of political involvement should also be directed to ensure that action takes place, that inter-Departmental and Agency rivalries and disputes are quickly settled and that over-bureaucratic rigidities and controls are minimised.

(ii) Inter-Departmental Policy Committee

17. The Inter-Departmental Committee of senior officials involved at present with drawing up the Operational Programmes for the LDP should continue in existence to complement and support the work of the above Ministerial Group. This Committee should also serve to ensure the necessary co-ordination and commitment at official level during the implementation phase.

(iii) National Co-ordinating Team

18. This Team, which comprises staff seconded from the main Departments and State Agencies concerned as well as from the Social Partners, is generally acknowledged to have played a key role in supporting and advising the 12 Partnership Companies established under the PESP. With the expansion in Partnership Areas and increased functions envisaged under the LDP initiative, the Forum believes that staffing of this Team should be strengthened, with the inclusion also of a broader range of professional expertise to address more effectively the needs of sectoral and disadvantaged groups.

19. Parallel with the above, the Forum also recommends that the level of representation from the community and voluntary sector on the Co-ordinating Team should be strengthened. That sector's expertise and experience is essential to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Team and of the Partnership Companies, particularly in responding to the needs and requirements of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and the need to promote environmentally sustainable development as an integrated part of the strategy to tackle marginalisation.

SECTION IV: EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES

20. The success of the LDP depends, of course, on successes with each of its four components, not least that of the Partnership Companies in the disadvantaged areas. To underpin the Partnership structures in these areas, the Forum recommends the following operating principles:

- All sectors and interests involved must be on an equal basis and footing to ensure their effective co-operation as a team effort.

- Partnership Companies and the CEBs must from the outset and, on a continuing basis, co-operate on an equal basis; one should not be subordinate to the other.

- Given varying needs and circumstances, flexibility in approach is necessary to ensure that the most appropriate structures for individual areas are adopted to accommodate the differing scales in size, depth and nature of disadvantage. It should, for example, be possible in some cases to increase the number of places allocated in the LDP structures to the voluntary and community sector and other sectors as appropriate.

- A variety of models should, therefore, be allowed at local level. The imposition of one model with a particular representative structure may not be wholly appropriate in all areas and local groups/organisations should be facilitated to develop and present proposals which may differ from the single model initiated under the PESP initiative.

- Partnerships should be required to include the needs of particularly disadvantaged and sectoral groups in all their work and deliberations; this should be built into the Guidelines for Partnerships (see paragraph 7 above).

- Consultation with all groups and organisations involved should take place, beginning with the very initial stages of development.

- All roles on the Boards of the CEBs and the Partnership Companies should be open to all interest groups e.g the role of Chairperson, Secretary etc.

- Given the number and diversity of the voluntary and community sector at local level, a selection procedure should be adopted to ensure equality of access and a broad-based representation. Where this sector does not have a strong base, support mechanisms should be provided to establish and develop its effective participation (see paragraph 25 below).

- A core organisation of all sectors and interests concerned should be established to ensure consultation and involvement right from the outset, before any action is initiated.

- To ensure interaction and co-ordination, each CEB and Partnership Company should, as far as possible, have at least one Board member in common. These members should be responsible also for liaison in conjunction with designated staff from both sides.

- Formal linkages need to be established between the voluntary and community organisations represented on the Boards of the CEBs and the Partnership Companies and those not represented to ensure information-sharing and enhance the representative structure.

- Structured procedures for feedback should be put in place for all sectors and interests represented on the CEBs and Partnership Companies.

- The relationship between CEBs and their Evaluation Committees requires a more open and transparent process of election/co-option to reflect Board membership. All Board members should be eligible for election to Evaluation Committees.

- The new interactions and relationships being provided for under the LDP must be supported by a training element which is crucial for the success of Partnership Companies and for all those involved, both in statutory as well as voluntary organisations.

- Staff recruited by the Partnership Companies and the CEBs should be on the basis of open competition; the present arrangements on appointments to Evaluation Committees and Chief Executives should be regarded as interim and subject to review and change.

SECTION V: CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PARTNERSHIP AREAS.

21. The Forum welcomes the stated intention in the National Plan to extend the Partnership-based approach to new areas and that these will be selected on the basis of **objective** criteria such as indicators of disadvantage, feasible operational boundaries and viability in terms of size and economic base. It notes that three categories of areas are envisaged viz. major urban centres, medium-sized towns and their hinterlands and marginalised rural areas.

22. The Forum's specific recommendations are:

- Decisions should be transparent and use objective criteria, on the basis of and building on the work undertaken in this area by bodies such as the Combat Poverty Agency.

- Further refinements will be needed to ensure that designated areas reflect community and administrative entities; the views of community organisations and local representatives should be sought before final decisions are taken.

- The existence of an established community base should not be a prerequisite for designation as this would only increase marginalisation.

- Unemployment data do not provide a full indicator of the underlying disadvantage of an area and need to be supplemented by the full range of other indicators of poverty and social exclusion.

- Care should be taken to ensure that not too many areas are selected which would dilute the targeted focus and effectiveness (the "watering can" concept) of the approach.

- Designation should not result in some areas becoming further stigmatised while at the same time ensuring that the most disadvantaged are adequately targeted.

- There should not be too rigid application of a particular population size in the designation process.

- The differences between urban and rural areas, both in terms of identifying disadvantage and in the development of strategies must be taken into account.

- It is understood that the LEADER Programme is under consideration at present as the vehicle for the Partnership approach in rural areas; this is a matter of serious concern to the Forum as the current LEADER Programme is too-narrowly focused on enterprise development and would need to be radically recasted to provide a much broader and a more integrated and multi-dimensional strategy to promote environmentally and socially sustainable local development and capacity building in rural disadvantage areas.

- Such a restructuring of the LEADER programme, involving as it would renegotiations at EC level, raises a whole series of policy implications which the Forum strongly recommends should be addressed in the first instance by the Inter-Departmental Policy Committee mentioned in paragraph 17 above.

SECTION VI: RESOURCING AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Matching Funds

23. The Forum is seriously concerned with the requirement for matching funds. This could mean that in particularly disadvantaged areas projects would never be initiated, resulting in further disadvantage and exclusion. It is essential, therefore, that flexibility be allowed in the application of this rule. For this purpose, the Forum recommends that a variety of approaches be considered and applied:

- The matching funds requirement should be kept to a minimum; the categories of projects and expenditures which are already exempted from this requirement under a number of EC-sponsored schemes should be extended, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.

- Voluntary time and other inputs in kind should be costed and allowed for in computing locally-matched funds; it is understood that this approach is already followed in a number of European countries.

- The matching requirement should be interpreted to include resources from different sources such as the Enterprise Trust and Local Authorities.

- Business accommodation free of charge should be provided in cases where such accommodation is currently lying idle in property owned by the State.

- Where matching funds are required, support - in terms of training and financial and accounting advice - should be provided from a central source and co-ordinated at national level through, for example, the National Co-ordinating Team and the intermediary company, ADM Ltd.

- Also where projects have been approved for funding, such funding should be provided promptly at the start, thereby avoiding difficulties some groups had experienced under the PESP initiative and the SES in having to provide initial funding through overdraft facilities - expensive interest payments on which they had to meet out of their own very limited resources.

24. In short, the Forum strongly recommends that, as an operating principle, any local development initiative should not be deprived of funding on the basis of an inability to meet the matching fund requirement. All necessary steps should be taken by the Government to ensure that this will be the case. If needs be, a mechanism can be put in place to claw back resources, once projects have successfully got off the ground.

Support Mechanisms

25. The needs, both in terms of financial resources and training, of the voluntary and community sector vary from area to area and must be reflected in the supports and services provided by Departments and State Agencies. Flexibility is crucial also in this area and in this respect the Forum's recommendations are as follows.

- A period of pre-development support will be required, particularly in Partnership Areas being designated for the first time, in terms of resources and expertise required to build up the community base. Resources need to be sufficiently flexible and targeted at these areas. In addition, adequate time must be allocated in these areas to the development function and account taken of it in the design and scheduling of Area Action Plans.

- Support in terms of skills and expertise will be required on an on-going basis to ensure the effective operation of Partnerships and participation on an equal basis by all sectors.

- A specific proportion of the resources allocated under the LDP should be set aside to support the development needs of Partnership Companies and of the voluntary and community sector. (It is understood that the French Government has adopted a policy whereby 1% of all funding for regeneration initiatives must be devoted to participation while, in the Netherlands, neighbourhood associations are widely supported with offices, telephones and community workers to aid their participation in social renewal programmes).

26. Finally, the Forum recognises the role of the Department of Social Welfare's Community Development Programme and the importance of its being strengthened, in terms of staff and resources, to complement the work of the National Co-ordinating Team referred to in paragraphs 18/19 above.

SECTION VII: COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CEDP)

27. The proposal in the National Plan to extend the CEDP is welcomed by the Forum. Implementation of the CEDP to date, however, has shown a number of anomalies which have created inequality among particularly marginalised groups such as lone-parents and married women. These need to be addressed. The Forum's specific recommendations are as follows:

- The replacement of the SES by the CEDP on a nationwide basis as soon as possible; increased resources will be required for this purpose.

- Conditions in respect of the CEDP and SES should be standardised to eliminate the inequalities that currently exist. In particular, conditions with regard to retention of Secondary Benefits should be extended nationwide.

- Access to CEDP/SES should be extended to people on credits and in receipt of the Disabled Persons Maintenance Allowance (DPMA) who are currently excluded from participation in these Schemes. In the particular case of those signing for credits, 85% are women who are therefore disproportionately affected; this is in line with the recommendations of the Second Commission on the Status of Women. This broadening of eligibility should, as a minimum, be introduced in the Partnership Areas.

- One of the most important benefits for sponsors of CEDP projects has been the remission in respect of employers' PRSI; this exemption should be maintained in the extended Scheme.

- On-going evaluation of the CEDP should examine whether the one - year duration is appropriate in all cases. Where evidence confirms that a longer duration is required, consideration should be given to extension, on a pilot basis, bearing in mind the need to maintain a balance between the numbers availing of the Scheme and the quality of learning outcomes targeted for and the level of services provided.

- Certification of CEDP training, both for sponsors and participants, should be pursued at appropriate levels.

- The need for many voluntary groups and CEDP sponsors to attend extensive training as well as participate in national and sectoral committees eg CEBs, Partnership Boards, etc creates real difficulties in maintaining both staff supervision and service provision. Where sponsors can demonstrate such difficulties exist, financial assistance for suitable core staff should be provided. Provision of assistance in non-staff areas should also be available to voluntary organisations as necessary.

- Policies and procedures with regard to all aspects of CEDP in the designated areas should be discussed with the Partnership Companies. This should also apply in the case of Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) and training for the disabled.

28. Finally, the Forum wishes to emphasise that it needs to be acknowledged that the CEDP is not a substitute for structural and radical measures and initiatives which are needed urgently at national level to create sustainable jobs.

SECTION VIII: INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

29. Given the wide variety of structures and the complexity and range of support schemes envisaged and, with a view to encouraging active local participation and involvement -which is essential to ensure the success of the LDP - there is a clear requirement to providing information on services and assistance which should:

(i) be understandable and accessible;
(ii) be from sources that people feel are worth paying attention to;
(iii) invoke peoples' interest; and
(iv) afford an opportunity for people to act and achieve results from this information.

30. The Forum recommends that the provision of such information, which can take a variety of forms (media advertising, explanatory leaflets, brochures etc.) should be both at national and local levels:

National Level: Responsibility for the co-ordination of all such information by Departments, State Agencies, non-government organisations etc involved at national level with the LDP might be given to the National Co-ordinating Team. In any case, all these bodies should be specifically charged with the provision of such information in relation to their own activities and specifically resourced for this purpose.

Local Level: This would parallel and complement the above and ideally should be provided through a number of One Stop locations. Also responsibility for the co-ordination of such information should be given initially to one body whose identity will vary and depend on the situation and circumstances in particular areas. Partnership Companies, once established, should have a specific and on-going information role. In this respect, resources and assistance should be specifically provided for non-government organisations, both at national and local levels.

SECTION IX: MONITORING AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

31. The Forum recommends that there should be a review of the Local Development Programme, in all its four elements, at regular intervals to:

- assess progress in its implementation;
- measure its effectiveness in terms of the targets set and the performance indicators chosen; and
- identify policy and any sectoral/management weaknesses, together with proposals on how these should be addressed.

32. The Forum welcomes that the Inter-Departmental Committee mentioned in paragraph 17 above will be charged with monitoring and analysing experiences in the Partnership Areas and, in the light of this, making recommendations to the Government on specific policy changes and on new policy issues. This process needs to use to the full the experience with the mechanisms, structures and performance indicators recommended earlier on in this Report, including consultations and input from the Partnership Companies. The Forum specifically requests, given its remit and composition, that it also be consulted and involved with a view to its making an input into this process.

SECTION X: CONCLUSION

33. Finally, the Forum recalls that it is unrealistic to expect a Local Development Programme to solve all problems of disadvantaged communities on its own. In this context, it wishes to emphasise the importance of the quality and effectiveness of economic and social policies and mainstream programmes being pursued at national level and, in turn, seeking to ensure that these are specifically targeted and tailored to support and complement the strategies which will now be pursued through the Local Development Programme (see also the recommendations in paragraph 14 above).

34. Particular account also needs to be taken of and specific measures introduced to tackle the problems of disadvantaged communities in areas outside those covered by the Partnership Companies.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference and Constitution of the Forum

(1) The Terms of Reference of the National Economic and Social Forum are to develop economic and social policy initiatives, particularly initiatives to combat unemployment, and to contribute to the formation of a national consensus on social and economic matters.

The Forum will:

(A) Have a specific focus on:-

- job creation, obstacles to employment growth and models of economic growth;
- long-term unemployment;
- disadvantage;
- equality and social justice in Irish society; and
- policies and proposals in relation to these issues.

(B) Make practical proposals on measures to meet these challenges.

(C) Examine and make recommendations on other economic and social issues.

(D) Review and monitor the implementation of the Forum's proposals and if necessary make further recommendations; and

(E) Examine and make recommendations on matters referred to it by Government.

(2) The Forum may consider matters on its own initiative or at the request of Government.

(3) The Forum will work in two year cycles and will inform Government of its programme of work within three months of the beginning of each cycle.

(4) In drawing up its work programme, the Forum will take account of the role and functions of other bodies in the social and economic area such as NESC and the CRC to avoid duplication.

(5) The Forum may invite Ministers, Public Officials, Members of the Forum, and outside experts to make presentations and to assist the Forum in its work.

(6) The Forum will publish and submit all its reports to Government, to the Houses of the Oireachtas and to other Government Departments and bodies as may be appropriate.

(7) The Forum will be drawn from three broad strands. The first will represent the Government and the Oireachtas. The second will represent the traditional Social Partners. The third strand will be representative of groups traditionally outside the consultative process including women, the unemployed, the disadvantaged, people with a disability, youth, the elderly and environmental interests.

(8) The Forum will have an independent Chairperson appointed by Government.

(9) The term of office of members will be two years during which term members may nominate alternates. Casual vacancies will be filled by the nominating body or the Government as appropriate and members so appointed shall hold office until the expiry of the current term of office of all members. The size of the membership may be varied by the Government.

(10) The Forum is under the aegis of the Office of the Tánaiste and is funded through a Grant-in-Aid from that Office. This Grant-in-Aid is part of the overall estimate for the Office of the Tánaiste.

Annex 2

Membership of the Forum

Independent Chairperson:	Maureen Gaffney
Government Representative:	Eithne Fitzgerald T.D., Minister of State at the Office of the Tánaiste
Chair (Employment and Economic Policy Committee):	Prof. John O'Hagan
Chair (Social Policy Committee):	Tríona Nic Giolla Choille

<u>Oireachtas</u>

Fianna Fáil:	Ned O Keeffe, T.D. Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D. Chris Flood, T.D. Liam Fitzgerald, T.D. Sen. Brian Hillery Sen. Brian Crowley
Fine Gael:	Richard Bruton, T.D. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. Paul Connaughton, T.D. Sen. Madeleine Taylor-Quinn
Labour:	Joe Costello, T.D. Sen. Jan O'Sullivan
Progressive Democrats:	Martin Cullen, T.D.
Technical Group:	Pat Rabbitte, T.D.
Independent Senators:	Sen. Mary Henry

Social Partners

Trade Unions:	Philip Flynn Patricia O'Donovan Noel O'Neill Mary Ann McGlynn Manus O'Riordan
Employer/Business Interests:	Declan Madden Anne Coughlan Karen O'Sullivan David Croughan Mirette Corboy
Agricultural/Farming Organisations:	John Tyrrell Tom Parlon Ciarán Dolan Clare Higgins Monica Prendiville

"Third Strand"

Womens Organisations:	Ann Taylor Noirín Byrne Ina Broughall
Unemployed:	Brendan Butler Jane Foley Mike Allen
Disadvantaged:	Niall Crowley Fintan Farrell David Joyce
Youth:	Gearóid O'Maoilmhichíl
The Elderly:	Michael White
People with a Disability:	Roger Acton
Environmental Interests:	Jeanne Meldon
Academics:	Fr. Seán Healy Stasia Crickley

Secretariat

Director:	Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh
Secretary, Social Policy Committee:	Majella Kelleher
Secretary, Employment & Economic Policy Committee:	David Hegarty