



Rural Renewal – Combating Social Exclusion

Forum Report No. 12

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■ This symbol indicates where a recommendation is made in the Report.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

1. This Report, which builds on previous work by the Forum in addressing the structural causes of disadvantage in our society, is centrally focused on how best to ensure that **all** people living in rural areas are provided with the capacity to contribute and to share more equitably in the benefits of economic and social progress.
2. Social exclusion is a dynamic concept of the process of increasing marginalisation in our society. It embraces not only economic and social factors (such as unemployment, poverty and inadequate incomes) but also that of wider issues such as isolation, powerlessness and lack of influence and participation in official decision-making fora. While social exclusion exists in both urban and rural areas throughout the country, its effects are more pronounced in rural areas, reflecting the distinctive features of these areas.
3. The Report is being submitted for consideration by Government in the context of their finalisation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Report by the Rural Development Advisory Group which is expected to be completed in the near future, implementation of the commitments on social exclusion in rural areas under the *Partnership 2000* agreement, the Local Government Reform Programme and on-going developments under the Strategic Management Initiative in the public service.
4. **Section I** defines the concept of social inclusion and highlights the need for a vision and for an overall strategic framework for the development of rural Ireland to ensure that **all** sections of the community are included. As a first step in the establishment of such a socially-inclusive and multi-dimensional strategy, the Forum proposes a set of twelve basic principles to underpin all policies and activities in this area.
5. **Section II** outlines the extent and impact of rural social exclusion. The key findings are: lack of awareness of rural poverty because it is dispersed and hidden; land ownership disguises a very disadvantaged farm structure; those living in open countryside, towns and villages are at greatest risk of poverty and exclusion; deprivation is most prevalent in the West and in the border counties; common features experienced by vulnerable groups are lack of transport and access to information, services, training and employment opportunities.

6. **Section III** contains a series of detailed recommendations to alleviate the adverse impact of policies on social exclusion in rural areas; chief among these (the references in brackets are to the corresponding paragraph numbers in the Report) are:

Population Trends: measures to halt consistent population decline in rural areas (3.5);

Agriculture and Forestry: need for continuing support, and provision of on-farm and off-farm opportunities for small farmers (3.11, 3.12, 3.13 and 3.15) and consultation with local communities on forestry issues (3.21);

Industry and Services: measures for those experiencing social exclusion to share in the benefits of economic development (3.25) and the Government's role in fostering the development of networks in the short-term and possibly of clusters in the medium-term (3.40);

Tourism: maximising the benefits to local communities (3.47), advice/technical assistance for low-income households, provisions in *Partnership 2000* agreement on low pay and working conditions and strategies for low-income households (3.48);

Transport: greater use of school buses and investment in rural transport services (3.54) and more effective planning and co-ordination, including brokerage of local transport services (3.55);

Housing: improving and targeting the refurbishment programme (3.62);

EU Structural Funds: the mid-term review should set equality objectives, with performance indicators and measures to achieve these objectives (3.67);

Health: promotion of community-based strategies in partnership with community groups (3.71);

Education: multifaceted response to needs of disadvantaged children (3.75);

Labour Markets: improvements in availability and quality of training and work experience programmes (3.80) and development of the social economy (3.81);

Public Services: development of those services on basis of the cluster model (3.83) and improving the telephone installation scheme for the elderly and its extension to other vulnerable groups (3.86).

7. **Section IV** recommends a number of principles which should be respected in the proposed integration, under the Local Government Reform Programme, of the local authority system with that of local development bodies (4.20) and also contains a number of recommendations on institutional matters in relation to issues such as inclusion, regional dimension, equality proofing, community development, spatial planning, horizontal/vertical co-ordination and representative and participative structures (4.23 to 4.31).
8. **Section V** lists the main conclusions and the Report's three core recommendations which are:
 - the Ministerial portfolio and that of his/her Department should be renamed as that of "*Agriculture and Rural Development*";
 - establishment of a *Standing Committee for Rural Development*; and
 - publication of a Government *White Paper on Rural Development*.
9. The public expenditure implications of the recommendations is referred to in Section 1 (paragraphs 1.24 and 1.25) of the Report.

Acknowledgements

10. Finally, the Forum wishes to record its fullest appreciation and thanks to all those who presented papers and contributed in the preparation of this Report. A special word of thanks is due also to those who participated in the Forum's Plenary Session on Rural Development in Co. Cavan on 18/19 April 1996. A list of all such contributors is set out at Annex 1.

Section I

Introduction

Introduction

Policy Context of the Report

1.1 Over the last ten years, a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting local and rural development have been introduced. These initiatives reflect developments in Irish and EU policies which have focused greater attention on the potential for growth in local areas and the need to ensure participation by all sections of the community in the development process. In tandem with these initiatives, a number of institutional structures for rural development have evolved.

1.2 Parallel with the above, the Government has appointed two Ministers of State with special responsibility for rural issues, and a Minister of State for Local Development. A Rural Development Policy Advisory Group has been established by the Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The Devolution Commission has published an Interim Report; the National Anti-Poverty Strategy includes rural development as one of its five key themes; and the National Economic and Social Council (NESc) has published a report on New Approaches to Rural Development.

1.3 The Forum welcomes these developments, in particular the involvement of community and other local groups. However, and despite the wide range of interests addressed by these initiatives, it notes with concern:

- that there is a lack of vision and of an overall strategic policy framework for the future development of rural Ireland; and
- that significant sections of the community remain excluded and have not benefited from the developments which have taken place.

1.4 The aim of the present Report is to complement and contribute extra dimensions to the above developments, with particular reference to:

- ensuring that rural renewal strategies are better integrated and underpinned by a socially inclusive dimension;
- identifying a number of sectoral policy issues and parameters as examples in this context; and finally
- highlighting a number of necessary institutional changes so that social inclusion is seen and accepted as a clear and valued outcome in the policy and decision-making processes, along with other key aims such as economic and industrial development.

- 1.5 In short, this Report's concern and central focus is that all people living in rural areas should be provided with the capacity to contribute and to share more equitably in the benefits of economic and social progress. While poverty and social exclusion exists in both urban and rural areas, it has a number of distinctive features which reflect the particular circumstances of rural areas such as high level of invisibility, depopulation, higher dependency ratios, small and non-viable farm holdings, lack of alternative employment opportunities and greater dependence on social welfare, poor transport and limited access to information and public services and weak community-based structures and development mechanisms.
- 1.6 The main thrust of the NESC Report centred on an examination of local economic and enterprise development. It did not deal in detail with the challenge of reducing social exclusion in rural areas and the focus instead was on rural specific policies, rather than that of the effects of undifferentiated national policies which may in turn contribute to rural social exclusion. The Report had a strong economic development orientation. However, it has come to be recognised that rural development is not sector specific, that it "*cannot be defined solely in economic terms*" and that "*area based strategies..... cannot succeed if they are not supported within the larger policy framework*".¹
- 1.7 The wide-ranging membership of the Rural Development Policy Advisory Group is an acknowledgement of the need for an integrated multi-disciplinary approach in this area. However, its membership is not adequately inclusive of groups representing communities experiencing social exclusion. At local level, Partnership Companies, LEADER groups, County Enterprise Boards and other community groups play a range of developmental roles involving a cross-section of interests. These are also welcome and important developments in themselves and help to create a more inclusive approach to policy-making.
- 1.8 The Forum also welcomes the commitment in the Interim Report of the Devolution Commission to the principle of completeness – "*the development of the widest possible role for local authorities in relation to specific functional areas*" – and the commitment to partnership between the local government system and the groups involved in local development "*so that development can continue to have a mix of representation and participation and that these are not in competition*". However, there is a tension where the commitment to devolution under the Local Government Reform Programme runs counter to policies on decentralisation of Government Offices and where the commitment to partnership is compromised by a model of integration which seems to suggest that control will be with one partner. The resolution of these tensions will have an important

1. Minister of State Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, T.D., addressing the *NESF Plenary Session on Rural Development* in Co. Cavan, on 19th April 1996.

2. The *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, Forum Opinion No. 2 (January, 1996).

impact on the effectiveness of socially-inclusive rural development policies. The Forum's comments on the Government's programme for reforming the local government system are outlined in Section IV of the Report.

- 1.9 The present Report is particularly relevant also in the context of the development of the Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). The Forum has already welcomed this important initiative and values the opportunity afforded to it at the time to present its comments on the development of that Strategy.² The issues raised in respect of rural poverty and social exclusion in that Opinion are discussed in greater detail in this Report. In short, the Forum considers that social exclusion in rural areas should now be prioritised by concrete Government policy and action, and the NAPS provides an ideal opportunity for new policy initiatives and commitments in this respect.
- 1.10 At EU level, the Commissioner for Rural Development has recently³ emphasised the importance of a simple, flexible and single integrated approach to rural development. The "Cork Declaration", which was issued after this conference but which has yet to be ratified by the EU Council of Ministers, sets out a ten point rural development programme for the European Union. The purpose of this Declaration is to:
- put sustainable rural development at the top of the EU agenda;
 - aim at reversing rural out-migration, combating poverty, stimulating employment and equality of opportunity and responding to questions of quality, health, safety, personal development and leisure in particular;
 - achieve a fairer balance of public spending, infrastructure investment and educational, health and communications services between rural and urban areas; and
 - use a growing share of available resources to promote rural development and secure environmental objectives.
- 1.11 This Declaration also emphasises the need for an integrated multi-disciplinary approach, with partnership and subsidiarity between the different levels of administration and a process whereby rural development is local and community driven within a coherent European framework, and for enhancing the administrative capacity of local and regional government. The views of the Forum on the issue of socially inclusive rural renewal and the aims of the Cork Declaration reflect a close synergy.

2. The *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, Forum Opinion No. 2 (January, 1996).

3. Commissioner Franz Fischler, at the EU Commission Conference on *The Future Shape of Rural Development Policy*, Cork, (7-9 November 1996).

A Vision for Rural Ireland

- 1.12 Despite all the initiatives outlined above, there are gaps in rural development policies and some groups and individuals remain excluded from the development process. In his address to the Forum, the Minister of State for Rural Development has already pinpointed the need to establish a “clearer vision” for rural development. The Forum hopes that this Report will contribute to such a vision, with particular reference to and focus on social exclusion and that it will serve to evoke a comprehensive policy response on this issue.
- 1.13 The Report builds on previous Forum Reports by concentrating on the structural causes of disadvantage and making recommendations across a number of policy areas to combat the resulting social exclusion experienced by individuals and groups in rural areas. A key concern of the Forum is that of providing employment opportunities for all. It sees the elimination of long-term unemployment as a key method of achieving social inclusion. In the context of rural Ireland, the Forum recognises the continuing importance of agriculture and supports policies to diversify farm income opportunities. The need for innovative Government approaches to stimulate full and part-time employment through the development of indigenous local industry is also acknowledged and fully supported.

Defining Social Exclusion

- 1.14 The concept of *social exclusion* was developed during the 1980s. As the Combat Poverty Agency points out⁴, this is a much more dynamic concept of the processes of social change than poverty. It seeks to encapsulate notions of societal responsibility, on the one hand, and on the other, the extent of powerlessness, lack of influence and the marginalisation of groups and individuals affected by it.
- 1.15 Social exclusion refers to the structures and processes which exclude persons and groups from their full participation in society. It may take a number of forms – economic, legal, cultural, social, political – with multiple and mutually reinforcing effects. It is not just about lack of money, but may also be about isolation, underemployment, lack of educational and work opportunities, and discrimination. Social exclusion is often the result of ineffective policies or of perverse effects of such policies.
- 1.16 Rural society is a complex arrangement of social classes and communities with differing levels of access to property and capital, employment, education, income and influence. Rural development strategies will not automatically eliminate exclusion. The Forum’s underlying approach is that such strategies,

4. *Combating Exclusion: Lessons from the Third EU Poverty Programme in Ireland 1989-1994*, Combat Poverty Agency (1994).

to be effective, must include elements targeted at groups experiencing such exclusion and be planned so as to ensure that mainstream policies are also of relevance and of benefit to these groups.

Social Exclusion in Rural Ireland

1.17 In recent studies, *rural* Ireland has been defined as open country or towns of less than 3,000 persons. On this basis, approximately 40 per cent of the population lives in rural Ireland. The North-West, North-East, West, Midlands and South-West regions of the country are predominantly rural. While agriculture is a central activity in rural life, rural is not necessarily synonymous, however, with agriculture and there are significant numbers of the population living in rural areas who are not engaged in any agricultural activity.

1.18 In the view of the Forum, rural social exclusion is a product of national, regional, local, spatial and sectoral policies which fail to address the specific needs of the rural community and of the different interests within this community. Rural development is a process which should facilitate social inclusion. However, national and EU programmes and policies contribute in some instances to social exclusion by benefiting better off groups more than those who are already disadvantaged.

1.19 For people living outside towns, rural social exclusion is dispersed, individualised and often invisible. It lies hidden, disguised and compounded by depopulation, unemployment and underemployment, poor infrastructure, especially transport, and inadequate and declining access to services. These are key issues which need to be addressed at both local and national level, and on the basis of a shared vision for the development of rural areas. In particular, policy makers need to address the problems caused by depopulation and outmigration by developing a consensus⁵ on what the future of rural Ireland should be, and by identifying and supporting measures to achieve sustainable communities.

Principles for a Socially-Inclusive Rural Development Strategy

1.20 Social inclusion is a core component of the Forum's philosophy of ensuring a more equitable society. Social inclusion focuses on empowerment and the responsibilities of all sectors of society to ensure that all citizens are treated equitably, while at the same time acknowledging that citizens also have a responsibility to play as active a part as possible in improving their economic and social conditions. It calls for a concerted societal policy of pluralism,

5. In this regard, the forthcoming NESC study of socio-demographic trends and settlement patterns should provide a clearer understanding for policy purposes of the mechanisms and factors involved.

tolerance, economic and social justice which promotes and obtains equality for all. It stresses procedures of societal organisation which are fair, and open to comment and change by individuals and groups affected by them. Social inclusion implies participatory democracy at all levels, encouragement of subsidiarity and combating tendencies towards self-interest. It requires that models of good citizenship are cultivated throughout society.

1.21 In the Forum's view, rural development should entail an integrated, multi-dimensional policy process whereby rural communities are sustained and developed in a manner that responds adequately and appropriately to the variety of their needs and interests. Agricultural or economic perspectives alone are insufficient. Policies must be designed or modified to ensure regeneration of rural communities and social inclusion should be one of their main objectives. The following are the core principles which the Forum considers should inform policy-making so as to generate social inclusion outcomes:

- *Equality Proofing*: in its Report on *Equality Proofing Issues*⁶, the Forum recommended that the design, implementation and outcomes of Government-funded programmes should be scrutinised from an equality perspective and that the policies and actions of Government Departments and public organisations should be equality-proofed;
- *Equity*: policies for rural development should be based on seeking to achieve equality of opportunity, participation and outcomes for all individuals and social groups; strategies for development should be formulated with the aim of eliminating discrimination and achieving greater social justice;
- *Gender Awareness*: policy-making and implementation should be informed by the specific needs and circumstances of women in rural areas; information and research on the situation of women (and different groups of women) should be built into the policy process;
- *Mainstreaming*: rural development policies should reflect an integration between measures targeted at social exclusion and mainstream measures; mainstreaming involves taking into account, at the planning stage, the possible impact of policies and measures, and whether they will promote or preclude social inclusion.
- *Targeting*: rural development should target and prioritise individuals and groups experiencing severe disadvantage;

6. *Forum Report No. 10*, (February, 1996).

- *Integration:* policies should address the needs of specific areas, sectors and social groups and involve an integration of economic and social objectives; this would enable policies to be assessed for their economic and social outcomes in rural areas, and for consideration of social costs, alongside economic costs, to be a dimension in the decisions made in relation to the future of rural Ireland;
- *Balance:* policies need to be flexible and adapted to the range of different economic, social and geographical circumstances of different rural communities; in particular, a commitment to balanced regional development, based on an equitable distribution of economic activity and social services, and not relying solely on income transfers, is required;
- *Respect for Diversity:* rural development strategies must respect the diversity of lifestyles and situations of individuals and social groups;
- *Sustainability:* policies and strategies for rural renewal should be formulated within a sustainable development framework; the long-term social and economic well-being of rural communities is particularly dependent on sustainable use of local resources;
- *Local, regional and national frameworks:* the development and implementation of socially-inclusive rural development strategies require institutions and actions at local, regional and national level; at all levels, there should be a mixture of participative and representative structures;
- *Participation:* processes and structures for the determination and implementation of policy need to be established in a way which ensures full and direct participation at local, sectoral, regional and national levels by groups and communities experiencing exclusion; and
- *Monitoring and Review:* structures and policies for socially-inclusive rural renewal must be subject to continuous monitoring and review through structures based on the direct participation of affected local areas, regions and social groups; this should involve a multi-dimensional approach which would incorporate social as well as economic considerations.

1.22 A broad range of EU measures and policies impact on rural areas in Ireland. These include Agricultural and Fisheries Policies, the Structural and Cohesion Funds and other EU financial instruments. While the Government has a limited role in the design of these policies, their implementation in this country should be informed by the principles set out above.

Structure of the Report

1.23 The structure of the Report is as follows:

- Section II outlines the nature, extent and impact of rural social exclusion;
- Section III identifies key sectoral policy issues contributing to rural social exclusion, and discusses appropriate responses;
- Section IV discusses institutional issues and the need for a more balanced and integrated approach to rural development; and
- Section V sets out the Forum's overall conclusions and core recommendations.

Cost of the Forum's Recommendations

1.24 Not all of the recommendations in this Report will lead to increases in public expenditure – for example the recommendations on institutional changes relate to the more effective deployment of existing resources and should not, therefore, involve any significant additional expenditure. The other recommendations are in outline form only and as a result cannot be costed at this stage as this will be dependent on the details involved and the time-scale for their implementation. In any case, any additional expenditure over and beyond that which could not be met from a re-ordering of existing priorities is in line with commitments given and the extra resources provided for under the *Partnership 2000* agreement.

1.25 The Forum endorses the fiscal disciplines accepted by all the parties to that agreement and also fully recognises the difficulties and costs involved in providing socially-inclusive policies and public services in remote and less-populated rural areas.

Section II

**The Nature,
Extent and
Impact of Rural
Social Exclusion**

The Nature, Extent and Impact of Rural Social Exclusion

- 2.1 This Section discusses the difficulties of identifying poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, outlines its spatial and occupational distribution, identifies a number of the contributory factors involved and highlights the particular groups affected.

Hidden Nature of Rural Poverty and Exclusion

- 2.2 The most familiar image of poverty is that of a bleak urban landscape and the general perception is that the problems of poverty and social exclusion are concentrated in urban areas. The lack of awareness of rural poverty arises partially because the countryside is not associated with deprivation and exclusion, and partially because it is dispersed and hidden. There is also a simplistic tendency to equate land ownership and production quotas under the CAP with income and wealth.
- 2.3 Having one of the lowest population densities in the EU means that there are considerable distances between households in many areas, resulting in greater isolation of particular members of the rural community. Ownership of land, especially in a situation of inflating urban and suburban land values, can disguise a very disadvantaged farm income structure.
- 2.4 The *1995 National Farm Survey* showed a continuing wide disparity in family farm income ranging from an average of £1,700 p.a. for smaller farms in the mixed livestock/cattle fattening system to over £65,000 p.a. for farms with over 100 hectares in the specialist dairying system. There was also a disparity between regions, with an average family farm income of about £14,200 in the East region and £6,300 in the West region. (It should be noted however that these figures do not take into account non-farm earnings and welfare payments.)

Land and Status

- 2.5 Despite the confusion between income and property, it remains true that land does represent an asset, often of significant value, and is an important element of status within rural society. Land continues to be held even when farming ceases to be the main economic activity of the household. Commins and Keane⁷

7. Commins P. and Keane M., *Developing the Rural Economy: Problems, Programmes and Prospects*, NESC Report No. 97 (1994).

show that although many farms which depend on State transfers or off-farm earnings are no longer viable “they view their assets in a different light than is implied in the concept of economic viability”, placing a stronger value on property as an asset, and the status and potential that it represents, than on income.

Invisibility

2.6 Rural poverty tends not to be seen for two main reasons. First, the rural landscape is seen as a consumption product for tourism and leisure pursuits. Many of the features of disadvantage such as old, cold and inadequate housing, isolation and remoteness from services and amenities may all appear as part of the rural heritage threatened by modernisation. Where there is evidence of poverty, it can be perceived as part of the rural landscape rather than as an indication of social deprivation and exclusion.

2.7 Second, “rural” is not necessarily synonymous with agriculture and farming. Table 2.1 shows that of the estimated 1.25m people who live in rural areas, 2 out of every 3 are not directly dependent on farming. Thirty-five per cent are employed in the services sector, 15 per cent in industry and 10 per cent are unemployed. The majority of rural residents are neither farmers nor dependent on the agricultural economy. Those without land include some who formerly provided farm labour, and who have moved to public housing in country towns and villages. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, housing policy was oriented towards housing people in towns rather than in the smaller villages or in open countryside. The housing estates established by County Councils in rural areas have tended to be located outside the central areas of small towns with the result that such estates are marginalised and effectively invisible to the townscape of which they form a part.

Table 2.1
Dependence on Agriculture in Rural Areas

	Estimated Numbers	Percentage (to nearest whole no.)
Directly dependent on Agriculture	415,000	33
Not directly dependent on Agriculture	837,500	67
of which		
Industry	187,500	15
Services	437,500	35
Unemployed	125,000	10
Other	87,500	7
Total	1,250,000	100

Source: Mannion, J. *Rural Development: Performance and Challenges*, Kilfinane Conference (March 1996)

Class in Rural Areas

- 2.8 Social class is difficult to define in rural communities, where the conventional links between ownership of property and social status are less clearly drawn. However, although property ownership is more widely distributed in rural communities, there are many individuals and families who do not have property. These people are at a disadvantage in terms of social class, because land ownership is an important element of status within rural society, and a crucial element in terms of access to economic activity. Even among those who have land, there are many who do not derive sufficient income from it. These families and individuals have to seek employment or, where this is not available, welfare benefits. In rural areas, population dispersal and shortage of resources mean that support structures to alleviate the disadvantages of dependence on benefits are less likely to be available. As traditional sources of rural employment decline, it is important that measures are taken to ensure social solidarity.

Extent and Features of Rural Poverty and Social Exclusion

Groups most at risk of poverty

- 2.9 The recently-published 1994 *Living in Ireland* survey carried out by the ESRI is the most up-to-date assessment of the extent of poverty in contemporary Ireland. Although it is not comprehensive – it deals only with the situations of households, does not reflect the positions of persons within households, and the results do not take non-monetary benefits into account – it is the best available. The ESRI use income poverty lines to measure poverty relative to the standard of living of society as a whole. These lines can be drawn at any level in the income distribution. To account for differences in household size, equivalence weights are used. The relative poverty line is drawn at a point representing 50 per cent of average household income. On this basis, the survey showed that a significant proportion of our population was living in poverty in 1994. Unemployed people were at the highest risk of poverty. Households headed by an ill or disabled person were at the second highest risk, with people on home duties third.
- 2.10 Table 2.2 shows that in 1994, almost 19 per cent of households were below the 50 per cent relative poverty line, compared with just over 16 per cent in 1987. However, this measure does not take account of how far below the poverty line the groups fall. Measures which also take into account poverty *gaps* show that those below the 50 per cent poverty line in 1994 were not as far below that line as those in 1987.

Table 2.2
Risks of Relative Poverty: Classified by Labour Force Status of Head of Household, 1987 and 1994

Head of Household	Percentage below 50% Poverty line	
	1987	1994
Unemployed	57.2	59.4
Ill/Disabled	33.7	44.5
Home Duties	9.8	34.9
Farmer	32.8	20.4
Self-employed	10.5	14.7
Retired	9.1	10.6
Employee	3.5	3.1
All Households	16.3	18.5

Source: Poverty in the 1990s – Combat Poverty Agency/ESRI, 1996.

2.11 While the risk of poverty had fallen for farmers, this is largely due to the fact that the base year was a particularly bad one for farmers. It also reflects increases in farm incomes since then. However, this does not reflect the disparities in farm incomes. Data from the 1987 and the 1995 *National Farm Surveys* shows that farms over 100 hectares recorded the biggest increases in average family farm income – from approximately £24,700 per annum in 1987 to £65,000 per annum in 1994. In contrast, the average family farm income for the *smallest* farms only rose from £1,200 in 1987 to £1,700 in 1994.⁸ In short, the gap between the incomes of large and small farms has widened significantly.

Spatial Analysis of Poverty

2.12 An analysis based on the 1987⁹ survey showed that the risk and incidence of poverty depended on whether a household was situated (i) in open country; (ii) in a village or town with a population of less than 3,000 persons; (iii) in a town with a population of 3,000 or more; (iv) in the cities of Cork, Limerick, Waterford or Galway; and (v) in Dublin City or County (Table 2.3). The highest risk of poverty was recorded in small towns or villages, and the lowest in Dublin.

8. Again, it should be noted that the National Farm Survey data do not take into account non-farm earnings and welfare payments.

9. A spatial analysis of poverty, based on the 1994 *Living in Ireland* study, was not available at the time of going to print.

Table 2.3
Risks and Incidence of Poverty by Type of Area, 1987*

Type of Area	Risk %	Incidence %	Percentage of all households
Open Country	32.1	41.3	35.6
Village/town of < 3,000 population	34.8	14.5	11.5
Town of > 3,000 population	30.6	19.9	18.0
Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford	29.1	8.8	8.3
Dublin City and County	16.2	15.5	26.5
Total		100	100

* 60% poverty line

Source: Paper on the *Spatial Aspects of Poverty and Disadvantage* presented to the Forum by Mr J. Williams (ESRI).

- 2.13 While unemployment is one of the most significant factors associated with disadvantage, unemployment rates alone do not provide a sufficient indicator of underlying disadvantage in an area. This is particularly true in rural areas where high emigration and on-farm underemployment may distort the real extent of unemployment.
- 2.14 In these circumstances, other indicators are needed to measure poverty. In the case of emigration, which tends to be concentrated among the working-age population, the age-dependency ratio is an indicator of a large economically-dependent population, and a proxy for measuring poverty.
- 2.15 A multi-variate analysis¹⁰, using thirteen indicators to measure poverty, allows a picture of the distribution of poverty to be built up. The thirteen indicators or variables involved, which are grouped under three headings: social class, urban deprivation, and rural deprivation – are set out in the following box:

10. Paper presented to the Forum by Mr Trutz Haase, *A Multi-variate Analysis of Poverty* (1996).

Box 1	
Social Class	Labour Force with 3rd Level Education Leaving School at 20 or over Rooms per Person Leaving School at 15 or under Higher and Lower Professional Class Unskilled Manual Class
Urban Deprivation	Households Owner Occupied Households Local Authority Rented Lone Parents Unemployed
Rural Deprivation	Proportion of Small Farming Cars per household Age Dependency Ratio

- 2.16 The level of education of the population in an area, and the age at which people left school, are strong indicators of the social class of an area. Urban deprivation is strongly related to unemployment and to the proportion of Local Authority rented houses in an area, while the proportion of small farmers in an area is indicative of rural deprivation.
- 2.17 The results of this analysis, which are illustrated in the map overleaf, show that deprivation exists in almost every part of the country. Although there are differences in the degree to which disadvantage is clustered in particular areas, both urban and rural, it will be noted that disadvantage is most prevalent in Counties Donegal and Mayo, but also extensive in the border Counties of Leitrim, Cavan, and Monaghan, as well as in Roscommon. Further significant pockets are found in North Kerry and parts of County Clare. In Dublin, the analysis fully confirms the known areas of deprivation. In the urban areas outside Dublin the main clusters of deprivation include parts of the four County Boroughs of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford and parts of the towns of Drogheda, Dundalk, Sligo, Wexford, Bray and Kilkenny. For the purposes of compiling the map, each of the thirteen indicators involved has been equally weighted and this important qualification needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the data.

Overall Deprivation in Ireland



Source: Trutz Haase – Social & Economic Consultant
based on CSO 1991 Data.

2.18 A striking feature of this map is the extent to which the fate of rural Ireland seems to be determined by urban factors. A pattern emerges of relative affluence initially and then increasing disadvantage forming concentric circles around the main centres of population. This is particularly apparent in the case of Dublin and the cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, but equally applies to Sligo, Dundalk, Drogheda, Cavan, Monaghan, Athlone, Ennis, Kilkenny, Cashel, New Ross and Wexford. Indeed, it is probably correct to say that this effect can be observed in almost every town throughout the country. In each case, a ring of relative affluence appears to stretch from the outer fringes of suburban developments into the adjoining rural space. The degree to which more extensive rural areas end up being disadvantaged appears to become a function primarily of the relative density and size of urban centres or the absence of such centres.

Trends in population and settlements

2.19 The results of the 1996 Census of Population show that the population at national level increased by approximately 95,000. Overall, the population of most counties increased, and the populations of Connaught and Ulster are now at their highest levels since 1951. However, these figures are preliminary, and do not provide the detailed data required to analyse population trends in rural areas.

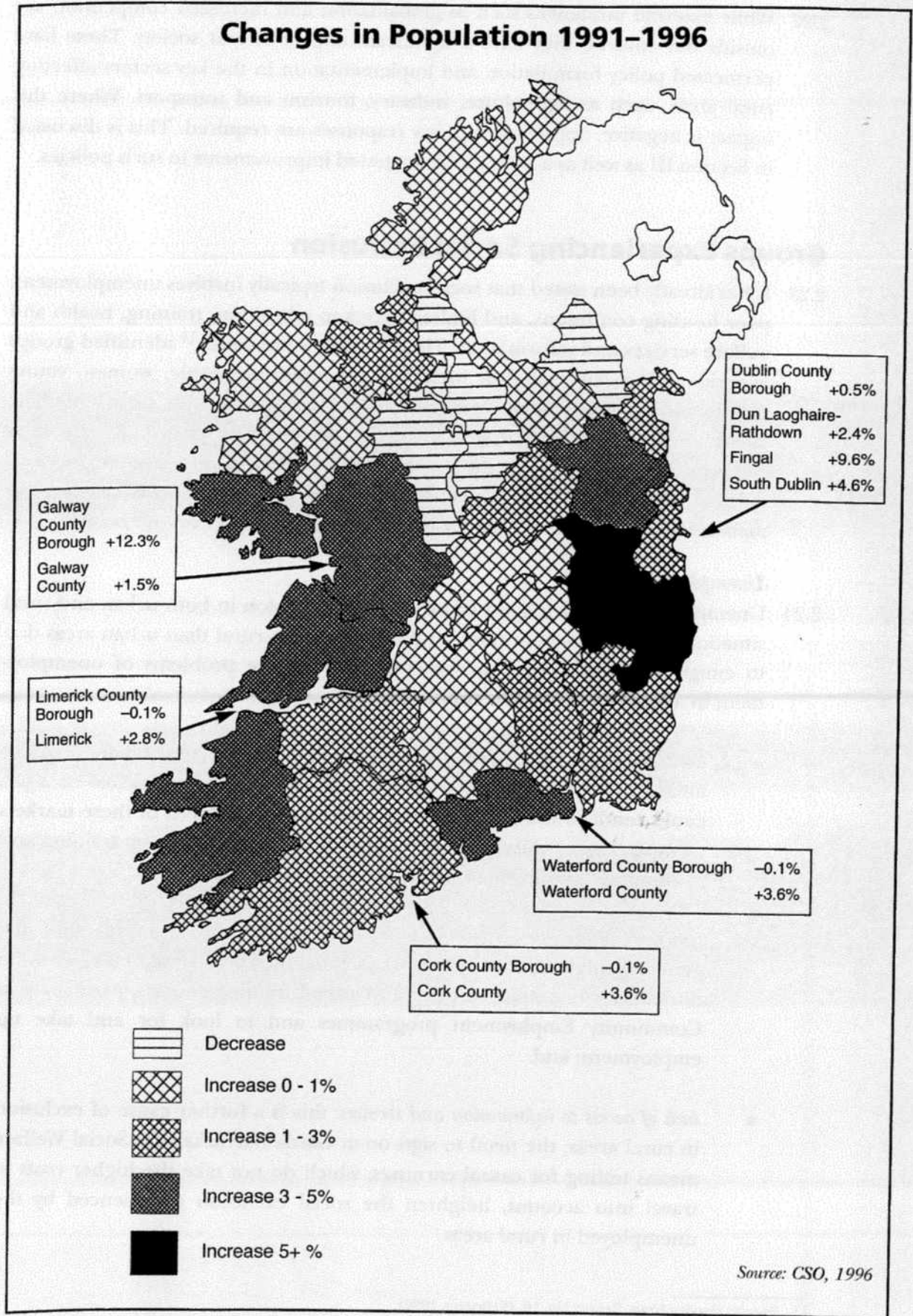
2.20 A District Electoral Division (DED) breakdown of these results shows that most of the increase in population between 1991 and 1996 occurred in areas with relatively high population densities. Areas with low population densities experienced a continuing decline. The 1996 results also reinforce the trend towards population growth in “rings” around urban areas and this is illustrated on the map (page 28). It is notable that the DEDs which registered the largest increases are located close to large and/or growing urban centres, thus reflecting the growth and extent of commuter hinterlands.

Factors contributing to Rural Social Exclusion

2.21 The main underlying factors involved in the process of social exclusion in rural areas are highlighted in Box 2:

BOX 2

- *Centralisation:* Policy has been increasingly driven from the centre in recent decades. Since EU membership in 1973, Irish policy has been influenced by EU requirements and according to EU funding rules. The CAP has had a particular influence on rural Ireland. Internally, Government Departments have been the key policy makers in the areas of transport, tourism and communications. While centralisation may lead to greater consistency and reduce duplication, it also excludes local people and organisations from decision-making and fosters a dependency culture. In addition, it does not allow for policy responses which reflect particular local and regional concerns.
- *Rationalisation:* Curtailment of services in rural areas has contributed to exclusion in recent years. Rationalisation has taken place in response to the market imperative to improve efficiency and reduce costs. However, some users of the services suffer increased costs because they have to travel to avail of them. Those in greatest need of services – older people and those with disabilities – may not be able to avail of them. There are strong social arguments for not curtailing services in rural areas, such as post offices, health centres, and in particular, public transport.
- *Policy Co-ordination:* There is a fragmentation of effort across a broad range of Government Departments. Rural development is identified as a specific function of the Department of Agriculture despite the fact that agriculture is no longer necessarily the economic mainstay of every rural community. There is no institutional mechanism to ensure relevant policy areas are co-ordinated or to ensure a complementary and targeted impact on rural areas and communities. Vertical co-ordination is also needed between local initiatives and national policy-making. Recent measures to address these problems include the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee in the Department of the Taoiseach on local development initiatives and that of the County Strategy Groups.
- *Globalisation and Increased Competition:* A key challenge facing the economy is global competition in the marketplace and for mobile investment. This will be intensified and reinforced by other developments, including the WTO, EMU and EU enlargement and will further contribute to rural decline and social exclusion.
- *Global Food Production:* Despite the agriculture sector's relative decline, the extent of and the conditions under which agricultural production takes place have a strong impact on rural communities. Changes over the last two decades have involved a shift in favour of the higher value-added food processing and marketing sectors. These have involved major technological advances and protectionist policies which have led to a situation of general over-production.
- *Tensions between the Demands of Economic Efficiency and Equity:* The Government plays important roles in the formulation of development strategies. This reflects objectives to promote competitiveness and also that of ensuring an even impact of development across different regions and social groups. There is a tension between the demands of economic efficiency and of equity. Efficiency is concerned with the use of resources available to society, while equity relates to the distribution of these resources.



2.22 While external influences such as globalisation and increased competition are outside our control, they have a significant impact on our society. These have permeated policy formulation and implementation in the key sectors affecting rural areas, such as agriculture, industry, tourism and transport. Where this impact is negative, appropriate policy responses are required. This is discussed in Section III as well as a number of suggested improvements to such policies.

Groups Experiencing Social Exclusion

2.23 It has already been noted that social exclusion typically involves unemployment, poor housing conditions, and limited access to education, training, health and welfare services and information. The Forum has previously¹¹ identified groups experiencing social exclusion including unemployed people, women, young people, older people, Travellers, lone parents and people with a disability. The factors involved are exacerbated in the rural context by spatial dispersion. A common thread is the lack of transport and access to information, services, training and employment opportunities. While the list is not exhaustive, the main issues involved for a number of vulnerable groups are set out below.

Unemployed People

2.24 Unemployment is the biggest cause of social exclusion in both urban and rural situations. Unemployment rates tend to be lower in rural than urban areas due to emigration and underemployment. However, the problems of unemployment in a rural context are compounded by:

- *limited employment opportunities*: the smaller size of rural labour markets means there is a relatively greater chance that the initial loss of a job could result in long-term unemployment; the limitation of these markets also affects the availability and quality of work experience on training and Community Employment programmes;
- *transport difficulties*: lower car ownership, lack of transport and the generally high cost of transport facilities in rural areas, make it more difficult for unemployed people to attend training courses, participate in Community Employment programmes and to look for and take up employment; and
- *lack of access to information and services*: this is a further cause of exclusion in rural areas; the need to sign on at Garda Barracks, and Social Welfare means testing for casual earnings, which do not take the higher costs of travel into account, heighten the social exclusion experienced by the unemployed in rural areas.

11. *Equality Proofing Issues*, Report No. 10, (February, 1996).

Women

2.25 The predominance of a patri-linear system of farm inheritance places many women in an unequal role in rural life. Despite their contribution on family farms, they receive no payment, have few entitlements to social welfare payments and little chance of inheriting the farm. The recent EU Conference¹² on women's participation in farming noted that throughout Europe women were leaving farms, but that the future of farming depended on the continued involvement of women. The factors which particularly affect women in a rural context are:

- *Non-recognition:* the Fourth Joint Oireachtas Committee on Women's Rights found that the "contribution rural women make to the economic life of the area is underestimated or completely overlooked". The 1991 *Farm Structure Survey* showed that 27 per cent (107,000) of the total number of people involved in agriculture were women but the 1995 *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) showed that women only accounted for 8 per cent, or 11,200, of the total engaged in agriculture. While this discrepancy may be due to non-recording of part-time and unpaid work by women on farms, the LFS shows that the average hours worked by women were 47.5 per week;
- *Economic status:* most farming women have no economic status unless they are farm owners; the typical practice in farming is that parents identify one son as their likely successor; where there is no son, an indirect male heir might be allowed to inherit; continued female migration, and longer duration in education for females, suggest that parents are not selecting daughters to inherit the farm; many rural women are absolutely dependent on their husbands, partners or male relatives;
- *Transport Difficulties:* availability of affordable transport is a crucial issue; even where there is a household car, women's access may be restricted; inability to travel is a particular constraint for disadvantaged women to avail of health and community services, as well as jobs, training and educational opportunities; this has recently been highlighted by the National Adult Literacy Agency¹³, which found that lack of transport prevented women in rural areas from obtaining literacy tuition;
- *Childcare:* it is estimated¹⁴ that some 40 per cent of rural women aged 15-64 years have dependent children living at home; lack of suitable childcare provision has a particularly severe impact on women in rural areas, and on the wives of fishermen who are away at sea; this combined with isolation, lack of transport and lack of income, may prevent women from participating in education and training, and accessing paid employment;

12. EU *Special Conference on Farm Women*, Brussels, (September 1996).

13. National Adult Literacy Agency *Access and Participation in Adult Literacy Schemes*, (1996).

14. *Women and Rural Development*, Fourth Joint Oireachtas Committee on Women's Rights, (1994).

- *Care of Older People:* women carry out most of the caring for older or infirm relatives and members of the community in rural areas, where the proportion of older people in the population is particularly high; this is a very valuable contribution to the community; it has been estimated by O'Shea and Hughes¹⁵ that in 1992, the real cost of care in public long-stay institutions could be in excess of £600 per person per week, while the cost of community care ranged from £147 to £211 per week; in the Forum's view, the under-resourcing of community care places a severe strain on rural women; the lack of paid recognition and of pensionable income is likely to be exacerbated in the future, as the population ages; women will be particularly vulnerable as they have a higher life expectancy than men, but will not have built up paid pension contributions;
- *Centralisation of Services:* this is a particular problem for women, not only in the context of caring for others, but also in having to travel increasingly long distances to access specific health services, such as family planning and antenatal/postnatal care; this problem was recognised by the Commission on the Status of Women, which recommended that each Health Board should establish mobile health centres to provide routine treatment for women in rural areas on a regular basis; other measures which could be considered would be specialist outpatient clinics in health centres and general practitioners' surgeries;
- *Social and Cultural Conditioning:* recent studies¹⁶ have shown that women's confidence levels are undermined by the isolation and lack of recognition associated with carrying out home duties; while this is true for both urban and rural women, isolation is a particular factor for rural women;
- *Invisibility:* economic and social marginalisation results in the invisibility of women in research studies, reports and development programmes; as a result, women's issues and concerns are not among the priorities in agricultural and rural development;
- *Decision-making:* while acknowledging the progress made at local level in some instances, under-representation of women in policy and decision-making structures is particularly severe in rural areas, where lack of economic status and mobility make it difficult for women to participate in the various political, administrative and community structures at local, regional and national levels; and

15. *The Economics and Financing of Long-term Care of the Elderly in Ireland*, National Council for the Elderly, (1994).

16. Byrne, Conlon, Forde, Lymer and Owen, *Rural Women's Research Project*, Final Report, University of Limerick, (1996).

- *Domestic violence:* physical isolation is an additional problem and recent research¹⁷ has shown that rural women may not wish to avail of local refuges and need improved information and access to refuges and advice centres in urban areas.

People with a Disability

- 2.26 The main problems experienced in rural areas by people with a disability are lack of transport and access to services, particularly education and health services. Moreover, disabled people with mobility problems have additionally to contend with lack of accessible transport and barriers to mobility. This also affects older people and those with young children.
- 2.27 In a society which sets a high value on personal independence and freedom of movement, mobility is seen as the key to equality for people with a disability. Entry to, and full participation in, education, training, employment, health services, leisure, recreational and social pursuits hinges on accessible and affordable transport systems. Such systems are not available in this country. Approximately one third of the written submissions to the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities referred to the daily problem of transport.
- 2.28 In rural areas, the sense of isolation and exclusion of people with a disability and their families is far greater because they live further away from services and amenities. If people with disabilities are to achieve equity and equal opportunities, the means of transport should be accessible, the surrounding infrastructure must be barrier-free and other difficulties should be dealt with through flexible schemes. A variety of community-based transport schemes which are accessible to, and meet the needs of, people with disabilities and any person living in rural isolation, including older people, is discussed in the next Section of the Report.

Older People

- 2.29 Rural areas are characterised by an older age profile, and have a higher proportion of older unmarried men, who are likely to live alone. A 1993 survey¹⁸ showed that the poorest housing conditions are experienced by older people living alone in rural areas. In addition, as with unemployed people and women, lack of transport and access to services are key factors in the exclusion of older people in rural areas:

17. Undertaken for the *Working Group on Violence Against Women*, Office of the Tánaiste, (1997).

18. Fahey and Murray, ESRI/National Council for the Elderly, (1994).

- *Housing:* poor housing conditions can exacerbate illness and disability in older people, as well as being unsuited to their needs once disability has occurred; the only option is usually to seek alternative accommodation, with all the ensuing trauma of relocation; sheltered housing for persons forced to vacate their homes, but not in need of institutional care, is a particular issue; housing policy should focus on developing life-time adaptable accommodation and upgrading existing accommodation in order to reduce the need for relocation;
- *Transport:* lack of accessible transport is also a particular problem for older people; a survey carried out for the National Council for the Elderly in 1994¹⁹ found that 50 per cent of older people living in rural areas reported that public transport was unavailable while the proportion using public transport had fallen from over 30 per cent in 1987 to 17 per cent in 1993; there is evidence that some older people forego health care, for example visits to day care centres for chiropody and physiotherapy, because no suitable transport services are available;
- *Crime:* recent criminal attacks on older people have created considerable disquiet among frail, dependent older people living alone, especially those with significant medical problems; this causes severe mental stress, social disengagement and a restriction on physical activity; while the overall level of reported crime is low by international standards, statistics supplied to the Task Force on the Elderly shows that there were 102 attacks on persons over 65 living alone in remote locations in 1995, compared with 69 in 1994; in these circumstances, telephones are an important means of communication for older people to make contact with neighbours and emergency services; however, there are about 23,000 older people living alone who do not have telephones;²⁰ in rural areas, almost a quarter of households comprise older people who do not have telephones;²¹ this issue is being addressed with the introduction of the *Scheme of Community Support for Older People*, the extension of tax reliefs to relatives who have alarms installed for pensioners, and the introduction of a once-off reduced telephone installation fee of £75 for pensioners; and

19. Fahey and Murray, *op. cit.*

20. *Task Force on the Security of the Elderly*, Department of Social Welfare, (1996).

21. Combat Poverty Agency, *op. cit.*

- *Community Care and Support:* as already mentioned, the relatively low cost of community care is an indication of under-resourcing; the lack of medical, nursing and chiropody care is a particular problem for elderly people; in addition to increasing community care, the Forum is of the opinion that greater provision of community support such as home-helpers would provide frequent contact and help offset loneliness and isolation.

Migrants

2.30 The 1996 Census results (Table 2.4) show that in the five-year period 1991 to 1996, inward migration exceeded outward migration by about 3,185. This reflects a considerable rise in recent years in the number coming to live here, the vast majority of whom would be returning emigrants. Although figures in recent years are showing minimal overall loss of population through emigration, this conceals the fact that there is still substantial emigration each year (the preliminary CSO figure for 1996 is 32,800).

Table 2.4
Components of population change for each Region, 1991-1996

Region	Population		Increase in population	Natural increase	Estimated migration
	1991	1996			
Persons					
Border	402,987	406,444	3,457	6,433	-2,976
Dublin	1,025,304	1,056,666	31,362	36,472	-5,110
Mid-East	325,291	346,669	21,378	13,748	7,630
Midland	202,984	205,252	2,268	4,656	-2,388
Mid-West	310,728	316,875	6,147	7,422	-1,275
South-East	383,188	391,046	7,858	8,785	-927
South-West	532,263	546,209	13,946	10,178	3,768
West	342,974	351,874	8,900	4,437	4,463
State	3,525,719	3,621,035	95,316	92,131	3,185

Source: Preliminary 1996 Census of Population (CSO).

- 2.31 The latest data available indicates that increasing numbers of emigrants are in their middle twenties and well educated, and that the proportion of families emigrating together is increasing. Despite this, it is likely that involuntary emigrants still account for a significant proportion of total emigrants.
- 2.32 Having suffered exclusion from their own society, many emigrants face new forms of exclusion in the countries to which they emigrate. Research²² and the pastoral experience of Church agencies working with Irish emigrants in

22. Joint Submission to Government by Several Agencies Concerned with the Problem of Emigration, (September 1995).

England, America and elsewhere show that emigrants, particularly the young and unqualified, often find themselves in a marginalised position in their host country. Emigrants who cannot find suitable employment or accommodation in their new setting may find it difficult to gain access to social welfare and other support systems and this is particularly serious since they are already separated from the network of support normally provided by family and friends.

- 2.33 An integral part of any policy in relation to emigration must involve tackling the factors in society which create pressure to emigrate – including unemployment, rural decline, and lack of sufficient opportunities for people with high educational qualifications. It is important that planning in economic and social policy areas is not based on projections rooted in an acceptance of emigration, particularly where this involves groups experiencing social exclusion.

Local Authority Tenants

- 2.34 Poverty and exclusion are not inevitable for local authority tenants, in cities or in rural towns. However, an analysis of these households shows high levels of unemployment, low education and high levels of welfare dependency. In rural areas the factors compounding exclusion for such tenants are:

- *Location:* some Council estates are located on the outskirts of country towns and villages, leading to lack of access to services;
- *Labour Market Marginalisation:* those living in outlying local authority housing estates face the most extreme form of deprivation²³; including the most severe difficulties in finding employment; and
- *Lack of property:* as already mentioned, ownership of land and property confers status in rural areas, to the extent that land-holders will hold on to non-viable farms; tenants of Council estates do not have that status.

Travellers

- 2.35 The problems of access to information, services, training and employment are exacerbated in the case of Travellers. Of a total of about 4,200 Traveller families, an estimated 900 are on the roadside in rural areas, without services and accommodation. About 250 of these families are nomadic on a continuous basis. These transient families in particular are excluded from participation and services.

23. *Marginalisation, deprivation and fatalism in the Republic of Ireland: class and underclass*, Chris Whelan, ESRI, (1994).

- 2.36 Travellers were a predominantly rural people. Change in their economic circumstances and the changing nature of nomadism has resulted in a move from a rural to an urban setting for the majority of this community. The mechanisation of agricultural activities, the wider drift of the rural population to the cities and the introduction of plastics made many of their traditional activities redundant. The cities offered new opportunities.
- 2.37 Travellers in a rural setting experience similar problems to those living in an urban setting. These have been detailed in the *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*. The key problems are lack of accommodation, poor access to education and health services, discrimination and a significant dependence on social welfare payments. Moreover, the problems of Travellers in rural areas can often be exacerbated by isolation due to their small numbers in any one place. This has implications for their capacity to organise and to formulate their needs in a collective manner. Equally, it presents particular challenges to service providers to ensure Traveller inclusion and culturally-appropriate provision.
- 2.38 A further issue for Travellers in rural areas is related to nomadism, often linked to rural fairs and involving movement along traditional routes. This can be a particular source of tension in rural areas. This tension arises due to the absence of what the Task Force refers to as transient sites. In the circumstances, the Forum welcomes the Government commitment to a five year programme for Traveller accommodation including the development of such transient sites.

Lone Parents

- 2.39 Many lone parents experience social exclusion in both urban and rural contexts. However, there may be a particular social stigma attached to being a lone parent in rural areas which is exacerbated by the lack of access to childcare and transport facilities. Many lone parents continue to live in their parents' house, leading to overcrowding, and a lack of accurate data on the numbers of lone parents in rural areas.

Gaeltacht Communities

- 2.40 Gaeltacht communities in rural Ireland share many problems in common with other rural areas. They can also experience particular forms of exclusion in relation to provision for linguistic needs. Educational disadvantage can be compounded in Gaeltacht areas. Particular issues are the lack of support services, such as educational psychologists, remedial teachers and speech therapy facilities in Irish. This issue also extends to a range of other areas of service provision, in particular, training measures.

- 2.41 The lack of support for families moving into these areas to learn Irish is a cause for concern. More broadly, tourism strategies which do not include any provision for protection of the cultural and linguistic identity of Gaeltacht communities have the potential to further entrench their exclusion.

Fishermen

- 2.42 The problems of rural isolation and exclusion also affect those engaged in the fishing industry. Fishermen operating on a small-scale are particularly isolated and vulnerable. The causes and features of this isolation and exclusion are: a long-term trend towards larger and more efficient units; the tendency for fishermen, (apart from part-time inshore fishing families) to stay at sea for longer periods results in a type of one parent family situation and the absence of male role models for children; many married men have moved out of fishing into shore-based occupations, or unemployment, leaving younger and often less skilled persons on board and the practical burden of administration and growing bureaucracy falls to the partner at home.

Farmers on Small Holdings

- 2.43 In many rural areas a significant proportion of those experiencing social exclusion are involved in subsistence agriculture. Current agriculture policy favours the unit of production rather than the producer and there is no support, such as the Family Income Supplement, aimed at *families* living on small holdings. This section of the population have suffered from the opening up of markets and competition, but tend to benefit less from the advantages of these developments, such as price supports and training and advisory services. For example, CAP supports are related to scales of production and the smaller farmers who most need income support receive the least amount. Farmers on low incomes are also unable to access the machinery and technology which facilitate the work of better-off farmers.

Section III

**Policy Issues
and Responses**

Policy Issues and Responses

- 3.1 A number of underlying factors which have influenced policies and continue to have major implications for social exclusion were outlined in Section II. This Section develops that discussion further with a review of the impact of a number of sectoral policies and identifies some key issues which need to be addressed in the context of better targeted and more effective socially-inclusive rural renewal strategies.

Impact of Key Policies and Services

- 3.2 Area-based local development initiatives such as LEADER and the Partnership Companies are central to the process of achieving balanced rural development and this approach is now seen as a strategic component of EU and Irish rural development policies. The success of the area-based approach depends crucially on:

- *Participation* in the planning and implementing of initiatives by organisations that represent the interests of communities experiencing social exclusion in rural areas;
- *Partnership* between the business, trade union, farming, community and statutory sectors in preparing development strategies which balance economic and social objectives;
- *Mainstreaming*, involving commitment to and mechanisms for ensuring that local innovation informs national policy and that there is local access to mainstream resources; and
- *Co-ordination* between the various institutions (representative and participative) at local level to ensure complementarity of effort without diminishing the autonomy of the different actors.

- 3.3 The linking of local priorities with sources of funding is particularly important because the predominant flow of public funds to rural areas follows a sectoral rather than an area-based route and it is vital, therefore, to have a cohesive and integrated partnership structure which can make best use of available funds.

- 3.4 Local area-based strategies and institutions serve as an important focal point for the purposes of targeting vulnerable groups. But these are not sufficient in themselves and must be reinforced and complemented by more effective national and EU policies, given the scale of the resources required and that the root causes of many of the problems lie beyond the local level. Moreover, the impact which some key policies have on rural development and social exclusion (which is outlined beneath) is compounded by the interaction of these policies across a number of sectors. This in turn emphasises the need for an integrated response.
- 3.5 In this context, and where consistent population decline has been recorded in certain rural areas, the Forum **recommends** that there should be clear and open discussion, within the institutional framework set out in Section IV and with the involvement of the local communities concerned, as to the feasibility of taking measures to halt or reverse such decline.

Agriculture

- 3.6 Since EU membership in 1973, Irish agricultural policy has been set by the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). The resulting adjustments in agricultural structures and production have had a pronounced impact on the rural economy. For example, between 1973 and 1989, the numbers of holdings with dairy cows fell by 50 per cent while cattle farms decreased by 25 percent²⁴. While the CAP has had many positive effects, including significantly higher farm incomes, it has also led to increased polarisation of such incomes, and profound structural changes in farming.
- 3.7 Farm development policies have, of course, been significantly influenced by the CAP. Until the 1970s, a policy of structural expansion of small holdings, particularly in the western counties, had been pursued. With EU entry, national programmes were replaced by farm modernisation and improvement schemes. Farmers in western counties had a much lower participation rate in these schemes than farmers in Munster and Leinster. Kelleher and O'Mahony²⁵ estimate that between 1975 and 1984 almost 60 per cent of expenditure on the Farm Improvement Scheme went to 30 per cent of farms. In these circumstances, western farmers did not benefit as much from farm modernisation schemes as their counterparts in eastern counties.
- 3.8 The poorer farming areas along the western seaboard have always had the greatest challenges to face and have to some extent adapted to circumstances by developing alternative and non-farm sources of income such as agri-tourism. However, the more traditional farming areas, particularly in the midlands, are

24. Patrick Commins, *Agricultural Production and Small Scale Farming*, Teagasc, (1995).

25. Kelleher and O'Mahony, *Marginalisation in Irish Agriculture*, Socio-Economic Research Series 4, An Foras Talúntais, (1984).

now finding it difficult to survive and have fewer alternatives to farming. The CAP supports are related to scale of production, as has been well documented by the EU Commission itself, and the smaller farmers who most need income support receive the least amount.

- 3.9 Structural changes will continue in agriculture well into the next century. The GATT-related CAP reforms mark a fundamental change in agriculture policy, with protectionist measures being dismantled. The next round of negotiations will begin in 1999, with a focus on further trade liberalisation. The OECD have noted that this will further erode agricultural protection, with major consequences for the viability of farming as currently practised. This in turn has major implications for the survival of rural areas.
- 3.10 On the basis of Teagasc definitions, less than 30 per cent of Irish farms are considered viable (see Table 3.1). Moreover, it has been suggested that by the year 2005, there could be a reduction of over 40,000 (almost 30 per cent) in the number of farms, with the greatest reduction expected to be in the non-viable category. It is estimated that simply to maintain a stable rural population at its present level of 1.25 million would require an additional 70,000 jobs in industry and services within commuting distance of rural areas over the next 5 to 10 years.

Table 3.1
Projected Change in the Number of Farms

	1994		2005	
	Number (‘000)	%	Number (‘000)	%
Viable	44.2	29	35	32
Non-Viable	109.8	71	75	68
Total	154	100	110	100

Source: Dr. Jim Frawley, *Farm Categories; their viability and future in Farm and Food*, Summer 1996, Teagasc.

- 3.11 This presents a fundamental challenge to policy makers and the farming community. Measures to provide alternatives for those who leave farming, and to maintain and secure the optimum number of jobs in farming and related services, need to be urgently identified. The sectoral approach of the CAP policy is increasingly being complemented by a territorial, regional rural approach. There is an increasing emphasis on direct payments to farmers and rewards for landscape management and environment protection. These changes pose major adjustment problems, but also opportunities, for farm households. In the circumstances, the Forum **recommends:**

- specific intervention to ensure that the response to these changes is based on a commitment to create access to economic activity alongside welfare-based initiatives; and
 - if there is any phasing out of CAP payments in the process of transition, that the special situation and diversification needs of small family farm holdings should be recognised and supported.
- 3.12 The Forum also **recommends** that diversification should be recognised as vital if small farm incomes are to be supplemented with either an additional enterprise or off-farm employment. This should be promoted within a commitment to maintaining the maximum number of viable farm families in rural areas. In particular, it is **recommended** that the definition of “farmer” used in the access criteria for grants, supports and benefits, which at present states that at least 25% of income must be earned from farming, should be reviewed. This militates against low-income farm families with low income off-farm jobs and it excludes many from the supports and grants available to others.
- 3.13 In this context also, it is **recommended** that consideration be given to the establishment of serviced Enterprise Units which would provide facilities for food production in compliance with EU Food Hygiene Regulations; these Units should also have the capacity to assist in other areas such as packaging, marketing, accounting etc., thereby turning cottage industry and crafts of all kinds into viable and professional businesses.
- 3.14 The benefits of an advisory service for small producers have been highlighted by the Teagasc *Pilot Programme for Small Producers* (1992-1994). Participants in this programme made considerable gains in farm income through an emphasis on cutting costs, improving efficiency and improving the quality of production. For example, small-scale milk producers increased their incomes by between £1,600 and £3,000 per annum by following the milk quality and efficiency goals of the programme. Enabling more small farmers to make strategic development choices should be a basic aim of agricultural advisory services in the coming years. Small farmers have most need for such services but, and as Box 3 shows, it is these farmers who do not access these services.

Box 3					
Farm Households: Use of Advisory Services					
Farm Characteristics					
Farm Category	Farm business/type	Income	Use of Advisory Services	Farm Outlook	Future income prospects
Viable farms and households	large dairying or tillage	above average, some with off-farm income and investments outside farming	proactive use of a range of services and information sources	predominantly expansionist	above "comparable income"
Viable households with non-viable farms but adequate household income	full-time/off-farm income	part-time farming, mainly drystock and small dairying or small/medium tillage	proactive use of a limited range of farm related advisory/information services	predominantly static	off-farm work and farm diversification
Potentially viable households with non-viable farms	inadequate household income, below "comparable income"	mainly drystock with limited development potential	low use of advisory/information services – rely heavily on neighbours/friends	predominantly reductionist	off-farm work and farm diversification
Potentially viable households and farms	inadequate household income, below "comparable income"	mainly drystock with some dairying and tillage development potential	low use of advisory/information services -rely heavily on neighbours/friends	predominantly static, some reductionist	uncertain-farming and off-farm work or diversification
Non-viable farm households and farms	low household income – farming and social welfare	mainly drystock with limited development potential	little or no use of advisory services	reductionist	social welfare and farming

Source: Paper presented by Prof. Joe Mannion to Kilfinane Conference op. cit.

- 3.15 While Teagasc already provides a range of professional advisory services, the Forum **recommends** that it should now review its strategy to ensure that these services are more accessible to small farmers in remote areas. Alongside this, it is also **recommended** that high quality research and development support should be targeted to farmers on small holdings. This would allow for the development of new food-based products at local level and also generate access to a range of niche markets, thereby providing higher incomes and job opportunities on small holdings.

Forestry

- 3.16 Changes in farm practices, productivity and profitability have led to increased emphasis on development of alternatives to tillage and livestock farming. Forestry is one such alternative which has been promoted over the last two decades. Ireland has the lowest proportion of afforested land area (about 7 per cent) in the EU. The EU average is about 25 per cent, with 45 per cent of land under forestry in Greece. The Operational Programme for Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry sets a target of 10 per cent in the afforested land area by the year 2000. It is stated Government policy to *“promote the development of a strong forestry sector which can contribute to sustainable development and which will bring economic benefits to the rural economy”*.²⁶
- 3.17 In a study on the impact of forestry on rural communities²⁷, the ESRI estimated that increasing the proportion of forestry area to 10 per cent would give an increase of almost £170m in Net Domestic Product and would require a labour force of about 10,000 people. This could be achieved without causing a reduction in agricultural output and employment. The study also found that a forestry programme would stem rural decline, but could not halt it completely due to the high level of agricultural under-employment. It concluded that there is an urgent need to increase afforestation to improve rural incomes by switching from *unproductive* farm land to forestry. The employment potential of forestry is partly dependent on harvesting methods and the recent trend towards the use of more mechanised equipment significantly decreases this potential.
- 3.18 Despite the benefits involved, the policy of increased afforestation has given rise to some criticism. Farmers argue that prime land has been planted, and that the price of such land is being forced beyond the reach of farmers. Planting on land which is marginal for agriculture has also given rise to other problems. It is now accepted that not all such land is suitable for forestry on environmental, social and commercial productivity grounds. In areas such as large parts of Co. Leitrim where soils are marginal for agriculture but are suitable for forestry

26. Minister for the Environment, Mr Brendan Howlin T.D., in announcing environmental controls for forestry production, (16th April 1996).

27. Kearney and O'Connor *The Impact of Forestry on Rural Communities*, ESRI, (1993).

production, problems of rural isolation have been exacerbated by rapidly maturing sitka spruce plantations.

3.19 Forestry has given rise to a number of other environmental problems. In the earlier years of grants and incentives, planting frequently took place on unsuitable sites, giving rise to environmental problems such as degradation of boglands and acidification of water – thus impacting on fisheries and visual intrusion on areas of high scenic quality. The fact that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required for plantations below 200 hectares meant that the cumulative social and visual impact of a number of smaller plantations was not assessed. Despite an increase in planting of broadleaf trees, the proportion of such species in our forests remains the lowest in any EU country. On this aspect, the ESRI recommended that *“the Forest Service and Coillte must take a hard look at current planting practices. The current over-reliance on one species – Sitka Spruce – is dangerous from an environmental, biological (disease) and business point of view. In future years, planting grants and forest praemia should be tailored to obtain a more diversified species planting regime”*.

3.20 The Government have responded to these concerns by:

- reducing (from 200 hectares to 70 hectares) the statutory threshold at which afforestation projects must seek planning permission and undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment;
- introducing a system of notification to Local Authorities for all projects over 25 hectares (where grants are sought);
- designating areas sensitive to afforestation i.e. where there is a need to avoid rural isolation, protect views and scenic areas, landscape and water quality and heritage areas; all proposals for afforestation in such areas, regardless of size, must be notified to Local Authorities; and
- tightening the operation and enforcement of forestry guidelines, especially in relation to the use of broadleaf trees on the margins of large coniferous plantations; and monitoring and review of controls to ensure their effectiveness.

- 3.21 While welcoming these measures, forestry policy continues to be formulated and implemented in a top-down framework and the Forum **recommends** that the future direction of policy should be determined in consultation and co-operation with local communities, with due cognisance of commercial and environmental factors.

Fishing

- 3.22 The trend towards capital intensive, larger and more efficient units, the complexity of EU regulations, technological innovations and global markets have also affected the fishing industry. The appropriateness of this development in a sector dependent on a potentially renewable resource is questionable and is currently the topic of much international debate. In the meantime, some fishermen are being forced out of a way of life known to their families for generations, while others struggle to survive. In addition to the traditional difficulty of trying to find a favourable conjunction of weather, fish stocks and markets, fishermen now have to deal with quotas, tonnage and an increasing level of regulations, to which they have had little input. Safety is also a major concern for fishing families where, until recently, more limited social welfare was only available for fishermen.
- 3.23 As fishermen are increasingly required to spend more time at sea, the burden of bureaucracy falls to the partner at home. There are no courses or avenues available which might enable a fishing family to understand and meet bureaucratic requirements.
- 3.24 A more comprehensive fisheries policy is required which would cover all types of fishing, with support systems for the families and training for the partners ashore on the workings and requirements of the administrative aspects of fishing.

Industry and Services

- 3.25 The development of rural areas is particularly dependent on the extent to which economic activity can be diffused to a large number of smaller towns rather than concentrated on a smaller number of large towns. It must be recognised, however, that while economic development is a prerequisite to addressing the problems of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, such development will not of itself solve these problems. The Forum **recommends**, therefore, that the dispersal of economic activity be complemented by measures to ensure social inclusion. These measures should include:
- targeting those experiencing social exclusion to share in the benefits accruing from economic activity;
 - development of necessary support services such as training and capacity-building programmes to achieve the above goal;
 - design of development strategies to build on existing capacity, potential and needs at local and regional level;
 - the concept of the cluster strategy should be broadened to encompass clustering of services to rural communities, particularly in the spheres of education and health; and

- a more regionalised training service²⁸ also needs to be implemented in tandem with such a strategy.
- 3.26 A policy of industrial dispersal and regional development operated successfully from 1952-1982. Mobile foreign-owned firms which by and large did not require advanced labour skills and specialised services were attracted by grants and relatively low labour costs. Between 1973 and 1982, industrial employment in the West region grew by an average of 6.4 per cent per annum. Because most foreign-owned operations were assembly plants, unskilled workers, particularly women, obtained employment. By the late 1980s, some 78 per cent of assembly workers in the electronics sector and 96 per cent of assembly workers in the chemicals sector were women²⁹.
- 3.27 The policy of industrial dispersal to rural areas underpinned the reversal of rural population decline during the 1970s³⁰. While industrial employment growth was concentrated around the larger urban centres, such as Galway, Castlebar and Ballina, there was also some employment growth in smaller centres. Between 1971 and 1986, rural population loss was reversed in all counties except Leitrim, Roscommon and, during the early 1980s, Clare. Furthermore, between 25 and 40 per cent of those taking up new industrial employment were returned emigrants.
- 3.28 The policy of industrial dispersal was, however, undermined by the mid-1980s due to:
- *increased competition for foreign investment*: between the mid-1980s and 1993 the four richest EU States increased their share of total EU industrial assistance expenditure from 75 to 80 per cent;
 - *firms' preference for urban locations*: in 1994, 50 per cent of all IDA announcements of new projects related to firms setting up in Dublin, with a further 20 per cent opting for Cork or Limerick³¹. The reasons for this were:
 - availability of highly-skilled labour;
 - proximity to international airports is more important as the new firms produce higher value output which is generally transported by air freight;
 - better communications and infrastructure facilities.

28. Previously recommended in Forum Reports Nos. 4, *Ending Long-term Unemployment* and 6, *Quality Delivery of Social Services*.

29. O'Donovan and Curtin in: Varley, Boylan and Cuddy, *Rural Crisis: perspectives on Irish rural development*, University College Galway, (1991).

30. See Commins P. and Keane M., *op. cit.*

31. Walsh, J. A., *Regions in Ireland: a statistical profile*, University of Maynooth, (1995).

- *concentration of resources in areas with greatest potential for growth: concern that attempts to spread industrial location too widely would dilute the level of infrastructural excellence necessary to maximise growth, and growing concern for the problems of urban areas, especially Dublin, influenced the direction of policy.*
- 3.29 The Forum accepts that industrial policy has to be responsive to the needs of investors, and that areas of growth should be fostered, particularly in an era of increased global competition. However, rural development and social inclusion must also be fostered. The best way to do this is to promote development centred on specific areas, as proposed by the Industrial Policy Review (Culliton) Group and, more recently, the NESC. The Forum **recommends** such a development strategy and that it should be multi-dimensional and integrated to achieve optimum results.
- 3.30 The core concept of the “clusters” put forward by the Culliton Group is that small firms engaged in closely-related activities can achieve a degree of specialisation and efficiency if located in a local cluster. Firms can avail of services provided by other local firms which they cannot carry out (or carry out less efficiently) themselves. The advantages of clusters are:
- speed and flexibility;
 - creation of a strong local labour supply;
 - development of a critical mass of specialised knowledge and the spread of that knowledge;
 - facilitation of strong social bonds which smooth transactions;
 - easier provision of credit and assistance in the development of co-operative activities; and
 - the formation of a local or regional industrial identity.
- 3.31 However, the Forum recognises that there are a number of practical difficulties involved in the development of clusters in this country. These require a high level of co-operation between firms, strong links with the local economy, and modern innovation and skills development. It has been noted that *“historically, there has been hardly any long term co-operation between Irish small firms in the provision of purchasing, marketing, financial services or through supply linkages”*.³² Opportunities for linkages between foreign-owned industry and local

32. O'Sullivan, M., “Manufacturing and Global Competition” in O'Hagan, J. W. (ed.), *The Economy of Ireland: policy and performance of a small European country*, (1995).

enterprises have not yet been fully developed. Also, and as documented in the Government's recent White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation, expenditure on research and development by the indigenous sector in this country is also low by international standards.

- 3.32 The NESC has undertaken some valuable research into the cluster concept. It emphasises the difficulties of introducing the model in the Irish context and that such initiatives have to be market led with the State playing a supportive rather than a leading role. The NESC have also introduced the concept of networks, which are less structured and more basic units. It suggested that networks rather than clusters were better suited to Ireland in its current state of economic development. It emphasised that networks can assist in the emergence of clusters in time.
- 3.33 There is evidence, however, that Ireland would be a suitable location for the fostering of clusters in the medium term. Hart and Gudgin³³ found that in 1989 and 1990, the highest rates of new firm formation in indigenous manufacturing industry were in *"the most rural and least industrialised regions of the country"*. These findings suggest that growth of this sector could be based around small towns in predominantly rural areas.
- 3.34 The experience of Údarás Na Gaeltachta is instructive in this context. Údarás was established in 1980 with the aim of encouraging the preservation and extension of the Irish language of the Gaeltacht communities and to establish and develop job-creating industries and services in the Gaeltacht regions. Over 1,200 small businesses, based on local enterprise, have been grant-aided and some 150 other projects of Irish and overseas origin provide employment in the Gaeltacht. Údarás is a shareholder in some 80 Gaeltacht companies. Total full-time employment in these companies exceeds 6,800, with more than 3,900 seasonal jobs also in existence. Údarás has developed clusters in the audio-visual, information technology, and marine industries which have involved establishing links and partnerships with similar concerns in Austria, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Wales. These clusters have been developed over a period of years – the audio-visual cluster has been developed over the past 10 years, while the first steps in developing a salmon industry were taken more than 20 years ago.
- 3.35 In addition to a strong development and innovation orientation, Údarás has a community involvement focus. Its board of directors comprises thirteen members, seven of whom are elected by the people of the Gaeltacht. Údarás has also operated an active community development programme – An Pobal Beo – and in 1995, a new community development strategy was agreed with the

33. Reported in Commins P. and Keane M., *op. cit.*

Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. A key point of this new approach is the identification of a single community development group for each local area, which will act both as a co-ordinating body and be a central representative voice for each community. The objective is to build on voluntary community activity, and the new community development policy pays particular attention to equality of participation and opportunity, the age-structure of the Gaeltacht population and to the need for specific skills training and personal development opportunities for the people of the Gaeltacht.

- 3.36 One in every three of the Gaeltacht labour force is employed full or part-time in an *Údarás na Gaeltachta* assisted enterprise, making the Gaeltacht one of the most industrialised peripheral regions in the EU. Despite this, the cost per job in *Údarás* assisted companies is generally in line with the national average for small to medium sized industries and the average level of grant approval per job has been declining steadily in recent years. The experience of *Údarás* demonstrates that clusters of modern industries can be promoted in peripheral areas, with the involvement of local communities and in partnership with international agencies.
- 3.37 The local partnership for the Galway Gaeltacht, *Cumas Teo.*, has noted that:
- “There is no doubt but that major development for the advancement of the area has been achieved over the years by Údarás na Gaeltachta. The organisation has done pioneering work in developing industrial sectors such as farm fishing and the media.”*³⁴
- 3.38 However, *Cumas Teo.* also noted that the *Údarás* has had difficulties in strategically addressing the needs of communities which are marginalised, partly because competitive pressures lead companies to choose the most profitable locations.
- 3.39 A cluster strategy has also been proposed by the subregional³⁵ CSF Review Committee, which is now incorporated in the Border Regional Authority. This Committee explicitly proposed the establishment of a tool-making and engineering cluster in Sligo. The Sligo proposal has been supported by IBEC’s North-West Committee, *“especially if support services relating to research, development and training were concentrated in this location also”*. The recently-published report of the Western Partnership Board³⁶ has proposed the establishment of local enterprise networks to promote local enterprise, strategic alliances and co-operative activities. The Partnership Board envisages that such networks would be comprised of executives of large employers, owner managers of small firms, enterprising individuals from all walks of life and the unemployed.

34. *Cumas Teo: Pleann Forbatha Áitiúil Comhtháite*, (1995).

35. Formerly the North-West CSF Review Committee.

36. *The Challenge – A Positive Future Through Action*, (1996).

3.40 The State has a key role in fostering the development of networks in the short-term and possibly of clusters in the medium-term. To this end, it is recommended that:

the Government should have a *supporting role* to play in:

- the development of industry and services networks;
- investing in infrastructure to provide the necessary technical and physical foundation; and

the Government should have a *central role* in:

- sponsoring training and capacity-building programmes to facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and a more regionalised training service as recommended in earlier Forum Reports³⁷; and
- facilitating transport provision for these groups to avail of training and job opportunities (see the sub-section on *Transport*).

3.41 The need for research, innovation and a skilled labour supply signifies that the successful development of clusters depends on their proximity to educational and research facilities. This means that Regional Technical Colleges and other third-level institutions have a major role to play in the promotion and location of industry as close as possible to rural areas.

3.42 The *services sector* has recorded the fastest employment growth of all sectors in recent years. Over 60 per cent of total employment in Ireland is now in this sector and this is expected to increase to 66 per cent by the year 2005. At present, 40 per cent of all service sector employment is located in Dublin, with high proportions also in other large towns. There are approximately 290 indigenous computer software companies now established here, with 206 of these located in Dublin; only 20 are located in the North and North-West. The pattern is similar for foreign-owned software companies³⁸.

3.43 Modern technology allows some potential for decentralisation of service sector activity. Technological progress and increased use of computers has encouraged more flexible employment location patterns, particularly the potential for more people to work from home. The high quality of our telecommunications infrastructure has facilitated the location of back-office activity in smaller towns such as Loughrea and Castleisland. Other examples include the success of Údarás na Gaeltachta in the promotion of internationally-traded service activity

37. Forum Reports No. 4, *Ending Long-term Unemployment* and No. 6, *Quality Delivery of Social Services*.

38. Irish Business and Employers' Conference, *The Competitive Position of the North-West*, (1995).

(such as in the media and information technology sectors) in Gaeltacht areas, with particular gains apparent in Connemara.

- 3.44 However, technological developments can also result in economic activity being drawn away from rural areas. A recent paper³⁹ showed that the bulk of the employment creation arising in new information and communication technology sectors was in Dublin. The reasons for this are the availability of a large pool of skilled labour, and the concentration of demand which means that Dublin and other urban areas will be given priority as regards the installation and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure. Similar conclusions were arrived at in studies⁴⁰ of the impact of telecommunications in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. These studies found that most of the economic growth associated with telecommunications had occurred in centres where there was already some level of industrial activity.
- 3.45 In summary, the promotion of industrial/services networks in the short-term and of clusters in the medium-term offers an opportunity to achieve a reasonably dispersed pattern of economic activity throughout the country. But this must be accompanied by parallel efforts and measures to promote social inclusion. At the same time, it must be recognised that rural social exclusion exists throughout rural areas and is most acute in more peripheral locations. These are also inevitably the areas least likely to be identified as “*appropriate hubs of economic activity*” and development strategies must also be devised for these areas. Finally, membership of the Steering Group to oversee implementation of a pilot networking programme, as provided for under the *Partnership 2000* agreement, should include representatives of the four pillars to the partnership process, with the potential impact on social exclusion among the issues to be addressed by that Group.

Tourism

- 3.46 Other forms of service activity are independent of such clusters, thus offering employment potential in smaller towns and villages as well as in the rural hinterland. Tourism is one such sub-sector which offers significant development opportunities for rural areas at present. The total overseas revenue of our tourism sector is approximately £1.5bn per annum. In 1996, the sector accounted for 102,000 full-time job equivalents. It is estimated that rural tourism is worth about £90m per annum. As a source of jobs and income which is locally-based, tourism has a particular role to play in fostering rural development.⁴¹ However, there are a number of factors which limit its impact on social exclusion and poverty:

39. Grimes S., *The Implications of Information Technologies for Regional Development in Ireland*, a paper delivered at the Regional Studies Association Conference, Maynooth, (September 1995).

40. Quoted in Commins and Keane *op. cit.*

41. Deegan J. and Dineen D. A. *Tourism Policy and Performance, the Irish Experience*, (1997), noted the importance of niche markets in rural tourism and benefits for local craft, food and other supply enterprises.

- *Limited Employment Opportunities:* recent studies⁴² have highlighted low pay and long hours in certain sectors of the tourism industry, particularly catering and hotels; employment in the sector is largely seasonal; surveys of hotel employment carried out in 1992 for the tourism plan showed that employees in the sector tend to be either young people (aged 15-18) or married women; in contrast to the seasonal workforce, the managerial/specialist staff are not generally recruited locally in rural areas; working conditions are particularly difficult for people with family responsibilities as staff are liable to be called in at short notice;
- *Under-representation of Women in Decision-making:* despite the predominance of women in the sector, the role of women has only recently begun to be explored; while women are the principal initiators of tourism services on farms, they are in general under-represented on locally elected decision-making bodies which control the funding of tourism projects⁴³;
- *Exclusion of Low-Income Households:* these households are inhibited from the provision of simple tourist accommodation due to the costs and requirements involved for registration purposes;
- *Self-Catering Accommodation:* in the rural tourism sector, there is increasing demand for such accommodation; low income households are, however, excluded because the demand for sites and houses has unbalanced the property market and inflated prices; while there is considerable interest in this type of development, the lack of grant aid and restrictive planning is a major disincentive; and
- *Investment in capital-intensive projects:* a feature of the last Operational Programme for Tourism was the promotion of Ireland's natural and cultural heritage as a tourism product, with support for the development of interpretative services; research⁴⁴ has shown, however, that such amenities have little direct economic impact; these facilities offer little prospect of employment or training for local people as many enterprises are private and family run; more generally, there is an absence of social inclusion or equality objectives within this Operational Programme and of indicators to measure progress in this regard.

42. Byrne et al., *Rural Tourism and Cultural Identity in the West of Ireland*, (1993) and *Perceptions of Employment, Turnover and Training in the Tourism Industry* CERT, (1996).

43. O'Connor, P., *Invisible Players? Women, Tourism and Development in Ballyhouna*, University of Limerick, (1996).

44. Deegan J. and Dineen D., *The Employment Effects of Irish Tourism Projects in Perspectives on Tourism Policy*, (1992).

- 3.47 To achieve maximum benefits to the local community, maintain and enhance environmental quality, generate social inclusion and provide a good experience to visitors in rural areas the Forum **recommends** that consideration should be given to:
 - developing greater career opportunities for those employed in the industry;
 - providing opportunities for people on low incomes to benefit financially and socially;
 - integrating the industry with fishing, farming and the environment and local culture; and
 - appropriately targeted and focused marketing.

- 3.48 In this regard, the Forum makes the following **recommendations**:

Provide Development Workers to advise, encourage and give technical assistance to low-income households and disadvantaged groups in rural areas; this should be aimed at capacity-building among part-time seasonal workers, generating an awareness of local resources, helping individuals and communities to identify projects with low entry costs, and a high labour input; for example, using local interpreters and story tellers as an alternative to audio-visual material, supporting initiatives brought forward by women and other groups experiencing social exclusion, and nurturing project developers in the initial stages; the experience of the Northern Ireland Rural Community Network I (which fosters tourism projects specifically to include those normally excluded from the development process) should be noted and assessed as a possible model;

Pay and working conditions for part-time seasonal employees; the Forum welcomes the commitment in the *Partnership 2000* agreement to a renewed information campaign on minimum rates of pay, a review and updating of enforcement procedures as well as a review of the effectiveness of Joint Labour Committees;

Exclusion of low-income households: inclusive development strategies are needed for these households entailing, inter alia, their involvement in discussions and decisions on tourism policy; their representation on decision-making bodies at regional and national level through organisations which are well established and can represent their interests; a review of the costs and restrictive conditions for registration purposes, and the development of a new category of basic camping site to allow landowners with limited resources to provide this service;

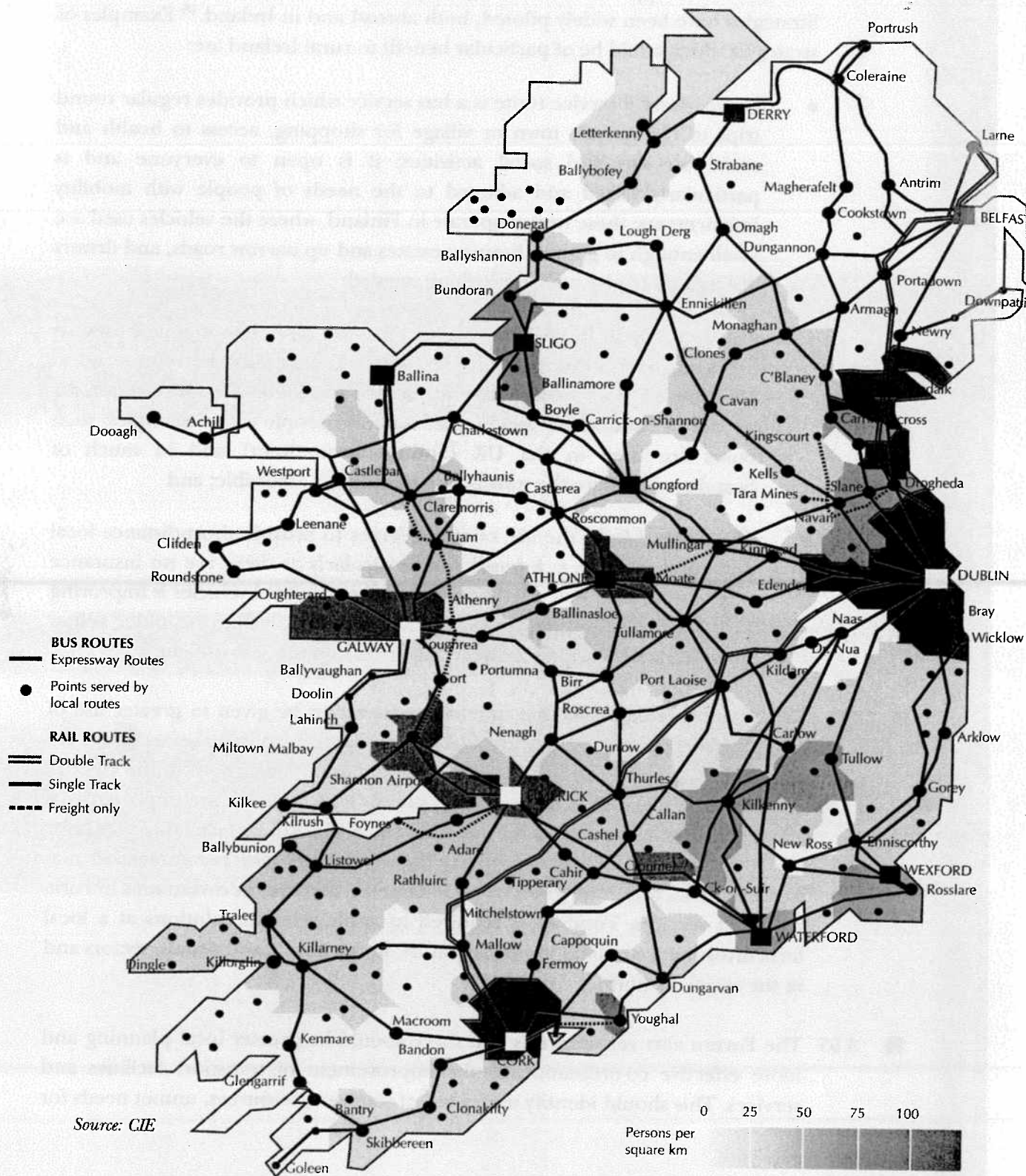
Carry out a socio-economic impact analysis of current tourism policy on low-income groups as part of the evaluation of the current Operational Programme; this Programme should develop clear objectives and measures for these target groups.

Transport

- 3.49 The availability of transport as a means of access to public and private services and places of work is a major issue for people living in rural areas. The centralisation of service provision means that transport plays an important role in accessing services such as health care and in the social integration of people living away from major centres of provision. The absence of public transport is, therefore, one of the major determinants of social exclusion in rural areas.
- 3.50 The crucial role of transport has already been pinpointed in Section II of the Report. The lack of transport was the key and common factor for all groups. The limitations of public passenger services mean that rural dwellers who do not have access to a car are severely restricted by lack of access to services and facilities. Even for those who can manage the acquisition and maintenance of a car, the distances to be travelled for some rural dwellers means that transport costs are a significant impediment to mobility and inclusion. In addition, poor road conditions in many isolated areas lead to transport difficulties, with or without a car. Completion of the 1994-1999 roads investment programme (see para. 3.56) should be directed, inter alia, at improving the rural road network and achieving a regional balance in provision.
- 3.51 There has been a significant erosion of public transport networks in rural areas in recent years. Budgetary constraints have resulted in the termination of unprofitable routes. It is clear from the map overleaf that significant areas of the western half of the country do not have direct access to national routes. In certain areas, notably Donegal, Connemara, West Cork and Kerry, points served by local routes are few and far between. Parts of Sligo, Longford, Roscommon, and the Galway/Tipperary border are similarly disadvantaged. Even where public services exist, frequency may be low, and since many people in rural areas live miles from existing routes, public transport is not an option.
- 3.52 Although it is recognised that the “availability of rail and bus services is essential to the economic, social and cultural well-being and development of the State”,⁴⁵ commercial considerations and the need to reduce CIÉ subvention levels prevents the Group (Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann) from extending services to areas of low population density. However, a number of pilot schemes for the provision of local transport services are in place and CIÉ consider that this approach could be further developed.

45. Paper submitted to the Forum by the Department of Transport, Energy and Communications.

National Rail and Bus Routes



Source: CIE

3.53 There has been a considerable amount of research undertaken over the past 20 years in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand to understand the role of transport and how it affects the lives of people in rural areas. It is clear that innovative approaches to transport provision are required in rural areas. Strategies have been widely piloted, both abroad and in Ireland.⁴⁶ Examples of strategies which could be of particular benefit to rural Ireland are:

- *Service routes:* a service route is a bus service which provides regular round trips to the nearest town or village for shopping, access to health and social services and social activities; it is open to everyone and is particularly suited and adapted to the needs of people with mobility impairments; these routes operate in Finland, where the vehicles used are small enough to go into housing estates and up narrow roads, and drivers are trained to give assistance where needed;
- *Post buses:* these involve the use of buses to carry passengers as well as collecting and delivering mail; the buses run on a published route and to a scheduled timetable; they could provide a valuable transport option for people in rural areas, and in particular for people with disabilities; such buses are used in the UK (Sittingbourne, Kent) and in much of Scandinavia, where the transport is wheelchair accessible; and
- *Use of School buses:* the use of school buses to provide short-distance local and rural services, is a possibility, particularly as there are no insurance obstacles to such extended use; the quality of school vehicles is improving as a result of the company's programme of replacing the older yellow buses and of bringing existing rural buses into the school fleet.

■ 3.54 The Forum **recommends** that urgent consideration be given to greater use of school buses, perhaps in the form of service route or post buses as described above. Preferential rates of taxation which apply to school buses should continue to apply if the buses are used for rural services. Future improvements to the school bus fleet should involve introducing buses with suitable access for people with disabilities and mobility problems. It is also **recommended** that urgent consideration be given to some targeted increase in investment in rural transport services. Funding is required to apply relevant solutions at a local level involving a combination of operators, in the public and private sectors and in the social economy.

■ 3.55 The Forum also **recommends** that there should be greater local planning and more effective co-ordination in the improvement of transport facilities and services. This should identify under-use of transport resources, unmet needs for

46. Pilots in North-West Conuemara and in Co. Kilkenny.

transport and the effective expenditure of financial resources. This would involve a local transport resource audit, covering not only public transport but also transport operated by Health Boards, school buses, voluntary organisations and private operators. It should also involve a local financial audit to examine expenditure on passenger transport and all transport services purchased in the area. Planning mechanisms should be developed at regional and local level to carry out these audits and the co-ordination of local transport resources needs to be developed to contribute to more effective transport provision. This should involve all relevant actors in the brokerage of various transport operators via a single booking agency or the establishment of a local transport purchasing agency to combine the budgets of State Agencies to purchase transport on a contract basis.

- 3.56 In recent years, Government capital spending on infrastructure projects essential for future growth has fallen relative to GNP. To ensure the economy has the capacity to grow and meet the employment needs of the future, the Government must not restrict necessary investment. Improving the roads network will make a significant contribution to socially-inclusive rural renewal. The long-term objective should be to build transport and logistics systems to world class standards so as to ensure the competitiveness of our industry, services and tourism sectors well into the next century. For this purpose, a strategic approach involving Government and business working together is required to ensure completion of the 1994-1999 programme of investment amounting to £2.5 billion; to create a “seamless” infrastructure system to UK/Continental destinations and strategic transport links on the island of Ireland; and to encourage private sector participation in infrastructure programmes so as to ensure faster completion of strategic routes.

Housing

- 3.57 The most striking feature of the Irish housing system is the dominance of home ownership, which now accounts for about 80 per cent of tenures. About 9 per cent of houses are rented privately. Although the local authority sector accounted for 25 per cent of tenures in the mid 1970s, it now accounts for 11 per cent of house tenures. At present, local authorities are the owners or landlords of about 95,000 houses. Relatively low levels of investment in the sector throughout the 1980s has compounded the problems of local authority estates. Lack of adequate and appropriate accommodation for the Traveller community has already been referred to in Section II of the Report.
- 3.58 Housing policies in rural areas should continue to have a greater emphasis on smaller estates and more “*specific instance*” (or stand alone) housing. To avoid reinforcing trends of depopulation, people should be housed within their own geographical location. This would have the added benefit of maintaining access to existing support systems. Communal facilities on estates, such as staffed

resource centres and playgrounds have a central contribution to make to the quality of life on housing estates. A rolling development plan should be prepared on the basis of inter-agency co-operation, to address the needs of communities on local authority estates, through a priority estates programme which would emphasise refurbishment of housing to up-to-date standards, especially in relation to heating and insulation, which would include an estate budget for communal facilities and would prioritise and resource tenant participation.

- 3.59 The Government's *Plan for Social Housing* (1991) and *Social Housing – The Way Ahead* (1995) have given greater importance to improving the management of local authority housing and, in particular, to involving tenants as partners in the running of their estates, rather than treating them as the source of the problem. As a further development, the Forum welcomes the publication in December last of the *First Report of the Housing Management Group* which contains best practice guidelines for local authorities in the area of housing management. These guidelines are aimed at promoting new approaches to the delivery of housing services with the emphasis on service quality, improving communication between authorities and their tenants and making the management of the housing service more responsive to individual needs.
- 3.60 The Forum welcomes moves to include tenants in making decisions about local authority housing schemes. However, it should be stressed that the problems experienced in local authority estates are not only housing problems but also problems evolving from multiple disadvantage in economic, educational and occupational terms, which happen to manifest most graphically in the public housing system. Estate management strategies will not of themselves resolve these broader problems and the solution to these lies through securing the inclusion of tenants in broader economic and social development policies and measures. Estate management can contribute to empowering local tenants to improve their environment but, to be successful, this must be combined with investment in community development strategies.
- 3.61 There are particular problems in the home ownership sector in rural areas which also need to be addressed. These relate to inflated property prices as a result of the demand for second homes in scenic, and particularly coastal, areas, thus making it more difficult for local people to buy land and build their own homes. Where problems arise in obtaining planning permission in such areas, there is a need for a sensitive approach which takes full account of social need while at the same time taking into account legitimate environmental concerns. The establishment of local consultative fora in rural scenic areas could help resolve such conflicts and ensure a more sustainable and inclusive approach to housing and to other land use and planning issues in the countryside.

- 3.62 Many families in rural areas live in poorly insulated damp houses without heating, other than a solid fuel range in the kitchen, and the necessary resources to improve their housing situation. This was referred to in Section II, with particular reference to older people. The Forum **recommends** that the existing refurbishment programme should be improved and targeted on “*specific instance*” (stand alone) local authority houses and on poor quality private houses occupied by low income families.
- 3.63 Finally, the Forum looks forward to the implementation of the national strategy for the accommodation of Travellers which has been announced by the Department of the Environment.

Application of Basic Principles to EU measures

- 3.64 The Community Support Framework 1994-1999 and the National Development Plan 1994-1999 are the basis upon which Structural Fund investments are made in Ireland. They provide important insights into the objectives for current policies of relevance to rural areas. The National Development Plan identifies that:

“The principal objectives of the agriculture, rural development and forestry sectors will be the achievement of high levels of efficiency, quality, market orientation and competitiveness in all areas of agriculture and food production, the continued development of the forestry sector and ensuring the necessary supports to secure a vibrant rural society”.
- 3.65 According to the Community Support Framework these objectives will involve action in diversification of on-farm production, improved processing and marketing of agricultural produce, development of the non-farm sectors and income maintenance in the less-favoured areas.
- 3.66 The Operational Programmes for industry, tourism, and transport also have an important contribution to make to the renewal of rural areas. The Community Support Framework states that “*there will be a fully integrated approach for the food industry which will combine EAGF, ERDF and ESF funds*”. It states that “*Tourism is also a powerful instrument of regional policy, assisting in raising incomes and providing employment in the country’s more remote and poorer regions*”. It also states that “*improvements will also be made on certain other national primary and on national secondary and non-national roads which make a significant contribution to the functioning of the economy*”.
- 3.67 The Forum readily acknowledges, of course, the significant contribution being made by EU structural funding in strengthening our economy’s productive capacity, raising skill levels and in boosting our employment-creation efforts. But these benefits need to be more evenly spread and, in this regard, the Forum **recommends** that the Mid-term Review should rectify this situation

through setting equality objectives in all these Operational Programmes, putting in place indicators to measure the achievement of these objectives, a refocusing of measures targeted at social exclusion and to enhance the inclusiveness of mainstream measures, and an expansion of the representation on the Monitoring Committees.

Health Services

3.68 Health care is a key issue in rural areas in terms of both adequacy and access. The availability of community care services is very important for people living in rural areas and particularly so for older people, people with a disability and for young families.

3.69 The National Health Strategy⁴⁷, which sets out fundamental changes to the present system, acknowledges that:

“the principle of equity imposes a particular obligation upon the health services to pay special attention to geographic areas or population groups (such as Travellers) where the indicators of health status are below average.”

Examples of possible approaches to paying special attention to these categories are listed:

- giving priority to disadvantaged areas in deciding the location of Health Centres; this is already underway but needs to be accelerated;
- developing “Community Mother” programmes to support mothers in need of assistance and advice; and
- designing health promotion programmes specifically for the groups concerned.

3.70 Under the Strategy, there will be a specific policy of targeting resources towards areas or groups with low health status and giving them priority in the development of services. The Health Boards will be required to identify “health development sectors” in each region on the basis of indicators of health status and social problems. The Forum, in welcoming the emphasis on disadvantaged areas wishes to emphasise, however, that in the interests of transparency and inclusion, there should be consultation on the indicators selected to determine areas of disadvantage.

47. *Shaping a Healthier Future*, Department of Health, (1994).

- 3.71 Community-based healthcare strategies based on primary healthcare models have a particular contribution to make to improved access to health care services and control over health resources at local level in rural areas. The Forum **recommends** that Health Boards should promote such an approach in partnership with relevant community groups. This should build on pilot initiatives already developed in this area and should link into the cluster approach and mobile services previously referred to. This would aid and enhance targeting strategies.

Education

- 3.72 Education has a particularly important and key role to play in improving the life chances of young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children born into disadvantaged households or who live in deprived areas are at greater risk of educational failure and subsequent labour market exclusion. The connection between poor educational qualifications and poverty becomes more pronounced over time, reinforcing the cycle of poverty and inequality.
- 3.73 The Forum's recently-published Report on Early School Leavers and Youth Unemployment deals in detail with the topic of educational disadvantage, in both rural and urban areas. This Report, quoting from a study by Kellaghan et al⁴⁸, highlighted that, and contrary to the general perception, rural areas⁴⁹ have the highest level of disadvantage (60.7 per cent) with just under 40 per cent for urban areas. While the greatest distribution of disadvantaged pupils is in rural areas, yet Dublin is the area that is best served under the Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage.
- 3.74 The key areas where intervention is required are:
 - *early childhood education*: although all of the research points to the need for early intervention, such education services are largely non-existent in rural areas; this gap must be rectified and the practical aspects addressed; for this purpose, various forms of provision should be considered such as mobile education units to cater for those living in isolated areas, development of groups through co-operation with day-time women's groups and women's organisations engaged in education and training activities e.g. Irish Country Women's Association; development of pre-school services attached to primary schools based on the cluster concept used to share educational services between primary schools;

⁴⁸. Kelleghan, Weir, O'hUallachain and Morgan, *Educational Disadvantage in Ireland*, (1995).

⁴⁹. Defined in the study as areas with populations of less than 10,000 people.

- *primary education:* rural primary schools should be enabled to provide disadvantaged students with a package of services including small classes to allow teachers time to individualise learning for students, remedial education teachers, resource teachers and home-school liaison teachers; rural schools should have library/resource room facilities to give students opportunities for learning which they may not have access to in the home; consideration should be given to improving the range of subjects on offer in small rural primary schools, particularly with regard to the teaching of European languages, and to enhancing the mobile school library services in isolated rural areas; and
 - *second-level:* the range of recommended interventions includes the elements referred to above i.e. small class size, adequate numbers of teachers, remedial education teachers, guidance and counselling services, home-school-liaison teachers; in addition, because of the diversity of the second-level curriculum, specific interventions are required to ensure that appropriate programme choice is provided to students; small schools of 300 students or less face particular problems in terms of their ability to provide a broad curriculum; they are not allocated full-time remedial education teachers or guidance counsellors and are also restricted in the range of subjects and programmes they can provide due to strict Departmental pupil-teacher appointment ratios; lack of subject and programme choice has negative consequences for all students but particularly for disadvantaged students for whom mainstream programmes are frequently not suitable.
- 3.75 Moreover, the response to the needs of disadvantaged rural students, at both primary and post-primary levels, must be multi-faceted if such students are to have access to the type of services available to similar students in urban areas and, in this regard, the Forum **recommends** that this should include:
- flexibility in teacher allocation to ensure that all schools have adequate numbers of teachers to deliver a sufficiently broad curriculum to meet the needs of all students;
 - the allocation of greater numbers of specialist teachers – remedial-education teachers, guidance counsellors, resource teachers – to rural primary and post-primary schools;
 - flexibility in the provision of educational services in primary and post-primary schools e.g. the provision of mobile educational libraries, career guidance teachers, peripatetic specialist teachers and teachers with specialist skills, e.g. in information technology, mobile child assessment clinics and education psychological services;

- development of services to enable rural schools to share educational services on the cluster model currently in operation between primary schools; for this model to work, the “host” schools must have adequate accommodation and teachers should have access to phones and other office facilities for efficient sharing of resources; the development of information technology networks between rural schools presents untold opportunities for the sharing of teaching expertise;
- partnerships between schools and parents and local communities should be fostered; as noted in the EU Report on *Measures to Combat Failure at School* (1994), school partnerships with parents are critical in any strategy to combat educational disadvantage; in rural areas, such partnerships are harder to create and maintain because of the dispersal of the population and the absence of facilities for community activities; community education programmes similar to those which operate in other EU countries should be supported;
- parents in rural areas require specific services such as transport and child-minding facilities if they are to get involved in such activities; school transport services should be developed to facilitate parent’s involvement in the life of the school including adult education activities provided in the school; greater flexibility in the school transport service (see the sub-section on *Transport*) would also facilitate disadvantaged rural students to participate in homework clubs and other school-based activities; and
- school-community partnerships for raising levels of educational participation and achievement are well established in continental Europe; such partnerships include co-operation by business and civic bodies in making available leisure and sports facilities to disadvantaged youth; these facilities are not available to the majority of disadvantaged rural youth and initiatives should be developed to promote the greater availability of such facilities in rural communities.

3.76 The Forum recognises, of course, the public expenditure implications and costs involved in the above but these could be reduced through making greater efforts to arrange for small schools, especially at the secondary level, to share staff, science laboratories, libraries and learning aids as well as developing distance-learning techniques. Finally, proposed school amalgamations should be thoroughly assessed as regards the economic and social implications for the viability and development of local communities. In this regard, particular account should be taken of the fact that most OECD countries are favouring the retention of small primary schools on social, environmental and educational grounds as well as maintaining many secondary schools at the minimum size required to deliver a balanced curriculum.

Labour Markets

3.77 In addition to the problems of unemployment in rural areas, underemployment is a particular feature of labour markets in these areas. While only limited data is available, the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) indicates that underemployment is more prevalent in the less-developed regions, as Table 3.2 shows. For the State as a whole, 20 per cent of those who are in part-time employment regard themselves as underemployed. This rises to 26 per cent for the Midland region, but is lower than 20 per cent for the Mid-West, Dublin and the West regions. According to the LFS, unemployment is lowest in the Mid-West and highest in the Dublin region.

Table 3.2
Underemployment and Unemployment By Region

Region	Underemployment as % of Part-time Employment	Unemployment as % of Economically Active Persons
Mid-West	16.5	9.1
Dublin	17.7	13.6
West	18.4	10.2
Mid-East	20.9	12.3
South-West	21.3	12.4
Border	23.9	11.4
Midland	26.4	10.8
South-East	26.3	13.1
State	20.4	12.2

Source: *Labour Force Survey* (1995).

3.78 Underemployment is related to the availability of work, and whether that work is part-time or full-time. Temporary, part-time and short-term contract work is becoming much more significant in terms of job creation, as Table 3.3 shows⁵⁰.

50. The Regions used by Forfás do not correspond directly to those used for the LFS.

Table 3.3
Increases in Employment in Forfás Companies, 1988 - 1995

Region	Permanent, Full-time Employment (% increase)	Temporary, Part-time, Short-term and Contract Employment (% increase)
Mid-West	5.4	521.2
West	20.1	36.9
East	16.7	145.3
South-West	17.2	100.1
North- East	16.2	36.2
Donegal	24.3	269.0
North-West	16.2	155.5
South-East	2.5	101.7
Midlands	8.1	202.9
State	13.2	129.8

Source: *Forfás Annual Report (1995)*.

3.79 The smaller size of rural labour markets means that there are fewer alternatives available to job seekers and there is a relatively greater chance that the initial loss of a job could result in long-term unemployment. In a situation of limited employment opportunities, social groups having access to information about vacancies and recruitment have an advantage in obtaining employment. The EU Commission, in a recent review of our employment services⁵¹, have pointed out that for manual workers, particularly unskilled and semi-skilled workers, personal contacts and informal methods are most important means of recruitment in this country.

- 3.80 To overcome the limitations of rural labour markets and improve the availability and quality of training and work experience programmes, the Forum **recommends**, that:
 - additional places on the *Jobs Initiative* should be extended to rural areas and targeted at areas with significant levels of unemployment and underemployment;
 - the Area Allowance (Enterprise) Scheme which is currently confined to the designated Partnership Areas should be extended and similarly targeted as above; this should be operated in harmony with the Back-to-Work-Allowance Scheme;

⁵¹. *Employment Observatory*, Annual Report No. 26, EU Directorate-General V.

- the most effective model of delivery for the Local Employment Service in rural areas should be promoted by the Department of Enterprise and Employment in the light of the forthcoming Forfás evaluation;
- rural CE programmes should be upgraded to the highest level of training and work experience should be a priority for FÁS;
- FÁS travel allowances for training courses, including those under CE training grants, should be reviewed, with a view to establishing more equitable access to quality training in rural and urban areas; and
- FÁS should review the minimum number of participants required for classes in rural areas so that training will reach the maximum number of those in need.

■ 3.81 The rural labour market can only function effectively for those experiencing social exclusion if there is a significant increase in the number of jobs available. Under the terms of the *Partnership 2000* agreement, provision is made for the establishment of a Working Group to undertake a detailed examination of the potential of the social economy, both in terms of employment and also in the supply of services such as childcare, care for the elderly and services to improve the quality of life in disadvantaged areas. As part of this exercise, the Forum **recommends** that consideration be given to developing initiatives for provision of various services in rural areas where depopulation and isolation mean that criteria of strict commercial viability could not be met and that the Department of Enterprise and Employment set up a social economy unit to support this end. Existing FÁS enterprise schemes and the Department of Social Welfare resources could be harnessed for the development of the social economy in these areas through new support packages. LEADER could also be stimulated and resourced to promote social economy enterprises. Community-based tourism and transport initiatives could also be encouraged and resourced under the relevant Operational Programmes. Issues of matching funding requirements would have to be resolved so that those who do not have resources are not excluded.

Provision of Public Services

3.82 Section II of the Report has highlighted the need for improved service provision for those experiencing social exclusion in rural areas. The priority services for all groups are transport, health, education and with childcare and housing of particular interest to specific groups.

■ 3.83 There are two dimensions to the provision of such services in rural areas: bringing people to the services (access); and bringing services to people (delivery). In the first case, improved transport and infrastructure is required to

facilitate access to existing services. In the second, specific measures need to be taken to make services more mobile, and to bring them to excluded and isolated communities. In both cases, the Forum **recommends** that the provision of services should be supported and developed on the basis of the cluster model. The clustering of services such as health and education provision would provide a fixed location or hub to which transport could be provided (access). This would also facilitate the development of a system of mobile health, education and training services (delivery). Some elements of this approach are already in place, with the Department of Education having introduced the concept of clusters for the provision of educational services in rural areas, while FÁS is making arrangements to provide mobile services in some rural locations.

3.84 The improvement of access to and delivery of services is a priority under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) which is currently under way throughout the public service. The Forum has previously welcomed⁵² the Government's decision that all Departments should draw up plans for the phased implementation of the recommendations which were contained in its Report No. 6 on *Quality Delivery of Social Services*. A notable feature of this decision also is that progress in this area will be reported on annually to the Strategic Management Group of Departmental Secretaries and that the Forum will be kept informed of developments.

3.85 The Forum looks forward to the interim evaluation results of the Pilot Programme for the Delivery of Public Service in Rural Areas, commissioned by the Minister of State with responsibility for Western Development and Rural Renewal and its implications for the future design and delivery of these services.

- 3.86 Finally, the Forum **recommends** that the scheme of telephone grants for the elderly should be renewed and that (i) the installation fee should be deducted in instalments from the telephone bill, rather than charged up-front and (ii) consideration be given to introducing similar measures for other vulnerable groups living in isolated areas.

52. Forum Opinion No. 4, on the *Post-PCW Negotiations: A New Deal*, (August 1996).

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Section IV

**Institutional
Issues**

Institutional Issues

Current Institutional Arrangements

- 4.1 The success of policies for rural renewal and social inclusion depends crucially on the extent to which the institutions involved provide coherence, overall direction and support for such policies. At present, there is a large number of institutions involved in performing many diverse roles in support of rural development. These include the European Commission, Government Departments, State Agencies, Local Authorities, Regional Authorities, Regional Agencies (e.g. Údarás Na Gaeltachta, SFADCO), the Western Partnership Development Board, Area-based Partnership Companies and the County Strategy Groups. The main institutions involved, letting aside those established for EU Structural Funds purposes, are set out in Box 4.
- 4.2 There is a Minister of State with responsibility for Rural Development in the Department of Agriculture, but at least four other Ministers or Ministers of State have responsibility for some aspects of rural development. The fact that responsibility for Rural Development is located in the Department of Agriculture mirrors the arrangement at EU level, where the Commissioner for Agriculture is also the Commissioner for Rural Development, but this arrangement is not satisfactory and can lead to a confusion of Rural Development with Agricultural Development.
- 4.3 A number of improvements have been introduced in recent years and these will be enhanced further by developments underway such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Local Government Reform Programme, the *Partnership 2000* agreement and the Strategic Management Initiative. The arrangements as they stand at present still fall short, however, in realising the potential for more inclusive approaches to rural development. With so many institutions and agencies operating a variety of programmes, the absence of an agreed and clearly thought-out set of goals and an agreed overall strategic policy framework for the development of rural areas increases the risk that the combined set of policy measures will lack coherence and effectiveness, when implemented at the level of the rural area. This clearly signals the need for an integrated rural development policy framework and, in turn, the elaboration of a more supportive institutional framework.

4.4 The wide range of bodies involved in rural and local development reflects the development of bottom-up approaches, as a response to the centralising tendencies of national and EU policies, and intensive efforts have been made to establish, or re-establish, local identities. These approaches are also driven by a recognition of the need to give greater effect to the principle of subsidiarity by establishing local structures which facilitate participation by a wide range of interests. The experimentation with local development initiatives over recent years has been favourably reviewed by the OECD⁵³. However, it cannot be assumed that, because programmes are administered locally, resources will be targeted to those in greatest need. In reality, it is often those who are already well-resourced and have the capacity to link into new sources of public funds who benefit most. Requirements for matching funding present particular barriers in this regard.

Institutional Weaknesses

4.5 Weaknesses in institutional linkages, and in the capacity of the institutions themselves, limit the extent to which rural areas in general, and those experiencing social exclusion in particular, can benefit from rural development measures. A number of these weaknesses are discussed under the following headings:

- Top-down structure (including local government);
- Sectoral, compartmentalised policies and programmes;
- Economic development focus;
- Vertical and horizontal co-ordination;
- Regional structures; and
- Institutions which are not sufficiently inclusive.

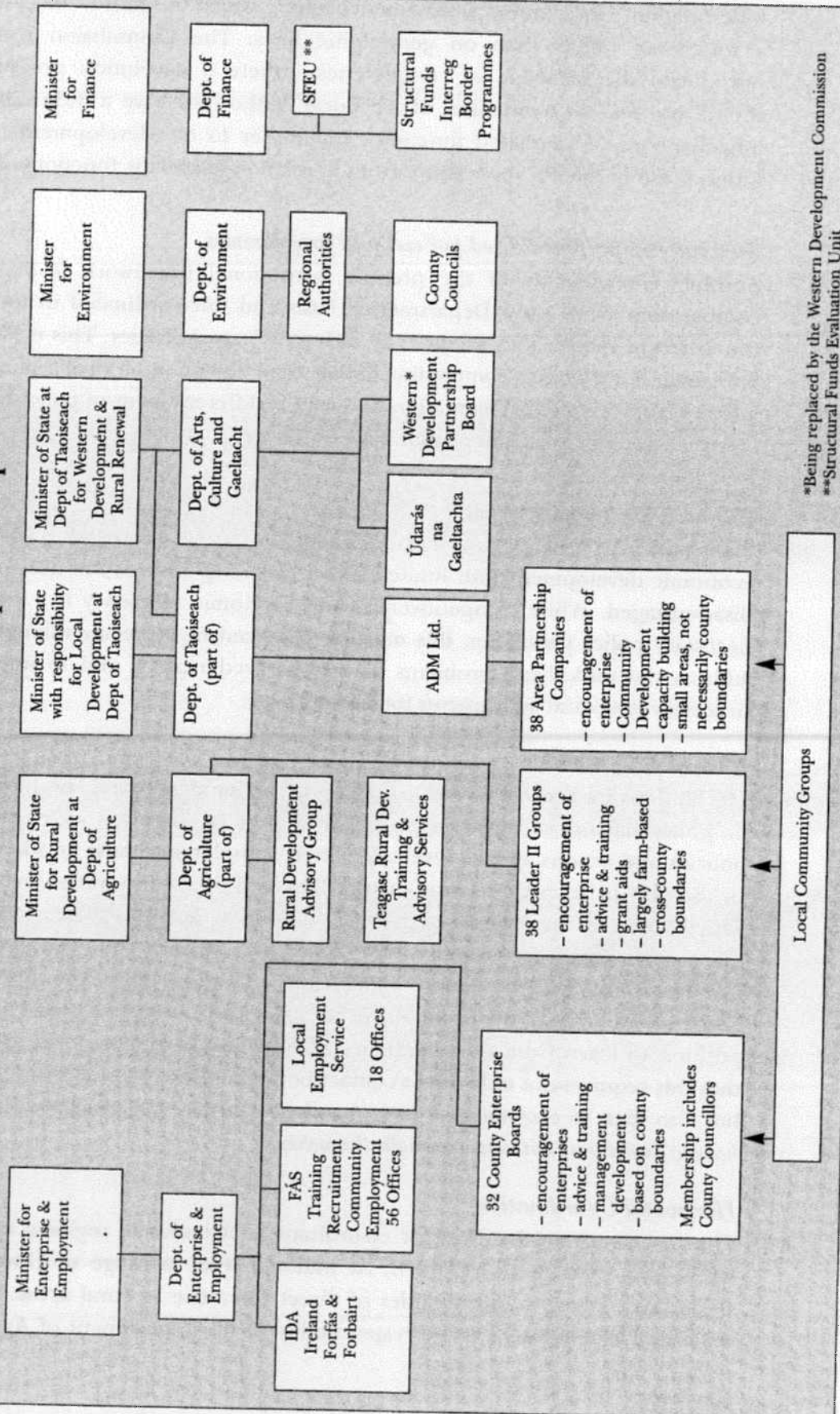
The Forum's comments on local government reform are outlined later on in this Section.

Top-down structure

4.6 Much of the current decision-making takes place within a top-down framework. This may diminish the potential for policy and provision to reflect and be responsive to local needs and local/regional contexts. The work of the Devolution Commission could make an important contribution to addressing this issue. The *Interim Report* of that Commission stresses the importance of accepting Local Authorities as multi-purpose bodies, having relationships with a

⁵³. Prof. Charles Sabel, *Ireland – Local Partnerships and Social Innovation*, OECD (1996).

BOX 4
Outline of Main Rural Development Groups



*Being replaced by the Western Development Commission
**Structural Funds Evaluation Unit

wide range of Government Departments among which business is allocated on a functional rather than on geographic lines. The Commission has also introduced the principle of completeness, where a devolution programme should not lead to a situation where Local Authorities have a wide range of miscellaneous or unrelated functions, but rather to the development of the widest possible role for these Authorities in relation to specific functional areas.

Sectoral, compartmentalised policies and programmes

- 4.7 Another characteristic of the present institutional framework is that it is compartmentalised on a Departmental basis and unco-ordinated in terms of the different spatial units adopted by different State Agencies. This is likely to encourage inter-agency competition rather than co-operation in the pursuit of scarce resources and fragmentation in terms of different areas of policy-making being carried out in isolation from one another.

Economic development focus

- 4.8 Plans and programmes have traditionally had a primary focus on generalised economic development with limited direct targeting towards the needs of the disadvantaged. While competitiveness and economic efficiency is a vital and necessary policy parameter, this must be balanced by a greater willingness to address the underlying problems of marginalised regions and to undertake necessary structural adjustments for this purpose.

Vertical Co-ordination

- 4.9 Mechanisms for vertical co-ordination of the national, regional and local levels of policy-making and service provision should be reviewed to ensure that policies and actions at each level adequately complement those at other levels. In the OECD Report on Local Partnerships and Social Innovation in Ireland, Sabel⁵⁴ presents an example of this from the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development, where he found that “*vertical co-ordination between the partnerships and central Government is ... faulty*”. This Report posed the challenge of vertical co-ordination in terms of central government being in a position to learn from the experience of local action and went on to suggest that this requires not only direct contact between institutions at different levels but also that “*to co-operate and learn from local activities, the administrations would have to decentralise authority internally themselves.*”

Horizontal Co-ordination

- 4.10 The horizontal mechanisms for co-ordination at national, regional and local levels also need to be reviewed. At national level, a range of Government Departments have responsibilities of direct relevance to rural areas. The fact that rural development is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture

54. Prof. Sabel, *op. cit.*

leads to confusion of rural development with agricultural development, at a time when agricultural activity is declining and this could inhibit the development of a more co-ordinated focus across Departments on the particular needs of different rural areas.

- 4.11 At a regional level, barriers to effective horizontal co-ordination have been identified in terms of the number of different regional boundaries used by different public agencies. The absence of a harmonised set of boundaries makes it very difficult to generate and analyse data for planning or evaluation purposes. The sectoral nature of policy-making identified above also hinders regional co-ordination where sectoral goals take priority over any regional policy goals.
- 4.12 At a local level there is a growing range of local development bodies alongside the local government system. The County Strategy Groups were an important institutional development to promote local level co-ordination. Many of the local development bodies are very recently established, so it will take time for effective models to emerge from this new experience.

Regional Structure

- 4.13 The *Interim Report* of the Devolution Commission and the subsequent Government Statement of August 1996 both identified the need for the establishment of a regional tier of government. In this regard, the Commission proposed that the Regional Authorities would have mainly co-ordinating functions which could be broadened to take account of developments in the regionalisation of public services.
- 4.14 However, a number of problems currently exist with regard to the operation of this regional dimension. There is a lack of public awareness of existing regional arrangements and so little motivation exists to enhance their role. Enhancing the role of regional authorities would require a transfer of power from other levels of government. This presents a major challenge.
- 4.15 The resources available to Regional Authorities are limited in human and financial terms. These Authorities are not directly elected and tend, therefore, to reflect a more local territorial rather than a regional focus. Statutory bodies organised on a regional basis tend to demonstrate little co-ordination, with remits carefully guarded and, as pointed out above, boundaries are often not coterminous.

Inclusive Institutions

- 4.16 The need to take into account more fully the interests of communities experiencing poverty and social exclusion has begun to be addressed through the creation of new participative institutions at national and local level. At

national level, institutions such as the Forum itself, the National Economic and Social Council and some of the Monitoring Committees set up under the EU Community Support Framework provide an important opportunity for a broad range of interests to formally influence policy. At local level, Partnership Companies, LEADER Groups and the County Enterprise Boards undertake a range of developmental roles, involving a cross-section of interests. These are important developments in creating a more inclusive approach to policy-making and represent a significant shift in the nature of governance in this country. However, a similar participative ethos and process needs to be strengthened within national/regional and local institutions with statutory responsibility for the development of policy and delivery of services of relevance to rural areas.

Local Government Reform

4.17 The Government's recently-published programme for reforming the local government system⁵⁵ lays down an agenda for change comprising:

- an enhanced role for democratically-elected councillors;
- a partnership approach and representation on Strategic Policy Committees of local interests such as industry, voluntary organisations, farmers and environmentalists;
- widening the role of local government with community and enterprise groups (at least half of whose membership will be drawn from local development bodies) taking on the present co-ordinating role of the County Strategy Groups and producing plans for integration of local government and local development;
- additional functions suitable for assigning to Local Authorities will be identified by the Devolution Commission;
- action to take account of services requiring co-operative efforts on a larger (regional) scale and to address service delivery where boundaries intersect;
- improving the quality of services and on serving customer needs; and
- a new system of funding, with the abolition of domestic water and sewerage charges, and local authorities to be assigned the full proceeds of motor taxation.

55. *Better Local Government – A Programme for Change* (19th December, 1996)

4.18 This programme, which addresses some of the issues outlined earlier on in this Section of the Report, has wide-ranging implications not only for the local authority system itself but also for the community and voluntary sector, the private sector, local development bodies (the Area Partnership Companies, LEADER Groups and the Enterprise Development Boards) and the Government itself. The Forum will be returning to these important issues in its future work. In its Opinion No. 4, the Forum has already highlighted the concern expressed by its Strand One Members on the transfer of power from elected to unelected local representatives (the “*democratic deficit*”).

4.19 In the meantime, the Forum particularly welcomes the emphasis in the programme on strengthening the democratic basis and functions of local government, the development of one-stop shops and the delivery of quality services from locations closer to the customer and notes also the introduction of a new system of funding of local authorities.

■ 4.20 Another noteworthy feature is the recognition given to the need for more effective co-ordination and for a more integrated and coherent policy framework at local level. However, the Forum very strongly **recommends** that the proposed integration of the local government system with that of local development bodies (Partnership Companies, LEADER Groups and the County Enterprise Boards) needs to be more fully assessed and debated and, in this regard, it wishes to point out the importance of ensuring that:

- the partnership approach, involving the voluntary and community sector, employers, trade unions and State Agencies is not undermined and that its distinctive functions are respected;
- duplication of roles must be avoided while at the same time recognising the principle of equality and complementarity between the two systems;
- preparation of local area plans should be underpinned by socially-inclusive strategies and measures in rural areas and on the basis of full participation and consultation with all the interests involved; and
- the one-stop shop should be developed to its maximum potential, including the development of community-based resources and local expertise, and taking into account the recommendations made in its Report No. 6.

Towards a more inclusive institutional system: Forum's Recommendations

4.21 A more effective and strategic institutional framework is required that can respond more fully to criteria such as equality, inclusiveness, effectiveness, accountability and subsidiarity and to address the weaknesses which were identified above. There are overlapping functions spread across at least four Government Departments, 38 LEADER II groups, 35 County Enterprise Boards, 38 Area Partnership Companies, County Strategy Boards, Regional Authorities, County Councils and a range of regional agencies.

4.22 There is a parallel need also for the adoption of a multi-dimensional concept of development. Under this approach to development, the primacy of short-term economic considerations is balanced by criteria such as long-term sustainability, participation, integration and inclusion. The principles which should underlie this are:

Inclusion

Regional Dimension

Equality Proofing

Community Development

Inclusive Framework for Integrated Spatial Planning

Horizontal Co-ordination

Vertical Co-ordination and

Representative and Participative Structures.

Inclusion

- 4.23 All institutions within this framework should develop work procedures and policy-making processes that allow for the participation of organisations that articulate the interests of those communities experiencing social exclusion in rural areas, especially where decisions made are relevant to these communities.

Regional Dimension

- 4.24 Regional planning needs are a key area of development and this needs to be promoted and delivered in a partnership model. The existing weak regional structure is the nearest link to a national policy on rural and regional development. Balanced development requires a regional dimension in terms of institutions to develop and implement policy. The features of such a dimension should include:
 - the allocation of resources and roles to Regional Authorities which would give responsibility and capacity to engage in regional planning and the implementation of regional-level initiatives;
 - a review of the regional structure of Government Departments and statutory bodies and the development of mechanisms for their co-ordination and engagement in integrated and coherent planning; and

- the development of participative processes of planning and work at this level which would engage the traditional social partners and the community and voluntary sector.

Equality Proofing

- 4.25 In previous reports, the Forum **recommended** that all Government policies and programmes should be subjected to equality proofing in their design and implementation. In particular, in its Report No. 10, *Equality Proofing Issues*, the Forum has highlighted a range of administrative procedures that should be adopted to ensure that institutional policy-making and service delivery seek to achieve equality of access, participation and outcome. The development of these procedures at all levels of the institutional framework would assist in alleviating rural social exclusion.

Community Development

- 4.26 Community development has a vital role to play in tackling social exclusion. But a supportive community development infrastructure needs to be put in place and with resources provided at local level as part of the institutional framework. The Department of Social Welfares Community Development Programme (CDP) is an important contribution in this area, working at a local level to tackle social exclusion. There are few CDPs in rural areas, however, and these should now be expanded to ensure that a more adequate infrastructure is in place.
- 4.27 It is essential that women, disabled people and marginal groups be included within the institutional structures for rural development, if these structures are to address social inclusion in the context of rural development.

Inclusive Framework for Integrated Spatial Planning

- 4.28 The conventional approach to development planning is for the most part organised from the centre along sectoral lines and targeted towards crudely-defined rural and urban areas, with only limited scope for local involvement. This approach needs to be refined to take account of different types of rural areas, the linkages between rural and urban areas, settlement patterns and distribution of the population, to analyse and more clearly define the objective of balanced regional and local development, and to consider the spatial implications of all policies and programmes in relation to specific objectives for rural renewal and socially-inclusive strategies and policies.

Procedures for Horizontal Co-ordination.

- 4.29 The Forum welcomes recent attempts to address the issues of co-ordination and integration. Mechanisms for horizontal co-ordination at county level were being put in place through the County Strategy Groups but, as mentioned above, these are now to be replaced by the Government's recent announcement on Community and Enterprise Groups. At regional level, the eight Regional

Authorities, established in 1994, have responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of public services. These initiatives are of recent origin and so it will be some time before the benefits of co-ordination will become evident. At regional level, there is an urgent need for all public agencies to review and harmonise their regional boundaries on the basis of those of the Regional Authorities. One of the most significant challenges continues to be to achieve horizontal co-ordination at a national level so as to ensure greater coherence between sectoral policies as well as seeking to ensure that the rural dimension of policies with a national coverage is addressed.

■ ***Procedures for Vertical Co-ordination***

4.30 Vertical co-ordination refers to co-ordination of activities undertaken by agencies operating at different levels. Clear channels of communication are required between the three levels, local to regional, local to national, and regional to national, and vice versa. Effective vertical co-ordination will also require a decentralisation of authority within institutions that have a presence at more than one level.

■ ***Representative and Participative Structures***

4.31 The current institutional framework contains representative and participative structures at all levels. In any rationalised and reorganised framework, it would be essential to ensure partnership and synergy between the different types of structures and to avoid any potential for lack of co-operation. This should be a product of discussion at each level, within a set of agreed, nationally-set parameters. Such parameters would include a commitment to complementary and cohesive action at each level, and within this a setting out of different roles, expertise, mandates and forms of accountability, and a focus on enhancing horizontal co-ordination.

Northern Ireland Institutions and Possibilities for Island-level and Cross-Border Co-operation

4.32 Finally, in the present context, it is instructive to turn to the institutional arrangements in Northern Ireland as they relate to rural development. These could provide valuable learning across similar experiences within different contexts as well as point up any potential for economies of scale to be realised through co-operation and/or harmonisation of approaches.

4.33 There is a formal hierarchy of responsibility for integrated rural development in Northern Ireland. The Minister for Agriculture is designated as Minister for Rural Development and administrative responsibility for Rural Development rests with his/her Department. The Rural Development Division of that Department administers EU rural development initiatives, promotes awareness in other Departments and Agencies on the needs of rural areas, and liaises with counterparts from the South on cross-border initiatives.

- 4.34 An advisory body and resource centre, the Rural Development Council (RDC), has been established outside central Government. Under the management of a broad spectrum of voluntary rural interests, the RDC acts as a source of expert advice and assistance to local groups engaged in the regeneration of rural areas. The interaction between the RDC and the Government is quite complex, involving a range of interests from Government Ministers through District Councils to local voluntary groups.
- 4.35 The stimulation of community-based rural development is central to the brief of the Rural Development Council. Five districts were organised to plan and implement the animation of local groups. At local community level, the Rural Community Network provides an independent voice outside government. This Network had (and continues to have) representation on the RDC, so providing representation for local community groups.
- 4.36 In 1995, a review of the then system was undertaken and resulted in a change and a stronger emphasis now being placed on community *economic* development. Key projects are required to have an economic focus. There has been a reduction in the number of community development workers funded by the RDC. Partly as a response to this, the Rural Community Network has become more involved in the community development work previously carried out in co-operation with the Rural Development Council.
- 4.37 The development plans of Ireland and Northern Ireland contain a common chapter on co-operation in EU Structural Fund assisted measures. Among the priority areas for co-operation at an island and a cross-border level are transport and communications infrastructure, the environment, tourism promotion and infrastructure, rural development, industrial development and human resources measures. These are all areas with a particular contribution to make to socially-inclusive rural renewal.
- 4.38 The document “*A New Framework for Agreement*” agreed by the British and Irish Governments in 1993 suggest that in future there will be a commitment to developing “*an agreed approach for the whole island in respect of the challenges and opportunities of the European Union*”.
- 4.39 An island approach to development strategies should unleash new growth which in turn could contribute to greater social inclusion. For this reason, North/South co-operation in the area of rural renewal should be based on mutual benefit and be committed to greater social inclusion. The challenges in developing such co-operation are great. Analysis of existing co-operation has highlighted its focus on disjointed projects rather on strategic policy-focused co-operation and its location at a cross-border with a limited but developing island level. Socially-inclusive rural renewal has much to gain from an effective and equitable island economy. However further evaluation is required in North/South co-operation in the context of increased policy harmonisation.

Section V

**Conclusions and
Core
Recommendations**

Conclusions and Core Recommendations

Conclusions

- 5.1 The introduction over the last few years of a wide range of initiatives and institutional structures to promote rural development in Ireland is to be welcomed but this has been hampered by the lack of a more integrated and strategic policy framework. Moreover, not all sections of the community have participated in the developments which have taken place and this attenuates the contribution which these initiatives can make to sustainable progress.
- 5.2 This Report has highlighted the distinctive features of social exclusion in rural areas, the impact of a number of key sectoral policies (transport, housing, health, education and labour market measures) in perpetuating such exclusion for vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, women, older people, Travellers, lone parents and people with a disability who are living in rural areas.
- 5.3 The Report contains a wide range of recommendations to address deficiencies in these policies. But, and even if these recommendations are accepted, this is not sufficient in itself unless these policies are incorporated and form part of a more integrated and multi-sectoral strategy and one which has as its core the better targeting and delivery of effective socially-inclusive rural renewal policies for these groups.
- 5.4 For this purpose, it is essential to have a vision of the future shape and direction of rural Ireland; that the policy formulation process is informed by a common understanding of the causes; that there is agreement on underlying principles; and that clearer commitments are given on what policies and strategies should seek to achieve in terms of promoting rural development and alleviating social exclusion.

Key Recommendations

- 5.5 Parallel with and complementary to the above, it is also essential to have a more integrated, supportive and strengthened institutional framework. The Forum's recommendations which are designed to address the weaknesses and gaps identified earlier and are underpinned by the set of basic principles outlined in the Introduction (Section I) of this Report are set out beneath.

- 5.6 The Forum makes **three key core recommendations** aimed at the development of more coherent and focused strategies and policies; more effective co-ordination and delivery of these policies and more supportive and integrated institutional structures. These recommendations are:
- enhancement of the **rural development** function of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry;
 - establishment of a **Standing Committee for Rural Development**; and
 - publication of a Government **White Paper on Rural Development**.

Minister/Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

- 5.7 At present, there is a wide dispersal of responsibility for various aspects of rural development across Ministers, Ministers of State, Departments, and State Agencies. On the basis of the discussions in the previous Section – and indeed throughout this Report – all the various aspects and policy issues involved in rural development should now be brought together and given a greater central focus and drive.
- 5.8 As a first step in this process, the Ministerial portfolio and that of his/her Department should be renamed as that of “*Agriculture and Rural Development*”. This would signal the commitment and priority which the Government attach to rural development and would also reflect developments at EU level where rural development initiatives are of increasing importance under the CAP. This would not involve any down-grading of the Minister’s role, or that of the Department, in dealing with agricultural matters proper or that of their central importance and role in the economic and social fabric of this country while food and forestry functions would also continue to be their responsibility.
- 5.9 Other advantages of this recommended change would be:
- direct representation at *Cabinet* level for rural development interests and issues;
 - provision of a central focus for rural development and renewal, and for policies to combat social exclusion;
 - creation of a Departmental or Divisional structure which would co-ordinate and liaise with other Departments and State Agencies; and
 - establishment of a unified system which would facilitate interaction with the European Commission on the CAP and on rural development policies and initiatives, which are of increasing importance in the EU context.

Standing Committee for Rural Development

5.10 This Standing Committee, which would report directly to Government, would have a wide membership, including representation from Departments and Agencies whose policies affect rural areas, as well as representatives of the “four pillars” under the *Partnership 2000* agreement viz. the farming organisations; community and voluntary organisations; trade unions; and employer and business organisations. The remit of the Standing Committee would be to offer independent advice on policy and institutional issues with particular reference to:

- enhancement of the contribution made by official policies to social inclusion in rural areas;
- co-ordination issues between the sectoral initiatives and policies of the various Government Departments and State Agencies;
- enhancement of vertical and horizontal linkages between representative institutions and participative organisations at all levels;
- assessment and monitoring of the impact on social inclusion in rural areas of mainstream national as well as rural-specific policies;
- liaising with rural development institutions in Northern Ireland and assisting towards greater co-ordination at cross-border and all-island levels; and
- co-ordination and liaising with the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the public service Strategic Management Initiative.

5.11 The work of the Committee (in the form of regular reports) should be published and available for debate in the Houses of the Oireachtas. Finally, the representatives of the State sector on the Committee would have a dual role to play in (i) working collectively within the Committee in discharging the tasks set out above; and (ii) working in their own Department/Agency as part of a unit responsible for ensuring that socially-inclusive rural renewal becomes an important and acceptable dimension of the policies and programmes of their respective Department or Agency.

White Paper on Rural Development

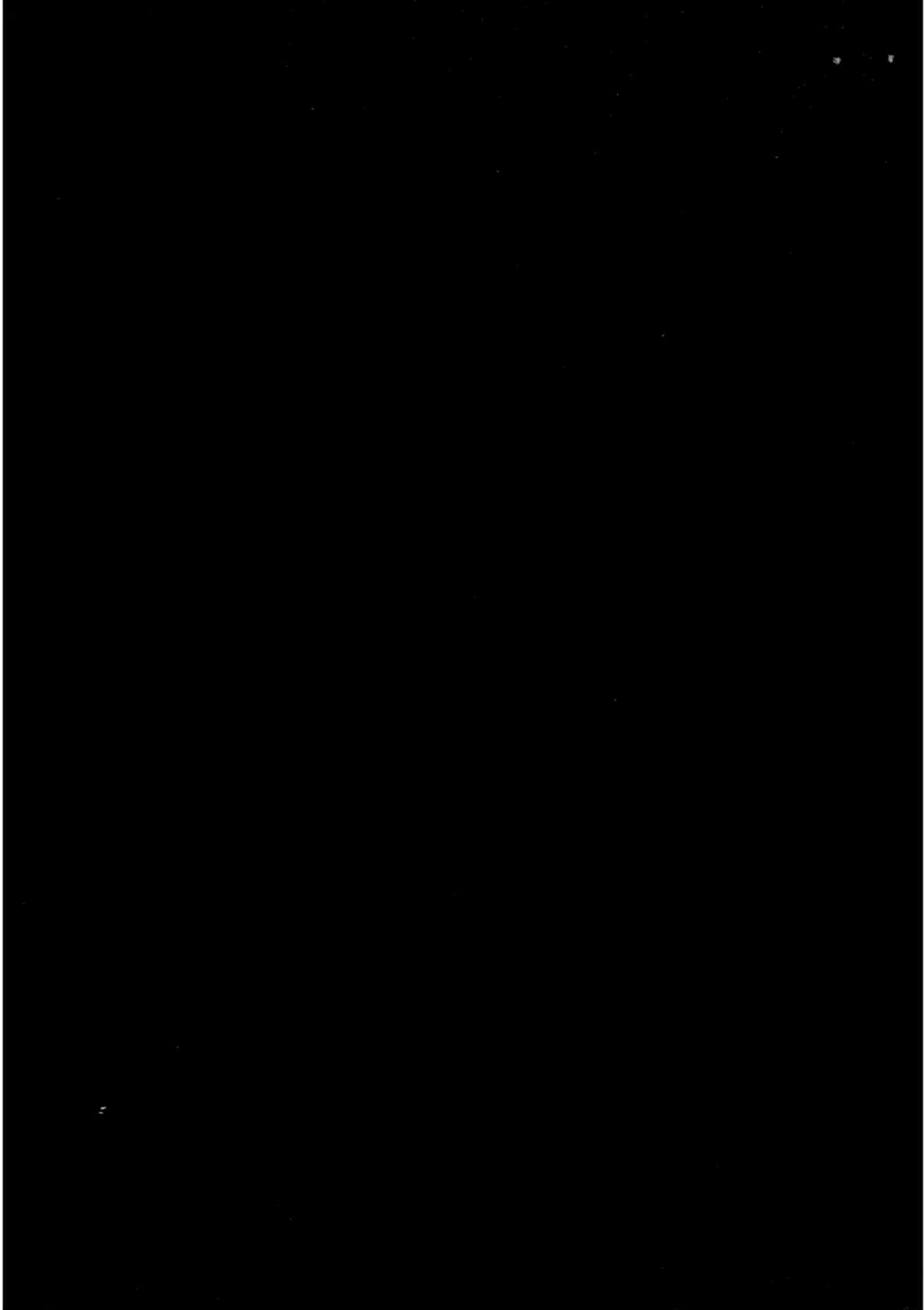
5.12 On the basis of this present Report by the Forum, the work of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Report by the Rural Development Advisory Group and on-going work under the Strategic Management Initiative and Local Government reform, the Government should prepare and publish a **White Paper on Rural Development**, with particular reference to the more effective

tackling of social exclusion in rural areas. This White Paper would serve, inter alia, to set out (i) a clearer vision of the type of rural society we wish to have and (ii) the policies, strategies and institutions needed for this purpose.

- 5.13 Such a clearly-articulated statement of rural development objectives/targets, and time-scales for their implementation in this White Paper would also provide a key focal point or benchmark in the policy formulation and implementation process as well as a framework to assist the above Standing Committee in its ongoing work.

Specific Recommendations

- 5.14 Finally, and for ease of reference, the more detailed specific policy recommendations which were made in earlier Sections are brought together and listed in outline form in the *Executive Summary* at the beginning of the Report.



Annexes

Annex 1

List of those who assisted in the preparation of this Report

Ms. Jacqui Browne, Disability Consultant
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Mr. John Higgins, Western Development Partnership Board
Irish Co-operative Organisation Society
Ms. Helen Johnston, Combat Poverty Agency
Ms. Judith Kiernan
Mr. Anthony Leddy, LEADER, Cavan/Monaghan
Mr. Graham Lighfoot, Transport Consultant
Mr. Barry Lynch, West Clare Development Resource Centre
Ms. Joan McGinley, Fisheries Consultant
Mr. Chris McNerney, Community Workers Co-Operative
Mr. Danny McNeill, Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland
Prof. Brian Nolan, ESRI
Ms. Máire O'Leary, Community Worker, Health Clinic, Letterkenny
Ms. Mary Lou O'Kennedy, Wexford Partnership
Dr. Patricia O'Hara, Callaghan Associates
Ms. Mary Owens, Irish Rural Link
Mr. Andy Storey, Economic Consultant
Mr. Peter Tiernan, Co. Leitrim Partnership Company
Dr. Mary Tubridy, Tourism Consultant
Prof. Jim Walsh, Dept. of Geography, Maynooth College
Mr. James Williams, ESRI

Annex 2

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:-
 - (i) Have a specific focus on:-
 - job creation and obstacles to employment growth;
 - long-term unemployment;
 - disadvantage;
 - equality and social justice in Irish society; and
 - policies and proposals in relation to these issues;
 - (ii) Make practical proposals on measures to meet these challenges;
 - (iii) Examine and make recommendations on other economic and social issues;
 - (iv) Review and monitor the implementation of the Forum's proposals and if necessary make further recommendations; and
 - (v) 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 3

Membership of the Forum

Independent Chairperson:	Maureen Gaffney
Government Representative:	Eithne Fitzgerald, T.D., Minister of State at the Office of the Tánaiste and at the Department of Enterprise and Employment
Chairpersons of the Standing Committees:	Dr. Eileen Drew Professor Donal Dineen
Oireachtas	
<i>Fianna Fáil:</i>	Martin Cullen, T.D. Chris Flood, T.D. Tom Kitt, T.D. Senator Willie Farrell Senator Marian McGennis Senator Paschal Mooney
<i>Fine Gael:</i>	John Connor, T.D. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. Senator Bill Cotter Senator Madeleine Taylor-Quinn
<i>Labour:</i>	Joe Costello, T.D. Senator Mary Kelly
<i>Progressive Democrats:</i>	Senator Cathy Honan
<i>Technical Group:</i>	Kathleen Lynch, T.D.
<i>Independent Senators:</i>	Senator Mary Henry
Social Partners	
<i>Trade Unions:</i>	Paula Carey Charlie Lennon Patricia O'Donovan Manus O'Riordan Tom Wall

Employer/Business Interests:

Mirette Corboy
David Croughan
Declan Madden
Aebhric McGibney
Aileen O'Donoghue

*Agricultural/Farming
Organisations:*

Mary Coleman
Ciarán Dolan
Mervyn Wynne
Monica Prendiville
Michael Slattery

“Third Strand”

Womens' Organisations:

Ursula Barry
Noreen Byrne
Cris Mulvey

Unemployed:

Mike Allen
Brendan Butler
Vacancy

Disadvantaged:

Niall Crowley
Mary Daniel
Eithne McNulty

Youth:

Gearóid O'Maoilmhichíl

Older People:

Breda Dunlea

People with a Disability:

Roger Acton

Environmental Interests:

Jeanne Meldon

Academics:

Fr. Seán Healy
Carmel Roulston

Secretariat

Director:

Seán O'hÉigeartaigh

Secretaries of the Standing
Committees:

Maeve Harold
Mary McKeon
John Palmer
Theresa Higgins
Liz Reason

Research/Administrator
Executive/Secretarial:

Annex 4

Forum Publications

(i) Forum Reports

Report No.	Title	Date
1.	<i>Negotiations on a Successor Agreement to the PESP</i>	November 1993
2.	<i>National Development Plan 1994-1999 – the proposed Local Development Programme</i>	November 1993
3.	<i>Commission on Social Welfare – Outstanding Recommendations</i>	January 1994
4.	<i>Ending Long-term Unemployment</i>	June 1994
5.	<i>Income Maintenance Strategies</i>	July 1994
6.	<i>Quality Delivery of Social Services</i>	February 1995
7.	<i>Jobs Potential of the Services Sector</i>	April 1995
8.	<i>First Periodic Report on the Work of the Forum</i>	May 1995
9.	<i>Jobs Potential of Work Sharing</i>	January 1996
10.	<i>Equality Proofing Issues</i>	February 1996
11.	<i>Early School Leavers and Youth Unemployment</i>	January 1997

(ii) Opinions

Opinion No. 1 (March, 1995) on the *Interim Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*.

Opinion No. 2 (January, 1996) on the development to-date of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*.

Opinion No. 3 (May, 1996) on *Long-term Unemployment Initiatives*.

Opinion No. 4 (August 1996) on the *Post-PCW Negotiations – A New Deal?*

Opinion No. 5 (December 1996) on the *Employment Equality Bill*.