

The Department and the EU

The Department delivers a number of EU programmes and interacts with the EU on a regular basis on policy, legislative and programme matters. EU Co-ordination in the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs is carried out by the *Corporate Co-Ordination, EU Affairs & Training Unit*. The main areas of EU activity are focussed on Rural Development, Equality and Social Inclusion areas. However, other sections within the Department also deal with EU issues. The Department has recently appointed a Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs Attaché based in Brussels (Mr Eddie Arthurs), who represents the Department's needs and requirements in the EU.

Outlined below are the key areas of EU involvement for the Department:

1. Diversity and Equality issues
2. Rural Development issues
3. Social Inclusion issues
4. Gender Equality issues
5. Drugs issues
6. Disability issues
7. Migrant Integration issues
8. Traveller and Roma issues

1. EU: Diversity and Equality Issues

The work of the Diversity and Equality Division in the Department is linked into the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council (Ministerial level), which in turn is serviced by the Social Questions Working Party at official level. Ireland's input into the work of the EPSCO Council is co-ordinated by D/ETI. However, a D/CEGA Minister may attend as the need arises and depending on the agenda.

Key Issues: Legislation

COM (2008) 637 : Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements on the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

This proposal is subject to the co-decision of the European Parliament, which voted in October 2010 to extend the provisions for maternity leave to 20 weeks and to introduce paternity leave of 2 weeks, both on full pay. These proposed amendments represent a significant extension of the proposals previously considered at EU level. The issue now falls to be discussed again by the Council of Ministers.

Examination of the proposal continued at Council Working Group level under the Belgian Presidency, which initiated consultation with the social partners. A progress report was submitted to the EPSCO Council of December 6th 2010.

Examination of the proposal is expected to continue at Council Working Group level under the Hungarian Presidency, which is continuing consultation with the social partners initiated under the Belgian Presidency. A progress report is expected to be submitted to the June 2011 EPSCO Council.

[Next paragraph is exempt from release under Section 21 of the FOI Acts.](#)

COM (2008) 426: Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

For acceptance, this proposal requires unanimity approval at Council and the agreement of the European Parliament. Examination of the proposal continued at Council Working Group level under the Belgian Presidency, which concentrated its efforts on the provisions of the draft Directive relating to insurance/financial services and housing. A progress report was submitted to the EPSCO Council of December 6th 2010.

Discussions are expected to continue under the Hungarian Presidency, with a further progress report to be submitted to the EPSCO Council in June 2011.

[Next paragraph is exempt from release under Section 21 of the FOI Acts.](#)

COM (2010) 708 : Proposal for a Council Decision amending Decision (2008/203/EC) of 28 February 2008 implementing Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 as regards the adoption of a Multi-annual Framework for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights for 2007 – 2012.

In February 2007, the Council adopted Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The thematic areas of activity of the Agency were determined by the Council through a Multi-annual Framework. It is now proposed to amend the Multi-annual Framework for the Agency in order to allow it to pursue its tasks in the areas of judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation.

While no implications unique to Ireland are envisaged, the extension of the Agency's ambit to the areas of police co-operation and judicial co-operation in criminal matters may have some influence on the content of future JHA measures that Ireland may decide to opt into, or on the working practices of relevant EU agencies (e.g. Europol, Eurojust) in which the Irish authorities participate.

An Oireachtas Scrutiny Note was submitted on this proposal on 31 January 2011.

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Parental Leave Directive 2010/18/EU: Council Directive 2010/18/EU was published in March 2010. It implements the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by the European Social Partners (including IBEC and ICTU) and repeals Directive 96/34/EC.

Main Features of new Directive:

- Each parent will be granted four months parental leave instead of three months and at least one month of this leave will be non-transferable. Currently under Irish legislation if both parents work for the same employer and the employer agrees one parent may transfer all of their leave entitlement to other the other parent.
- The leave will now apply to workers on fixed term contracts and agency workers.
- Members States are required to assess the need to adjust the conditions for access and application of parental leave to the needs of parents of children with a disability or a long-term illness. Currently under Irish legislation the parents of a child with a disability can take parental leave up until the child is 16.
- The right to request changes to your working hours or working pattern on return from parental leave which employer must consider and respond to but not obliged to grant.
- Provides for an assessment of the needs for additional measures to address the specific needs of adoptive parents. Ireland provides parental leave for adoptive parents currently.

Ireland has two years to transpose the Directive. This will require amending legislation with regard to the Parental Leave Acts 1998 and 2006. It is proposed to take the opportunity to review and consolidate all existing family leave legislation in one Act. See also the separate Divisional briefing information.

Self-Employed Gender Equal Treatment Directive: Council Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC was published on 7 July 2010.

The aim of the Directive is to change the Community legal framework to provide a period of maternity leave for self-employed women and to recognise the contribution of assisting spouses to the family business by providing them with social protection equivalent to that of their self-employed partners.

Ireland has until 5 August 2012 to transpose the Directive. The Department of Social Protection is currently examining the Directive to establish if any legislative changes are required.

Infringements in the equality area

Five new equal treatment directives were adopted by the EU between 2000 and 2006. Arising from the adoption of these directives, the Commission in 2004 began examining the national laws of Member States to ensure their compliance with EU legislation aiming to combat discrimination. Following this initial examination, in 2006 the Commission began infringement proceedings against most Member States, including Ireland, having concluded the directives had been incorrectly, or incompletely transposed into national laws.

There are three stages involved in the formal infringement procedure used by the Commission. In the first stage, the Commission issues a letter of formal notice requesting a Member State to submit its observations on an identified problem regarding the application of EU law. Where issues are not resolved at that point, the Commission may issue a reasoned opinion setting out its position on the infringement and requesting the Member State to comply within a given time limit. Where it is not satisfied with the response from a Member State to its reasoned opinion, the Commission has discretion to decide whether or not to progress to litigation and refer a case to Court of Justice.

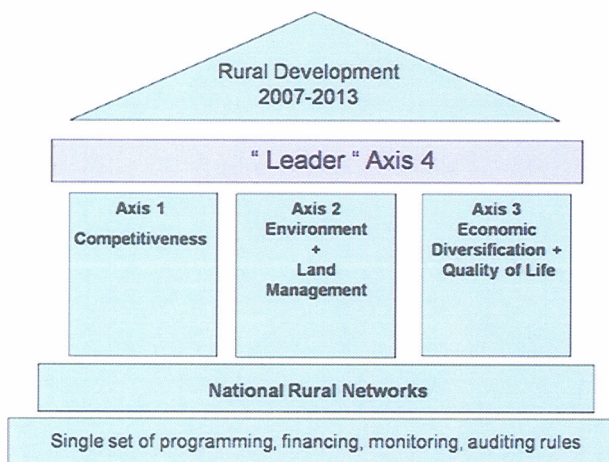
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The Commission's examination and assessment of the transposition by Member States of two further equal treatment directives is still in progress. These are

- the Gender Goods and Services Directive (2004/113/EC) and
- the Gender (Recast) Directive (2006/56/EC).

2. EU: Rural Development

The function of the EU Rural Development Division is to implement Axes 3&4 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 using the LEADER approach. Axes 1&2 of the RDP is implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are also the managing authority for the Programme overall. See diagram below which outlines the overall Axis structure of the Rural Development Programme.



The broad objectives of the LEADER Axes of the Programme are to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification of economic activity in rural areas including supports for non-agricultural activities. The measures under Axis 3 include a range of initiatives that are designed to promote economic activity in rural areas and also stimulate broader community initiatives aimed at improving the overall quality of life for rural dwellers.

LEADER (a French acronym) stands for 'Links between actions of rural development' and it is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in local rural communities. Since its launch in 1991, LEADER has provided rural communities in the EU with the tools to play an active role in shaping their own future. For the 2007–13 programming period, LEADER is no longer a separate programme but is integrated ('mainstreamed') into the overall Rural Development Programme managed by DAFF as part of the overall Common Agricultural Policy.

The Programme is administered by 36 Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country. The LAGs are responsible for selecting and approving projects in their respective areas in accordance with business plans agreed with the Department. The Department has no role in selecting what projects are funded its role is to ensure that the LAGs adhere to the Programme regulations, operating rules and in accounting for expenditure.

Budget: €425m is available over the lifetime of Axis 3 and 4 of the programme. This is co-funded at 55% from the EU. In 2009 €19.5m was spent on Axes 3 & 4 activities. This increased to €44.2m in 2010 and a budget of €62m is allocated for 2011. There have been no cutbacks in the level of funding available to local and community projects under the RDP. In 2011, the LAGS will continue to provide funding for projects in rural areas that include, but are not limited to, the expansion/renovation/upgrading of local rural facilities and amenities; the provision of training; support for festivals and local markets; development and improvement of tourism amenities and conservation of rural heritage.

The individual measures under the Programme and the indicative funding are as follows:

- *Diversification into non-agricultural activities for farm families* - €16.66m – eligible activities include the development of niche tourism and educational services such as arts and crafts, speciality food provision, open farms, &c.
- *Support for business creation and development* - €48.26m – funding can be provided to promoters wishing to start a new business or expand an existing enterprise.
- *Encouragement of tourism activities* - €45.4m – eligible activities include the maintenance of vernacular features in a way that protects the heritage of the features, e.g. disused railway lines and canal towpaths.
- *Basic services for the economy and rural population* - €49.61m – Funding is available for the identification and provision of appropriate cultural and leisure facilities to local communities, which would not otherwise be available to them.
- *Village renewal and development* - €54.2m – eligible activities include environmental upgrading of parks, civic areas, river walks, access to facilities and amenities and farmers markets.
- *Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage* - €51.7m – funding is available for actions including alternative or renewable energy actions addressing suitability of new technologies to meet community energy needs, environmental initiatives aimed at waste reduction, actions to protect and restore the amenity value of local watercourses and high value nature areas.
- *Training and information on adapted and new skills* - €29.45m – funding is available for training and the development of training facilities in rural areas (fixed or mobile).
- *Implementing co-operation projects* – €10.7m – provides for trans-national and inter-territorial actions, which would be eligible under the other Programme measures set out above.
- *Skills acquisition and animation* - €34.6m.
- *Administration funding for the LAGs that deliver the Programme* - €84.83m.

The 36 LAGs and their allocations over the programming period are listed in the table below:

<u>Local Action Group</u>	<u>Indicative Allocation</u>
Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership Ltd (Cork East)	€9,057,810
Ballyhoura Development Ltd (Limerick East and North Cork)	€11,673,519
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	€8,878,177
Cavan & Monaghan Partnerships	€12,035,118
Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	€14,028,529
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	€4,642,415
Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	€12,831,901
Fingal LEADER Partnership (Rural Dublin)	€7,766,780
Forum Connemara	€9,668,965
Galway Rural Development Community Ltd.	€15,257,985
Inishowen Development Partnership (Donegal)	€8,286,143
I.R.D. Duhallow (Cork North-West & Kerry South-East)	€10,315,943
Kildare (Cill Dara ar Aghaidh Teoranta)	€12,282,448
County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Ltd	€11,523,729
Laois Community & Enterprise Development Company Ltd.	€10,993,608
Leitrim Integrated Development Company	€10,845,497
Longford Community Resources Ltd.	€8,714,110
Louth LEADER Partnership	€8,839,815
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Company Teoranta	€10,751,894
Meath Partnership	€12,748,771
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teoranta	€17,278,809
North & East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teoranta	€10,558,882
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership Company	€9,708,008
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company	€11,520,489
Roscommon Integrated Development Company	€12,838,021

County Sligo LEADER Partnership Company	€10,888,673
South & East Cork Area Development Ltd.	€10,641,494
South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd.	€12,370,667
South Tipperary Local Development Company Ltd.	€11,106,187
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd.	€12,150,007
Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	€10,558,519
West Cork Development Partnership	€14,601,149
West Limerick Resources	€9,997,751
Westmeath Community Development	€10,987,060
Wexford Local Development	€12,515,565
County Wicklow Partnership	€11,135,560

Securing the necessary finance to deliver the EU Programme

The current capital envelope available to the Department is not sufficient to cover the needs of the Programme. The Division, along with DAFF, has had a number of meetings with the Department of Finance regarding this issue and while the Department of Finance is sympathetic, they do not appear to have any solution at present.

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In addition to the financial allocation, it will also be necessary to secure Department of Finance sanction to enter into increased commitments during 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Under the Programme regulations the relevant funds have to be fully committed by the end of 2013 but there is a further two years available in which to complete the expenditure (N+2 rule). These timelines are fixed and any funds left uncommitted at the end of 2013 cannot be committed or spent at a later date.

Funding Agri-Food projects under Axis 3

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3. EU: Social Inclusion Issues

Similarly to the Equality Divisions, the work of the Social Inclusion Division feeds into the EPSCO Council and SQWP. Below are some of the key issues relating to social inclusion.

EU 2020 Strategy, Ireland's National Reform Programme and the Poverty Reduction Target

Europe 2020 strategy

The Europe 2020 strategy aims to reduce by 20 million the number of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion across the EU by 2020. The poverty reduction target is one of 5 headline targets in the new strategy. The other targets relate to employment, research and development, climate change and education. Under the strategy, member states will set national targets to contribute to the achievement of the European wide targets. Ireland's National Reform Programme, which will set out the national targets and the measures to achieve them, is being co-ordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach. The Social Inclusion Division in this Department is responsible for developing proposals for the national poverty target in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy commitment.

The Department of the Taoiseach submitted a draft National Reform Programme to the Commission in mid-December 2010. Work is continuing on the development of the national targets for inclusion in the revised National Reform Programme, which is due to be submitted to the EU Commission in April 2011.

Ireland's National Poverty Target

In the draft National Reform Programme for Ireland, the national poverty target is formulated to replicate the existing target in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, i.e., to reduce consistent poverty to 2 to 4 per cent by 2012 and to eliminate it by 2016. Taking 2008 as the baseline year, the consistent poverty rate is 4.2 per cent. Converting this figure into an absolute number in line with the EU poverty target, the national poverty target is to lift 186,000 people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion.¹

Ireland uses three indicators to identify the population at risk of poverty and exclusion: two are similar to the EU indicators (at-risk-of-poverty and material deprivation) and the third is the overlap of the two indicators, referred to as consistent poverty. (Note: the third EU indicator, low-work intensity, is not currently used as an Irish indicator.) Despite the use of different indicators, the national and EU approaches both identify the same percentage of population at risk of poverty and exclusion (25 per cent).²

The Social Inclusion Division is undertaking further analysis of the poverty target for inclusion in the final National Reform Programme to be submitted to the Commission in April 2011. This has involved consultation with a technical advisory group made up of the national statistical office, academics, government departments and the social partners, including the Community and Voluntary Pillar. The work underway addresses a number of outstanding issues with the approach to setting the national target. These relate to

¹ It should be noted that the consistent poverty rate for 2009 is higher than the 2008 baseline rate at 5.5 per cent, equal to 245,000 people in consistent poverty.

² Further analysis is planned as to the overlap between the low work intensity indicator and existing Irish poverty indicators.

- alignment of the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* timescale (2007-2016) with that of the Europe 2020 Strategy (2008-2018);
- consideration of subsidiary targets relating to the other poverty indicators;
- identification of population groups for priority action in order to meet the national target, including the gender dimension; and
- developing indicators which would capture progress on the poverty target taking into account the difficult economic context.

Finalising the poverty target for the revised National Reform Programme

The following are the main steps in finalising the poverty targets:

- **Consultation with social partners**
The Department of the Taoiseach has undertaken a series of meetings in mid February with Social Partners to ascertain their views on the targets in advance of the finalisation of the National Reform Programme. Issues raised were about child poverty, gender, budgetary policy and an at-risk-of-poverty target.
- **Exploring linkages between the targets with government departments**
The Social Inclusion Division is engaging with the Department of the Taoiseach and other Departments to identify ways to capture the linkages between the education, employment and social inclusion targets – an issue raised by the Commission in bi-lateral discussions on the approach to setting the national target.
- **Discussions at EU level**
A series of bi-lateral meetings is underway with the Commission on the national targets for inclusion in the final National Reform Programme. These are being led by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs (the Permanent Representation in Brussels). The Division actively participates in discussions at EU level on the national poverty targets in the Social Protection Committee, in the expert group of that Committee and at informal bilateral meeting. A further bilateral meeting with the Commission on the options for the national target will take place in the next two weeks.

The outcome of these deliberations will inform the proposals for the Minister and the Government for a national poverty target to meet the commitment in Europe 2020. A briefing for the Minister on the options for setting the national poverty target will be arranged as soon as possible. This is with a view to finalising proposals for the Government to consider for the National Poverty Target to be included in the revised National Reform Programme, due to be submitted to the Commission in April 2011.

4. EU: Gender Equality Issues

Gender equality is enshrined in the Treaties of the European Union, as is equal pay. The EU places emphasis on gender equality as an instrument to foster economic growth through women's labour market participation in order to maximise the contribution of the well-educated cadre of women to the economy of the EU.

Europe 2020 Strategy

The EU published its strategy for sustainable jobs and growth in mid-2010. Member States are required to prepare their National Reform Programmes to address the key aims of the Strategy which includes, inter alia

- Achieving an employment rate of 75 per cent for men and for women by 2020
- Increasing the numbers of women in scientific research
- Increasing the numbers of women in managerial positions in scientific research

The Department of the Taoiseach is currently coordinating the development of the National Reform Programme which must be submitted to the Commission in April 2011. It is essential that this Programme includes targeted actions to address these goals.

Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015

The European Commission's new ***Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015*** was adopted on 21 September 2010. The Strategy follows on from the Commission's ***Roadmap for Equality between women and men 2006-2010***.

- The new Strategy identifies five priority areas for action:
 - equal economic independence;
 - equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
 - equality in decision-making;
 - dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and
 - gender equality in external actions.
- A sixth area concerns horizontal issues relating to gender roles, legislation, governance and tools for gender equality. The Strategy includes key actions of the European Commission for all six areas. The publication of this Strategy will see a strengthening of regular dialogue on the achievement of de facto gender equality among the EU Institutions at the highest levels.

5. EU: Office of the Minister for Drugs Issues

The Horizontal Working Group on Drugs (HDG) is the European Council's working group for drugs. Meetings are held monthly. Officials from the Department's Office of the Minister for Drugs attend meetings of the HDG on a regular basis, as do officials of the Department of Justice & Law Reform. Contributions/briefings are provided by the Department of Health & Children and the Department of Foreign Affairs as necessary. Member States and the Commission share information and seek to address issues in areas such as supply reduction, drugs trends and developments in treatment.

Key Issues

Competency for drugs legislation lies with National Governments, rather than with the EU. The EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 aims to provide added value to national drug strategies in the EU Member States while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality set out in the Treaties. The Strategy covers the period 2005-2012 while the current EU Action plan on Drugs covers the period 2009-2012.

The European Commission is currently reviewing the functioning of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances (in accordance with Action 69 of the EU Drugs Action Plan). For this review the Commission is gathering information from all relevant stakeholders, including member states. Given the serious headshop issue that arose in Ireland, we are one of the main contributors to this process, suggesting a more flexible and responsive system.

The EU Presidency priorities for the Hungarian presidency are the possible standardisation of the drug prevention activities, the development of the efficiency of drug treatment systems and the preparation and representation of a common EU position on the 54th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (21-25 March 2011).

6. EU: Disability Policy Issues

EU ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

On 23 December 2010, the EU formally ratified the UNCRPD, the first time the EU has become a party to an international human rights treaty. In order to do so, and in accordance with an EU Council Decision of November 2009, a Code of Conduct was agreed among Member States, the Council and the Commission setting out, where shared competence exists, the appropriate internal arrangements for representation of the EU's position.

For the EU, ratification means ensuring that all legislation, policies and programmes at EU level comply with the Convention's provisions on disability rights, within the limits of EU responsibilities. While it obliges its various institutions such as the Parliament and

the Court of Justice to protect the rights of people with disabilities, individual Member States of the EU must still ratify the Convention domestically.

Following its ratification, the EU has already called on Member States which have not yet ratified, of which Ireland is one of ten, to do so as soon as possible and these calls will increase as time goes on.

Ireland does not tend to become party to treaties until it is first in a position to comply with the obligations imposed by the treaty in question, including by amending domestic law as necessary. The ongoing implementation of our National Disability Strategy in many respects comprehends many of the provisions of the Convention. In addition, the Inter-Departmental Committee on the UNCRPD, chaired by DPD, has developed a work programme, which will continue in 2011, to ensure that all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are being met.

These processes ensure that, while Ireland has not yet ratified the UNCRPD, ongoing progress is being made towards the *actual implementation of the Convention*, which ultimately is what is most important. A number of countries which decided to ratify, before having legislative and administrative requirements in place, are having difficulties in fully implementing the provisions of the Convention.

European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 was announced by the European Commission in November 2010. The strategy focuses on empowering people with disabilities to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others and on removing obstacles in everyday life. To achieve this, it determines the mechanisms needed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at EU level, including inside the EU institutions and it identifies actions at EU level to supplement national disability strategies and policies. It also identifies the support to be provided in terms of funding, research, awareness-raising, statistics and data-collection. The strategy is to be formally approved by the EU Council and the Parliament in the coming weeks.

An initial high-level work plan for 2011-2015 has recently been issued by the Commission. The Strategy is likely to add considerably to our reporting to the EU for both this Department and other Government Departments, from which this Department will be co-ordinating input.

7. EU: Migrant Integration Issues

(i) National Contact Points on Integration

A Departmental official from the Office of the Minister for Migrant Integration regularly attends meetings of the **National Contact Points on Integration (NCPI)** which are convened by the EU Commission. The network of National Contact Points on Integration is a forum for the exchange of information and good practice at EU level with the

purpose of finding successful solutions for integration of immigrants in all Member States and to ensure policy co-ordination and coherence at the national level and with EU initiatives. Meetings take place approx 6-7 times per year in Brussels and expert meetings and conferences in Member States take place approx. 2-3 times per year.

(ii) Key Developments

The Treaty of Lisbon was signed on 13 December 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009. It amends existing Treaties and provides a legal basis for the first time and a policy context for issues related to migrant integration. The topic of integration is dealt with under the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council of the EU.

The Stockholm Programme sets the agenda for the European Union's actions for the next five years in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) and was adopted by the European Council in December 2009. The Programme includes a number of ideas, such as developing common European modules (essentially how-to guides for key elements of integration policy) and EU-wide integration indicators to monitor the results of integration policies.

Detailed proposals for a New Agenda for Integration will be developed by the EU Commission in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders in to the Justice and Home Affairs Council in due course.

Ministerial Conferences on Integration have taken place in Groningen in 2004, Potsdam in May 2007, Vichy in 2008 and Zaragoza in April 2010. There are no indications yet as to when the next Ministerial Conference on Integration will take place.

European funding related to immigrants

The Office of the Minister for Migrant Integration is the responsible authority in Ireland for the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and European Integration Fund (EIF). The ERF target group is refugees and asylum seekers and the EIF target group is newly arrived legally resident third-country nationals. The Funds provide 50% or, in certain cases, 75% financing for projects. This money is routed through the Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs Vote. The practice has been that the national co-financing must, in general, be raised by projects themselves.

Selection of projects for funding, financial monitoring etc is carried out by Pobal, which is the delegated authority for the Funds. The Community Decisions establishing these Funds apply up to 2013. It can be expected that the Commission will make proposals for decisions to replace them though no timescale has been indicated to date for this.

The EPIC (Employment for People from Immigrant Communities) measure also comes within the responsibility of this Office. It aims to facilitate immigrants in accessing the labour market or further training. It is open to EEA nationals and persons who can work here without a work permit. At present it is operated on the Department's behalf by

Business in the Community. In 2010, €435,000 was spent on this measure and 50% will be recouped in due course from the European Social Fund.

8. EU: Traveller Policy & Roma Issues

The Traveller Policy Division has responsibility for Roma issues and, where necessary, for coordinating the Department's response to queries on policy matters raised in relation to Roma at European Union and international levels.

Hungarian Presidency

Developing a European Roma Policy is one of the key priorities of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Hungarian Presidency plan to take a cross-sectoral approach, covering education, employment, housing, health and other relevant areas (with special emphasis on education and employment), and may ask Member States to develop specific targets for Roma in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the related targets outlined in National Reform Programmes.