

IRELAND AND THE IRISH ABROAD

**Report of the
Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants
to the
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D.**

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The economic and social developments that have taken place in Ireland in recent years, and the new and inclusive definition of the Irish Nation in Article 2 of the Constitution as a result of the Good Friday Agreement, provide a new context in which to view the phenomenon of Irish emigration and present an opportunity to put in place a new approach to meeting the needs of Irish emigrants.

This approach should encompass not only the needs of Irish-born people who have emigrated but also people of Irish descent who wish to express their Irish cultural identity and heritage. Throughout this report, these are referred to collectively as the Irish Abroad.

There are many different communities among the Irish Abroad, with different needs. There is no single approach that will meet all of these needs and a variety of responses are required. Meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad should take into account their rights and respect their views.

The key recommendations made in this report are as follows:

- The adoption of a strategic and integrated approach to meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad which includes policy objectives, an action plan and the necessary structures and resources to achieve these ends

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- The adoption of policy objectives designed to:
 - Ensure, as far as possible, that Irish people who emigrate do so voluntarily and on the basis of informed choice, and are properly prepared to live independently in different societies
 - Protect and support the Irish Abroad, particularly those who emigrate involuntarily and those who find themselves marginalised or at risk of social exclusion
 - Facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration into Irish society of emigrants who wish to do so, especially the vulnerable and the elderly
 - Support the Irish Abroad who wish to express and share the Irish dimension of their identity

ACTION PLAN TO MEET THESE OBJECTIVES

— Pre-departure Services

- The inclusion of a module on education for independent living in the schools curriculum
- The development of comprehensive information materials for potential emigrants
- The provision of financial assistance to voluntary agencies to enable them provide coordinated information and advice about emigration

— Services to the Irish Abroad

- The promotion of increased cooperation between statutory and voluntary agencies in Ireland and overseas, and the Irish Abroad
- The allocation of increased financial assistance to voluntary agencies and programmes abroad which provide welfare services to Irish people who are vulnerable or excluded
- The provision of financial assistance towards the cost of Irish community, cultural and sporting activities abroad where these help people to express the Irish dimension of their identity
- The commissioning of a study to identify the potential of the Internet and to build a communications hub to assist the Irish at home and abroad
- The establishment of an Awards Scheme to recognise exceptional or distinguished service by Irish people abroad

— Services to Returning Emigrants

- The establishment of a funding scheme for the provision of care and support services to elderly returning emigrants in supported housing accommodation
- The introduction of a 'Holiday in Ireland' scheme for elderly Irish emigrants resident in the Britain who are unable to return to live permanently in Ireland
- The development of employment and training services for returning emigrants

STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES

- The allocation to the Department of Foreign Affairs of overall responsibility for policy on emigration and for the coordination of support services to emigrants and Irish communities abroad
- The establishment of a new structure – the Agency for the Irish Abroad - under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs to coordinate the provision of services for Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad
- The appointment of additional staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs, at home and at certain Missions overseas, to support the Irish Abroad
- The allocation of additional resources to other Departments providing services to Irish emigrants to enable them improve and develop these services
- A significant increase in the level of official funding for emigrant services. A figure of €18 million is proposed for 2003 building to €34 million in 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Ireland occupies a remarkable place in world emigration terms in that, in recent centuries, very large numbers of its people have emigrated relative to the overall population. There has been a continuous decline in the population of the island of Ireland from around 8.2 million in 1841 to only 4.2 million in 1961¹.

In the last fifty years, there were two periods of substantial emigration, in the 1950s and the 1980s, due mainly to difficult economic and social conditions in Ireland. There was also significant emigration from Northern Ireland, especially in the 1970s.

Despite increasing levels of prosperity in more recent times, some 20,000 people continue to emigrate every year. This is a substantial figure. It is also estimated that of the 3 million or so Irish citizens abroad, almost 1.2 million were born in Ireland, the equivalent of approximately 30% of the present population.

Objective

Against this background, the question of involuntary emigration has been a major challenge for successive Irish Governments. As a practical expression of intent to meet this challenge, the present Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) includes an undertaking to address the special needs of those Irish emigrants abroad who are particularly marginalised or at greatest risk of exclusion.

On foot of this undertaking, the Government established the Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants in December 2001 to recommend a coherent long-term policy approach to meeting the needs of Irish emigrants. Its terms of reference required that special consideration be given to pre-departure services, services for emigrants overseas and services for returning emigrants. Particular emphasis was placed on addressing the needs of young and vulnerable emigrants. A primary objective of the Task Force was to propose a set of practical proposals and suggestions which could be implemented quickly and effectively to the benefit of Irish emigrants.

A New Policy Approach

Many Irish people have achieved success abroad and have contributed greatly to their adopted countries. The remittances sent home by Irish emigrants and the generosity of Irish individuals and voluntary funding organisations also testify to the willingness of Irish emigrants to give something back to their native country. An increasing number see value in spending time abroad acquiring knowledge, skills and experience. This is part of the increasing web of inter-relationships that has been built up with other countries and it shows, in many ways, the growing confidence of

¹Sources: CSO, Dublin; NI CSO, Belfast

Ireland as a nation.

On the other hand, it is clear that much emigration from Ireland has been involuntary and this has caused great suffering and loss to many people. Many of them were ill-equipped to cope with the challenges of living abroad with the result that they failed to integrate well in their adopted countries and, in some cases, became marginalised or socially excluded.

Taking into account Ireland's current prosperity, the Task Force recommends that an integrated strategy be adopted to provide effective support to our emigrants. The strategy should also address in a systematic way the development of relationships with Irish Communities abroad through which political, economic, social and cultural links could be fostered to our mutual benefit.

The Task Force believes that the Government has a responsibility to assist and support Irish emigrants abroad who are in need and to ensure that, as far as possible, those who emigrate are properly prepared for the challenges and opportunities of living and working abroad. For this to succeed, a partnership approach, involving the statutory authorities and the voluntary sector, in Ireland and overseas, as well as the Irish Abroad, is needed.

Principles

A number of fundamental principles should apply in the provision of assistance to the Irish Abroad. Transparency, accountability, consultation and a built-in requirement for capacity building in the agencies being supported should underpin all assistance provided. There should be a high degree of partnership with the official authorities and agencies in the host countries, who have the primary responsibility to assist their residents, including Irish emigrants. A holistic approach, involving many sectors and Government Departments is required and there should be coherence and flexibility in the application of agreed policy and practices. Finally, there should be rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all programmes of assistance to ensure that effective services are provided and that value for money is obtained.

Pre-departure services

The consensus among those engaged in providing services to Irish emigrants is that one of the greatest needs is for more and better preparation before emigrants leave the country. This preparation should begin in the schools where students should learn how to live independently in a multicultural society. The aim should be to ensure that those who emigrate do so on the basis of an informed choice and are properly prepared to cope with the challenges and opportunities they will face abroad.

There is need for more comprehensive information materials for those considering emigration and these should be made available through a wide range of outlets. Innovative ways of reaching out to those who may emigrate as a result of a crisis should be devised. The voluntary sector have a key role to play in the delivery of pre-departure services and there should be closer communication and coordination between service providers, both at home and abroad, to give intending emigrants the best possible chance of succeeding abroad.

Ireland and the Irish Abroad

The new approach to meeting the needs of emigrants should be rooted in the recently introduced Constitutional commitment to the Irish Abroad. This includes acknowledging the Irish Abroad as part of the Irish Nation and recognising their achievements.

The Task Force considers that one way of giving expression to this commitment is through the establishment of an Awards Scheme to acknowledge exceptional or distinguished service by the Irish Abroad. Another way is to give support to projects such as heritage centres which highlight and celebrate the variety of roles played by the Irish Abroad in the development of their adopted countries.

Access to news and information about Ireland is a further important means of retaining links and cultural identity for the Irish Abroad. The provision of Irish television and radio programmes and services and the development of the Internet as a means of exchanging information and building knowledge systems are of critical importance in this regard.

It is clear that maintaining and expressing an Irish identity abroad is not just an issue for Irish born emigrants. Many second generation Irish and members of subsequent generations also wish to retain their links with Irish affairs. The Task Force considers that the voluntary, social, cultural, educational and sporting bodies abroad, which play a key role in assisting them to meet this need, should be encouraged and supported, as appropriate.

The Vulnerable Irish Abroad

The experience of voluntary agencies, especially in Britain, shows that, despite recent improvements in the economic and social situation in Ireland, significant numbers of Irish emigrants of all ages continue to seek help from these agencies.

Older emigrants face particular problems. Many who left Ireland involuntarily had to settle, at least in the early stages, for insecure manual jobs and were unable to make adequate provision for their retirement. Now, as they reach this stage, many of them require special assistance.

Victims of institutional abuse, prisoners and travellers are among the groups of the Irish Abroad who require special attention and assistance. While some research has been conducted into the needs of the vulnerable Irish Abroad, more research is needed to establish their specific circumstances and requirements.

Returning Emigrants

Emigration is not just a one-way process. Many Irish emigrants return to live in Ireland. Some do so during their working life and bring back valuable skills and experience gained abroad. Some elderly Irish emigrants return to retire here although it would seem that many would be inhibited by circumstances from returning to settle in Ireland. However, for those who wish to exercise this option, there is a need for special assistance, particularly in obtaining affordable housing and related support services, to enable them to cope with the transition.

The Department of the Environment and Local Government has put in place a scheme designed to enable elderly Irish emigrants abroad to obtain affordable housing in Ireland. The Task Force commends this scheme.

The Task Force also suggests that a 'Holiday in Ireland' scheme be introduced to enable elderly Irish Abroad, especially people in Britain who are unable to return permanently, to retain links with their relatives and friends in Ireland.

Structures and Resources

The Task Force believes that new structures will be needed to achieve the policy objectives and to implement the practical measures suggested in this report. It recommends that responsibility for overall policy on emigration be given to the Department of Foreign Affairs. It proposes the establishment of a new Agency for the Irish Abroad, under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to coordinate the provision of services for Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad. The Task Force further proposes the establishment of a new Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the strengthening of staffing at Irish Missions in Britain, the United States and Australia, to provide greater support to the Irish Abroad.

One of the key roles of the new Agency should be to encourage and support closer cooperation and communication between statutory and voluntary agencies at home and abroad in relation to the provision of services to emigrants. There is a need for properly resourced structures at the national level, particularly in Britain, the United States and Australia, to promote such cooperation and to represent the interests of the voluntary agencies and other interested groups in those countries.

Substantial resources will need to be put in place to provide the support services necessary to meet the requirements in this important area. The Task Force recommends that an annual budget of €18 million be allocated for this purpose in 2003 rising to €34 million in 2005.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

- .4 The Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants was established by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in December 2001 in fulfilment of an undertaking¹ in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) *“to address the special needs of those Irish emigrants abroad who are particularly marginalised or at greatest risk of exclusion”*. The membership of the Task Force is at Appendix I.
- 1.2 The commitment in the PPF was based on a recommendation in a Report commissioned by the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants and the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas in 1999². The Harvey Report assessed the current pattern of Irish emigration; reviewed the policy responses and services provided by the Government, the Catholic Church and other voluntary agencies; and set out the main policy challenges that would arise over the ten year period ahead. It concluded that there was need for a Government commitment to a partnership approach to the subject of emigration and to the development of a coherent and effective policy, funding and service infrastructure. The Report recommended that the Government *“establish a time-limited Task Force, coordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and involving Government Departments, State Agencies and NGOs, to develop a coherent long-term policy approach to emigration and the needs of emigrants”*.
- 1.3 The Terms of Reference approved by the Government for the Task Force are
- *To recommend a coherent long-term policy approach to emigration and meeting the needs of emigrants and, in that connection:*

¹ Programme for Prosperity and Fairness - Section 4.6: Commitment to the Wider World; Stationary Office, Dublin, 2000.

² Emigration and Services for Irish Emigrants: Towards a New Strategic Plan by Brian Harvey (Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants and the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, 1999)

- *To examine the adequacy of existing pre-departure services, Government and voluntary, for intending emigrants and make recommendations if appropriate*
- *To consider whether the needs of emigrants in different countries, especially of young vulnerable people, can be identified better and regularly, and addressed in the context of changing social and economic conditions*
- *To recommend a medium-term plan of assistance to emigrants for the relevant Government Departments and agencies at home and Embassies and Consulates abroad, clearly defining their responsibilities and functions within such a plan*
- *To consider the roles of voluntary organisations at home and abroad as partners with Government in meeting the needs of emigrants in the context of such a plan*
- *To examine further measures to encourage and facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration of emigrants and their families, especially the vulnerable and the elderly*
- *To recommend such changes of structures or practices or allocation of resources as may be necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the recommended policy*
- *If possible, to estimate the cost of its recommendations and*
- *To report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs within 6 months*

1.4 The Task Force held its first meeting on 12 December 2001 and met on eight further occasions to carry out its work. It invited a number of experts to make presentations to its meetings on specialist areas. Notices inviting submissions from members of the public and interested organisations were placed in the national press in Ireland and in Irish newspapers in Britain, the United States and Australia. A list of those who made submissions or addressed its meetings is at Appendix II. Irish Embassies abroad were asked to submit reports on the situation of Irish emigrants and Irish communities in their countries of accreditation. Government Departments were also invited to submit observations to the Task Force.

1.5 Members of the Task Force travelled to Britain, the United States and Australia to consider the needs of Irish emigrants there and the extent to which these needs were being met. In the course of these visits, members met with a wide range of Irish individuals and groups, as well as public representatives with an interest in Irish affairs. A list of organisations and individuals met in the course of these visits is also at Appendix II.

- 1.6 The Task Force is conscious that, although these countries are the three largest destinations for Irish emigrants at the present time, there are large Irish communities in many other parts of the world also. The Task Force would have liked to visit a wider range of countries but, in the limited time available, this was not possible. Nevertheless, in framing its conclusions, the Task Force has sought to make them generally applicable although it recognises that, in implementing its recommendations, account will have to be taken of the differing situations in the various countries to which the Irish have emigrated.
- 1.7 This report is not a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the subject of Irish emigration. The Task Force concluded at an early stage of its deliberations that such a task would be impossible to carry out in the time available. In particular, the Task Force has not examined the causes of emigration which are outside the scope of its Terms of Reference. However, the Task Force has endeavoured to address the consequences of emigration throughout this report.
- 1.8 To assist it in its work, the Task Force commissioned a research study to review existing statistical data and literature on Irish emigration in the countries that are or have been the main destinations for Irish emigrants. This study provided much useful information which assisted the Task Force in forming its conclusions and recommendations. The report of the study includes a general description of Irish emigration and return migration, and a portrait of Irish communities abroad, including separate sections on Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the other Member States of the European Union. Extracts from the study, which provide a statistical profile of Irish emigration since 1945, are at Appendix IV. The Task Force considers that this study constitutes a very useful resource and recommends that it be published separately in its entirety.
- 1.9 The study makes clear that there is a need for more research into the specific needs of the Irish Abroad, particularly in Britain. Where research has been carried out, it has produced compelling arguments for the provision of special services for the vulnerable Irish and has been used successfully to persuade local authorities to provide special assistance to meet specific needs. However, much of the research that has been carried out needs to be updated and there are many areas where no research at all has been undertaken. More research, including comparative research, is required into the situation, including health status, of older Irish people abroad, particularly women. It is also necessary to ensure wider dissemination of existing research. The information gathered from such research should be collated and made available so that it is taken into account in the formulation of policy at national and local levels in Ireland and abroad.

- 1.10 In line with its terms of reference, the Task Force has focussed in particular on the vulnerable Irish, both young and old, who are most in need of assistance and support while abroad. The Task Force has considered what support services are needed to reduce involuntary emigration; to care for Irish emigrants abroad who require special support; and to help those Irish Abroad who wish to return home.
- 1.11 The Task Force recognises that many Irish people living abroad lead successful and fulfilling lives in their adopted countries. They have different needs, which the Task Force has also sought to address, and they constitute a potential resource which can be harnessed to support less fortunate Irish emigrants, as well as their homeland and their host country.
- 1.12 The Task Force has sought to interpret its terms of reference in a pragmatic and forward-looking way, seeking to present constructive policy recommendations and practical measures that can be implemented quickly and effectively to the benefit of all concerned. The Task Force has also identified issues that will require further consideration in a longer time frame.
- 1.13 In the time at its disposal, the Task Force could not deal in depth with the needs of Irish prisoners abroad. It notes that, in some cases, prisoners may have special needs that do not arise in the case of other emigrants. The Task Force recognises also that there is a separate commitment¹ in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) to carry out a research study to identify the needs of Irish Prisoners abroad. The Task Force recommends that this project be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity before the expiry of the PPF and that account be taken of its conclusions in considering the implementation of the recommendations in this report.
- 1.14 The Task Force notes that, while the issue of votes for emigrants was raised by a small number of people, there was no consensus on how best to address the issue. The All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution considered this matter and, in its Seventh Progress Report entitled 'Parliament'², concluded that

"The right to vote in Dáil elections should remain confined to citizens ordinarily resident in the State, and to such other classes of resident as are determined by law. The Taoiseach, in nominating senators, should include among his or her nominees a person or persons with an awareness of emigrant issues. For reasons similar to those set out in our discussion of Northern Ireland representation, the committee believes that the right to vote in presidential elections should not be

¹Programme for Prosperity and Fairness - Section 4.6: 'Commitment to the Wider World'; Stationary Office, Dublin

² Stationary Office, Dublin, 2002 - PN11281.

extended to emigrants at the present time, nor should the right to vote in referendums be granted to emigrants.”

In the circumstances, the Task Force has not addressed the question of votes for emigrants. However, it recommends that this issue be kept under review in the context of further consideration of Constitutional reform.

- 1.15 The Task Force is conscious that its consideration of the needs of Irish emigrants is taking place at a time of substantial inward migration to Ireland. Many of these are returning Irish emigrants but an increasing number are foreign nationals, embarking on a similar journey to a new and hopefully better life that so many Irish people have made in the opposite direction. While the subject of immigration into Ireland by non-nationals does not fall within its remit, the Task Force believes that the needs of Irish emigrants should be viewed in the context of the increasingly multicultural nature of Irish society that is emerging as the level of migration into Ireland continues to grow. The more we appreciate the needs of foreign nationals coming to Ireland, the better able we will be to respond to the challenges facing our own emigrants abroad. Conversely, we can learn from the successes and failures of our emigrants how best to assist the integration of foreign immigrants into our society.

Acknowledgments

- 1.16 The Task Force would like to acknowledge the generous support and cooperation it has received from many people and organisations and wishes to thank in particular all those who contributed to its work either in person or in writing. The Task Force is deeply appreciative of the time and interest taken by so many individuals and organisations in the preparation of those submissions and oral presentations. The Task Force is also grateful to the voluntary organisations and individuals whom it met in the course of its visits abroad, and whose insights and advice were invaluable. Consideration of the points made by all these people was a central element in helping the Task Force to produce this report. A number of submissions raised questions about entitlements to services and these were referred to the relevant Departments and agencies.
- 1.17 The Task Force would like to express its appreciation to Professor Bronwen Walter, Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge; and her colleagues, Dr. Breda Gray, University College, Cork; Dr. Linda Almeida Dowling, New York University; and Dr. Sarah Morgan, University of North London, who carried out the research study on its behalf.
- 1.18 The Task Force is indebted to the Department of Foreign Affairs for the assistance and support provided by its staff at home and abroad. The reports from Missions abroad on the situation of Irish emigrants and communities in

their countries of accreditation were extremely useful. A special word of thanks is due to the Ambassadors in London, Washington, Canberra and Singapore, and to the Consuls General in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Sydney, and their staff, for their assistance with the organisation of the visits to Britain, the United States and Australia. Finally, the Task Force would like to record its appreciation to the Executive Secretariat - John Neary, John Neville and Elaine Caul - for the services they provided with the organisation of its meetings and the management of its work.

CHAPTER 2

A NEW POLICY APPROACH

- 2.1 Article 2 of the Constitution of Ireland, as amended by Referendum held in 1998 following the Good Friday Agreement, provides that

“It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.”

- 2.2 This definition of the Irish Nation, which embraces the Irish abroad as well as those at home, has come at a time when patterns of migration to and from Ireland are changing as a result of the transformation of the economic and social situation over the last decade. This creates a new context in which to view the phenomenon of Irish emigration. The Task Force considers that emigration from Ireland can now be seen in a more positive light, as part of the process of constructive engagement which has characterised Ireland’s interaction with other countries for centuries. In this way, the traditional perception of emigration as a sign of failure may be seen as less valid in current circumstances and its important role in the history of the nation can be fully acknowledged.
- 2.3 The Task Force notes that, even though emigration has declined in recent years to the point where the State is now experiencing net inward migration, some 20,000 Irish-born people are still emigrating every year, which is a substantial figure. It is likely, therefore, that emigration will continue to be a reality for many in Ireland, even if at times, such as the present, the numbers leaving are masked by larger numbers entering the country either as returning Irish emigrants or as non-nationals coming to work or study here.
- 2.4 No part of Ireland, North or South, has been left untouched by emigration and there is scarcely a family in Ireland that does not have some memory of loved ones departing these shores, in some cases, never to return. The tragic consequences of the Great Famine have burned an indelible impression into the Irish psyche which remains vivid more than a century and a half later. The more recent experiences of widespread involuntary emigration since the Second World War have left their mark on every part of Ireland also.
- 2.5 Irish people have settled in all parts of the world and many of them retain a

strong affinity with their country of origin and its culture. Maintaining and fostering links with emigrants who have settled abroad and with those of Irish ancestry for whom this is meaningful, will be to our mutual benefit and should remain a priority.

- 2.6 We owe much to our emigrants. Many of them helped their families who remained behind through generous remittances sent home from their hard earned incomes. In recent years, the establishment of voluntary funding organisations abroad and the personal generosity of individual Irish people who have achieved success, notably in the US, have led to the investment of large sums of money in Ireland. Moreover, people who returned to Ireland having gained experience abroad, have contributed significantly to the country through learning and innovation. The Task Force acknowledges this debt and recognises the sacrifices made by generations of emigrants to the economic benefit of Ireland.
- 2.7 The stories of Irish emigrants have been mixed. On the positive side, the contributions made by Irish people, in all sectors of society, have enriched the development of their adopted countries and have reflected great credit and prestige on themselves and on their homeland. Irish people abroad have risen to the highest levels in politics, in the arts, in sport, in business and in international organisations. They deserve to be honoured and recognised for their successes.
- 2.8 For many other Irish people, however, the experience of emigrating has been an unhappy one. Many were compelled to emigrate because of poor economic circumstances in the years before the Celtic Tiger was born. Regardless of the degree of success they have achieved abroad, their story has been overshadowed by pain and loss, and separation from their families and friends. Others have left for a variety of mainly personal or social reasons. Emigration policy must take account of those emigrants who may now need support in various ways including assistance in returning and re-integrating into Irish society.
- 2.9 Against this background, and taking into account Ireland's recent prosperity, the Task Force believes that the Government has a responsibility to assist Irish emigrants, particularly those who are vulnerable or in need of special support. In this way, the Constitutional commitment to the Irish Abroad can be given meaningful and adequate expression.
- 2.10 The Government should seek, through cooperation with other Governments, to ensure that Irish emigrants receive their full entitlements, and social supports where appropriate, under the laws of their host countries. The Government should also support voluntary organisations assisting emigrants by way of services and advocacy. These organisations have a key role to

play, in cooperation with the authorities of the host country and of Ireland, in providing for the welfare and health needs of Irish emigrants. The Task Force has been impressed by the importance that many of these organisations attach to the Irish Government's role in offering recognition and assistance, and by the extent to which even a limited amount of Irish Government support enhances their influence and effectiveness.

- 2.11 The Task Force recognises that there is no 'quick fix' to meeting the needs of the Irish Abroad and that no single solution exists. Every situation requires a specific response. It would be wrong, however, to address the different needs in isolation. The Task Force believes that the overall approach must be guided by a vision that is both holistic and pragmatic. For the vulnerable Irish Abroad, the psychological and emotional support they receive from their fellow nationals can be as valuable as material assistance. Equally, for the Irish Abroad who wish to express an Irish identity, making their skills and experience available to improve the situation of the disadvantaged Irish among them is a very effective way of doing so.

Strategic Approach to meeting the needs of Emigrants

- 2.12 The Task Force recommends that a strategic and integrated approach be adopted to give practical expression to the commitment in Article 2 of the Constitution to the Irish Abroad. This approach should comprise the following:

- Clear, concrete and comprehensive objectives, which would be subject to regular review to ensure that they remain appropriate in the light of changing circumstances
- An Action Plan setting out detailed measures to meet these objectives over a defined period, including priorities, targets and deadlines, and resources to be committed
- Integrated structures for implementing the overall strategy and the specific Action Plans, including effective procedures for monitoring implementation and regular reporting on the outcomes
- Reviews undertaken every three years, with subsequent Plans containing an evaluation of implementation in the preceding period, as well as actions for the following period

Policy Objectives

- 2.13 The Task Force considers that the strategic objectives of a policy to meet the needs of Irish emigrants should be to:

- Ensure, as far as possible, that Irish people who emigrate do so voluntarily and on the basis of informed choice, and are properly prepared to live independently in different societies

- Protect and support the Irish Abroad, particularly those who emigrate involuntarily and those who find themselves marginalised or at risk of social exclusion
- Facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration into Irish society of emigrants who wish to do so, especially the vulnerable and the elderly
- Support the Irish Abroad who wish to express and share the Irish dimension of their identity

Achieving these Objectives

- 2.14 The achievement of these objectives will require a concerted and coordinated approach. The key to success will be a commitment by the Government to work in partnership with the voluntary sector at home and abroad, and with Governments of countries to which Irish people emigrate.
- 2.15 It will also be necessary to mainstream emigration issues into all relevant social and economic policy areas so that they are taken into account in the planning and delivery of Government services. This will help to develop a better appreciation of the needs of emigrants at official level in Ireland and facilitate improved contacts and communication between statutory and voluntary agencies at home and abroad in this area. The Task Force recommends that every Government Department and Local Authority that deals with emigrant issues should designate an officer or Unit to act as a 'Point of Contact' for individuals and organisations at home and abroad in relation to these issues. Other statutory bodies whose services are availed of by emigrants, should also designate 'Points of Contact'.

International Context

- 2.16 The Task Force recognises the importance of national legislation in host countries in addressing Irish emigrant issues and concerns. Voluntary agencies should be supported in a strategic manner to improve the integration of the Irish Abroad based on full access to statutory entitlements and acceptable standards of treatment in these countries. Intergovernmental cooperation also has an important role to play in this regard and the Task Force recommends that the relevant statutory authorities in Ireland liaise with their counterparts in other countries and with voluntary agencies to this end.
- 2.17 The Task Force considers that effective support can also be provided to the Irish Abroad through the implementation of international regulations and agreements which are designed to protect the rights of emigrants and their families.

- 2.18 Ireland has concluded bilateral Agreements on social security with Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Austria and the United Kingdom. The last two Agreements are now largely superceded by EU Regulations. The Agreement with the United Kingdom, however, applies to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands which are outside the European Union. The bilateral Agreements concluded with the North American States and with Australia and New Zealand protect pension entitlements on a basis similar to that which applies under EU Regulations. They also provide a basis for certain workers in the other State party to the Agreement to remain subject to the legislation of their home country for defined periods.
- 2.19 The Task Force recommends that the Government examine, with the countries concerned, the possibility of extending the scope of these bilateral Agreements to enable entitlements to short term benefits and health services to be maintained until such time as their entitlements are built up in the host country.
- 2.20 Ireland is party to a number of multilateral Agreements negotiated in the framework of the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations. A list of these is at Appendix III. They deal with rights of emigrants generally and in particular with social security entitlements. There are other multilateral Agreements which are relevant to emigrants and to which Ireland is not party. A number of these are also listed at Appendix III.
- 2.21 In addition, the general rules of international law as well as the UN Convention on Consular Relations (1963) and the Consular Convention between Ireland and the United States (1950) facilitate the rendering of certain assistance to Irish nationals abroad, including emigrants, by Diplomatic or Consular representatives.
- 2.22 The Task Force recommends that, when reporting under International Human Rights monitoring mechanisms, it would be useful to include details of measures taken by the Government to protect the rights of Irish emigrants and to meet their needs.

European Context

- 2.23 The European Union has adopted laws and regulations in relation to the free movement of persons and the protection of the rights of migrant workers which affect Irish emigration to other EU Member States. In due course, these laws and regulations will also apply in new EU Member States.
- 2.24 EU Regulations relating to migrant workers broadly provide for equal

treatment with nationals of the host State in relation to access to social security entitlements acquired in member States. The Task Force notes that agreement has recently been reached within the European Union on extending these Regulations to non-nationals, including nationals of each country with which Ireland has a bilateral Agreement.

- 2.25 The Task Force considers it important that there be adequate arrangements in place to enable Irish emigrants in EU Member States to benefit from their entitlements under EU law. To this end, it recommends that the relevant statutory authorities in Ireland review and develop their liaison procedures with their counterparts in other EU Member States to ensure that Irish emigrants in the European Union receive the most efficient and effective services possible. It is important that the necessary resources are made available as a priority for this purpose.
- 2.26 The Task Force notes that, at EU level, migration has been identified by a number of Member States, including Ireland, as a risk factor for social exclusion and that specific programmes have been proposed to deal with it. The Task Force welcomes the emphasis being placed at EU level on combating social exclusion and the submission in June 2001 of National Action Plans by each Member State to meet agreed EU objectives in this area. In its Action Plan, Ireland has proposed the commissioning of a research study on how best to reduce and prevent the risk of exclusion for migrants. The Task Force welcomes this initiative and urges the Government to give priority to this issue during its upcoming Presidency of the European Union in 2004.
- 2.27 In view of its long history of emigration, Ireland is in a unique position to contribute to the formation of policy at EU and the wider international level in this area. The Task Force believes that Ireland can draw on the experience and concerns of its emigrants, in both EU and non-EU States, in relation to their needs and rights in helping to create just and transparent migration policies which can in time inform and enhance national policy.

CHAPTER 3

PRE-DEPARTURE SERVICES

- 3.1 The reduction or ending of involuntary emigration has been a policy objective of successive Irish Governments. Seeking to achieve this objective, however, has presented challenges because of the complexities involved. The decision to emigrate is a life changing one and as such requires accurate information and careful consideration. Many of those who have left, especially the young and the vulnerable, did so without proper preparation and, as a result, found the experience very difficult. The Task Force has been impressed by the consensus among those engaged in providing services to Irish emigrants abroad that one of the greatest needs at present is for more and better preparation of emigrants before they leave Ireland.
- 3.2 For too long there was a reluctance to put in place comprehensive pre-departure services because of the fear that this could be perceived as encouraging emigration. The Task Force believes, however, that Irish society has changed considerably in recent years, in both economic and social terms, and that we are now in a position, perhaps for the first time in our history, to put in place policies and actions that respond in a meaningful way to the needs of those contemplating emigration who require assistance. The Task Force believes that the best advice possible should be available to anyone who wishes to emigrate.
- 3.3 Ultimately, the root causes of involuntary emigration lie in the economic and social fabric of society where, for a variety of reasons, some people cannot, or find it difficult to, establish a place. Tackling these causes involves addressing a number of aspects of domestic economic and social policy, including social exclusion, that are outside the remit of this Task Force. There is a need for more research into the reasons for involuntary emigration, particularly into the influence of areas such as youth services, employment black spots, school drop out, the availability of affordable housing, counselling and family services. The Task Force recommends that this be addressed in the context of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Social Exclusion referred to in paragraph 2.26 above.
- 3.4 The Task Force believes that pre-departure services should, in the first instance, seek to educate people, particularly young people, about the complexities of living in different countries. The Irish are one of the most migrant people in the world and our education system should reflect this. We need to learn more about our Diaspora – its sources, its extent, its influences on the history of both Ireland and other States, its triumphs and its failures. This in turn should lead to an understanding of multi-culturalism. It should raise awareness about the differences and similarities between home and

abroad and promote support for diversity and tolerance. There should be practical life-skill lessons on how to live independently in a multicultural society. The more people understand about themselves and about others, the more likely it is that they will be able to deal successfully with the challenges and opportunities of living abroad.

3.5 The Task Force recommends, therefore, that the Government support the provision of appropriate pre-departure services for potential emigrants to ensure that those who emigrate

- do so on the basis of an informed decision, in full awareness of the consequences involved, and
- are properly prepared to live independently in different societies

The Task Force recognises that the achievement of these objectives will require an integrated approach involving a range of sectors including the education system, the social and employment services and the voluntary agencies.

Education in the Schools

3.6 Since many of the most vulnerable emigrants fall within the 15 – 24 age group, the starting point for pre-emigration services should be in the schools. The Task Force recommends that a module on education for independent living in a multi-cultural world be included in the new Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which is aimed at developing a wider sense of an individual's self, their role in society and their relationships with others. This programme is due to be introduced in primary schools in the autumn of 2002 and extended to secondary schools by 2003. Information about pre-emigration advice services should also be provided as part of the careers guidance programme to Leaving Certificate students who may be contemplating going abroad to work or study on a short or long-term basis.

3.7 The Task Force considers also that the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, which is aimed at enhancing education in disadvantaged areas by actively involving parents and communities alongside teachers in the educational process, could also be used to reach young people who are at greatest risk of becoming marginalised if they emigrate. There are now 400 Home School Coordinators managing this scheme in 500 urban schools around the country with a further 350 rural schools and 60 coordinators to be incorporated in the near future. By linking into organisations providing information and advice to emigrants, these coordinators could help to advise young people on alternatives to emigration or, if they remain determined to leave, assist them to obtain valuable information that would help them to cope successfully with life abroad.

Information Materials

- 3.8 At present, the main providers of pre-departure services are Emigrant Advice, a voluntary agency that provides an information service for intending emigrants, and the Cork Catholic Diocesan Emigration Service. Information is also available from Comhairle through its network of Citizen Advice Bureaux, Youth Information Centres, Libraries (school and public), Centres for the Unemployed, Health Boards, Social Welfare Offices, and FÁS Offices, which operate the EURES service in Ireland on behalf of the European Union. Information in electronic form may be obtained from sources such as the Comhairle database. The Information Services of the Department of Social and Family Affairs publish a range of booklets and leaflets for intending emigrants and provide funding to Emigrant Advice.
- 3.9 The Task Force considers that there is a need for more comprehensive information to help those who are considering emigration to make informed choices. To cater for the full range of possibilities, there is a need for flexibility and innovation both in the design of information materials and in the channels for distributing them.
- 3.10 The Task Force recognises that the profiles of intending emigrants can be varied and their needs complex. In some cases, practical information on employment and living conditions abroad will suffice. In other instances, advice relating to immigration status and visa requirements may be needed. For some, the discussion may show that an alternative to emigration would be more appropriate and this could lead to referral to another agency. Emigrants' needs depend heavily on their circumstances and their reasons for wanting to leave. Pre-departure services must, therefore, be capable of dealing with a wide variety of situations.
- 3.11 The range of materials currently available both in written form and electronically needs to be reviewed and a comprehensive, integrated set of materials produced which are clearly written and attractively presented. These could include information on all the various services available to emigrants, with practical guidance on how to access the services and seek further advice from agencies in Ireland and overseas. In addition to visa and residency requirements, the information provided should cover the social, economic and cultural matters that are likely to affect emigrants abroad. It will be essential to have materials which are specific to the main countries of emigration such as the United States and Britain.
- 3.12 More detailed information on the profile of Irish emigrants will help in designing new information materials. So also will more systematic feedback from Irish welfare agencies abroad on gaps in preparation for emigration that they see in people who access their services. The Standardized Information System (SIS), recently developed by ÉAN (see paragraph 3.20 below) for

recording information about those seeking advice from its members, could be developed further to improve the design of new information materials.

- 3.13 As regards channels for distributing information, the Task Force believes that a wide range of outlets should be used. Basic information, indicating where more detailed advice about emigration can be obtained, should be available in a wide variety of places where potential emigrants are likely to attend such as Schools, Social Welfare Offices, Travel Agencies and Public Libraries. There should be a specific pre-emigration section on the Comhairle database. Leaflets containing emergency contact numbers and general advice relating to specific countries (chiefly Britain, since that is the main destination of 'impulse' emigrants) should be placed at ports and airports. The Department of Foreign Affairs should publish a general guide to travelling abroad and distribute this through its Passport Offices. When such services are put in place, there should be a concerted media campaign to create awareness of their existence and of their importance for potential emigrants.
- 3.14 The Internet has an important role to play as a means of delivering pre-departure information. There is need for a structured method for conveying information from Ireland to Irish voluntary agencies abroad, and vice versa. The Task Force also considers that the model used by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Federation of Irish Societies in Britain, in relation to pre-1953 pensions, which involved the organisation of information seminars, may have the potential for more general application.
- 3.15 The Task Force recognises that some people who emigrate do so as a result of a personal crisis in their lives and may suffer from illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, or social problems such as domestic disputes. Such people are among the most vulnerable of our emigrants and are most in need of support and assistance when they arrive abroad. However, because they often leave hurriedly and without proper planning, they are the least well prepared to cope with the challenges of living abroad. They are also the least likely to avail of pre-departure services or to consider alternatives to emigration.
- 3.16 The Task Force considers that innovative ways of reaching out to people who might be likely to emigrate as a result of a crisis should be devised and that practical information should be made available in places they might visit shortly before their departure such as methadone clinics, hospitals and treatment centres, Garda Stations and Social Welfare Offices, as well as points of exit.
- 3.17 Voluntary agencies play a key role in the delivery of pre-departure services and the Task Force considers that they should continue to be centrally involved in this area. The services they provide require a skillful,

knowledgeable and sensitive approach by trained staff. It is essential that they work in partnership with the statutory agencies concerned. The Task Force recommends that financial support be made available to voluntary agencies engaged in this work to enable them to provide coordinated emigration information and advice.

- 3.18 The Task Force recognises that discussions with potential emigrants about emigration may involve the need for counselling skills. This should be taken into account in the recruitment and training of advice centre staff. Agencies whose remit is limited to providing information should consider whether they could extend their services to include giving advice also.

Communication and Coordination

- 3.19 The Task Force considers that there is need for closer communication and coordination between statutory and voluntary agencies at home and abroad in relation to the provision of pre-departure advice and information. In some instances, this may involve exchanging general information about conditions abroad but, in certain cases, it will enable an agency in Ireland to request that specific support be provided to an individual at risk after they emigrate. The question of coordination among agencies abroad is discussed in Chapter 7 below.

- 3.20 The Task Force considers that there should also be effective coordination among statutory and voluntary agencies in Ireland to ensure the comprehensive development of accurate, accessible and relevant information for potential emigrants. The voluntary agencies involved in providing pre-emigration services in Ireland have sought to achieve this by establishing ÉAN, an independent national network of statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as individuals and academics with an interest in this work, to provide a comprehensive and professional migration information and advice service in Ireland. However, ÉAN has no permanent staff or other resources with which to provide effective coordination or support to its members. The Task Force recommends that financial support be given to ÉAN to enable it to develop its coordination role and promote closer cooperation with welfare agencies abroad in order to enhance the overall impact of pre-emigration services in Ireland.

CHAPTER 4

SUPPORTING THE IRISH ABROAD

- 4.1 There is hardly a corner of the world that does not have an Irish population. Their experiences vary from one country to another and between different groups in each country, with the result that there is not one Irish community abroad, but many.
- 4.2 There are those who have emigrated and who are happily settled in their new homes. Many have achieved great success in their chosen fields and have contributed generously to their adopted countries and to Ireland. There are those who were forced to leave by the prevailing economic conditions of their day or by social circumstances. There are young Irish emigrants who left without adequate preparation for life abroad and who may have specific problems that require treatment. There are emigrants who make contact with welfare and support agencies and those who make no contact at all. There are those whose legal status is irregular. There are emigrants in prison. There are those who want to forget Ireland and those who will never forget. There are the less visible emigrants such as elderly Irish people, especially women. There are people of Irish descent, extending beyond the second generation, many of whom regard themselves as Irish or partly Irish and who have a strong wish to express their Irish identity.
- 4.3 They all have needs, and many require support in meeting these needs:
- For many, there is a strong desire for recognition of the contribution they have made to Ireland
 - For many second and subsequent generation Irish, there is a wish to have their Irish identity properly acknowledged, both in Ireland and in the country in which they have grown up
 - For most Irish Abroad, there is a strong desire for contact and communication with Ireland, to help them maintain the Irish dimension of their identity
 - For the vulnerable Irish Abroad, both young and old, there is a need for support to enable them to access statutory services provided by the host country, or in some instances by Ireland, or to receive assistance where such services are not available
 - For some, there is a need for assistance with returning home
- 4.4 The above is not necessarily a comprehensive list of the needs of the Irish Abroad and the categories are not mutually exclusive. These needs affect

some people more strongly than others. People may experience some or all of them simultaneously or quite separately. As indicated in paragraph 1.9 above, there is a clear need for more research, at both the macro and the micro levels, into the needs of the Irish Abroad. This is vital in order to identify their needs, and to evaluate the nature and scale of the responses required.

4.5 In addressing the needs of the Irish Abroad, the Task Force considers that account should be taken of the extent to which there are:

- specific, legally-binding regulations and agreements in place which protect the rights and entitlements of Irish emigrants
- effective means of cooperation between Ireland and the host countries in implementing these regulations and agreements
- culturally sensitive ways of delivering services to the most vulnerable, and
- sufficient resources available to implement the legislation and cooperation procedures.

Existing Services

4.6 The Task Force recognises that there is already a wide range of services provided for the Irish Abroad by statutory and voluntary agencies in the host countries as well as by the Irish Government. This includes a broad range of consular services provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs to protect the rights and interests of Irish citizens abroad. The aim is to provide a caring, efficient and consistent service with the widest possible international coverage.

4.7 One of the primary goals of the Department of Foreign Affairs is to *“protect the interests of Irish citizens abroad, (and to) maintain and strengthen links with the Irish Diaspora¹...”* One of the principal tasks of Irish Embassies and Consulates abroad is, therefore, to maintain contact with the Irish communities in their areas of accreditation and to support these communities in every way possible. In the countries that have traditionally been the largest destinations for Irish emigrants, a considerable part of the time and energies of the Heads of Mission, and their staff, is devoted to supporting local Irish communities. The Department also provides grants to Irish welfare agencies in the United States and Australia.

4.8 Irish Honorary Consuls can also provide an invaluable service in supporting the Irish community in their areas of accreditation. In addition to the consular

¹Promoting Ireland's Interests - Strategy Statement of the Department of Foreign Affairs 2001 - 2003

services they provide, they also offer a focal point and a link to Ireland that is greatly appreciated.

- 4.9 Other Government Departments also provide assistance to the Irish Abroad. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provides grants to voluntary agencies working with disadvantaged members of the Irish community in Britain through the Díon Committee. The Labour Attaché at the Irish Embassy in London, who is seconded from that Department, is the chairperson of the Díon Committee and the greater part of that officer's time is devoted to the administration of the Díon Fund and to dealing with Irish community welfare issues.
- 4.10 The Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Department of Health and Children are responsible for the administration in Ireland of EU Regulations governing the protection of rights to social security and health care of migrant workers. The Department of Social and Family Affairs is also responsible for the administration of provisions of social security Agreements concluded on a bilateral basis with certain non-EU countries.
- 4.11 Welfare and health services are provided for the Irish Abroad by a wide variety of voluntary agencies established and run by Irish communities, Catholic charities, social service agencies and Church personnel. Many Irish community organisations abroad, originally founded to enable Irish people to maintain contact with each other and with their home country, have extended their activities into the welfare area. A large number of voluntary agencies have been established specifically to provide welfare and health services to Irish people overseas, in most cases with the active support and involvement of the local Irish communities. In Britain, the Federation of Irish Societies employs a full-time officer to coordinate the work of affiliated agencies there.
- 4.12 The Chaplaincy Scheme operated by the Catholic Church in Ireland has played a central role in supporting welfare services for the Irish in many countries, notably Britain and the US. A similar scheme is currently being established in Australia. The Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants, which coordinates the work of the chaplains, remains one of the mainstays of the support services for emigrants at home and abroad. However, the capacity of the Catholic Church in Ireland to provide chaplains and leaders is diminishing as a result of the decline in vocations and, increasingly, the services they provide are being taken over by lay people.
- 4.13 The Task Force has been deeply impressed by the commitment and dedication of the people who operate these services. With the limited resources available to them, they have built up a wide range of professional services that are of inestimable value to the people they serve. They have also helped Irish people abroad to integrate into the community in which they

reside. Through their work, they have brought and continue to bring great credit to these communities and to their country. Ireland is fortunate to have so many people of such high calibre working on behalf of its citizens abroad.

- 4.14 Irish community organisations abroad, including cultural and sporting organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the GAA, also play an important role in supporting the Irish Abroad, as do educational institutions that offer courses in Irish studies. By promoting Irish history, language, culture and sport, and providing opportunities for Irish people to participate in these activities, they assist the Irish Abroad who wish to maintain and express their Irish identity.

Recognition of the Irish Abroad

- 4.15 The Task Force considers that there should be a formal system for acknowledging the contributions made by Irish people and groups in other countries. The Task Force recommends the establishment of an Awards Scheme to recognise exceptional or distinguished service by Irish people overseas. Such awards could be made annually by the President on the advice of the Government and include those who have achieved distinction in a range of fields including community service, culture, sport, business and education.
- 4.16 Due recognition should also be given to the contribution the Irish Abroad have made to building the countries in which they have settled. In many cases, this is a story of extraordinary commitment and achievement, often played out against a background of personal separation and sacrifice. Ireland and the Irish Abroad can be proud of the role played by Irish emigrants in their many adopted lands.
- 4.17 The Task Force believes that there is need to acknowledge, in a tangible way, the contribution that the Irish have made to the development of other countries. A possible model for this already exists in the Irish World Heritage Centre in Manchester which is being re-developed, with assistance from the Millennium Fund, to document the stories of the Irish in Britain and to be a showcase for their achievements. The Task Force recommends that support be given to efforts to build similar centres in other countries, where the Irish contribution to national development has been significant. The local Irish communities should continue to take the lead role in the provision of these centres.

Supporting the Irish Diaspora

- 4.18 In recent years, the renaissance in Irish language, studies, history, music and dance has given new energy and momentum to Irish cultural and sporting organisations abroad. This has led to an upsurge in interest and involvement in their activities. A new generation of the Irish Abroad have discovered their Irish heritage as a result. The Task Force believes that support should be given to those Irish Abroad who wish to express their Irish identity. This can best be done through attendance at Irish community functions abroad by Irish Ministers and Diplomatic and Consular representatives, and through encouraging Irish organisations abroad to play a more active part in the overall network of supports for the Irish Abroad.
- 4.19 The Task Force recommends that a budget be established to provide financial assistance towards the cost of Irish community, cultural and sporting activities abroad where these help Irish people to maintain and express their Irish identity. This budget should be disbursed by the Agency proposed in Chapter 7 below on the advice and recommendations of Irish Diplomatic and Consular Missions overseas.
- 4.20 The Task Force considers that visits by the President, the Taoiseach and Government Ministers to the Irish Abroad are of practical, political and symbolic significance. These visits open a two-way channel of communication and increase mutual understanding, energise the Irish Abroad and make official Ireland less remote in the minds of those who have left its shores. The Task Force acknowledges that, in planning these visits, account is taken of the extent to which they help to recognise and support the Irish communities in question. The Task Force recommends that such visits be used more pro-actively to strengthen and develop links with the Irish Abroad in all their diversity.
- 4.21 The Task Force also recommends that support be given to Irish studies courses and other programmes in educational institutions abroad which help to promote a better understanding of Ireland and its history and assist the Irish Abroad who wish to re-connect with their heritage and cultural identity. These courses and programmes, as well as student exchanges between educational institutions at home and abroad, also help to develop an awareness of the contributions made by Irish emigrants to their host countries and enrich our relationship with other countries. A similar function is attributable to the various networks which exist for the promotion of Irish Studies, such as the American Committee for Irish Studies (ACIS) in the United States, the Société Française d'Etudes Irlandaises (SOFEIR) in France and the British Association of Irish Studies (BAIS) in Britain. These, through their conferences, seminars and publications, constitute supportive networks for academics, students, independent scholars and those with a general interest in the field of Irish Studies, as well as raising the profile of Irish Studies and promoting understanding. The Task Force considers that support should be

given to these networks also.

- 4.22 The Task Force encourages the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) to expand its services to emigrants through further investment in the development of its facilities and games development programmes. The Task Force noted during its visits the important role that touring Gaelic football and hurling teams play in providing a link with home and in recognising the contribution of emigrants to the Association in their new homes. The Task Force encourages the continuation of these links through All-Star Tours, International Games, County and Club Teams visits and asks that the GAA consider sending a hurling exhibition to Australia to coincide with the International Rules visit, as requested by Irish emigrants in Australia.
- 4.23 The Task Force notes that expressing and maintaining their Irish identity is not just an issue for Irish-born emigrants. Often, it matters as much to those born abroad of Irish descent. The extent to which these people consider that they are Irish varies. For some, their Irish background is of no significance in their ethnic identity whereas many others wish to have their Irish background acknowledged and have opportunities to express the Irish dimension of their identity. Most of those for whom an Irish identity is important see no conflict between maintaining this identity alongside that of their country of birth while a minority take the view that only an Irish identity is relevant for them.

Irish-speaking emigrants

- 4.24 More than any other cultural element, the Irish language represents a unique and distinctive feature of the Irish identity. The Task Force has noted that there is a large number of Irish-speaking emigrants living abroad. They represent a significant and vibrant community who have brought our native language with them to foreign shores.
- 4.25 To support the promotion of the Irish language abroad, the Task Force recommends that Foras na Gaeilge, the newly-established North/South Irish Language Agency, be requested to draw up a strategic plan that will include:
- the creation of an organisational structure to service the linguistic needs of Irish-speaking emigrants and students of Irish abroad
 - the development of language planning strategies to ensure the continuation of Irish-speaking communities and their further development
 - the examination of promotional opportunities for the Irish language abroad in other communities and educational institutions
 - the creation of links with Irish Festivals abroad with a view to

promoting the language as an intrinsic element of our Irish culture

- the provision of an Irish language component on the website of the Agency for the Irish Abroad proposed in paragraph 4.30 below

Information and Communication

- 4.26 As modern communications have developed, it has become increasingly easy to make contact with distant places. The technology now exists for transmitting a sense of Ireland to the Irish Abroad. A constantly recurring theme throughout the Task Force's discussions with the Irish Abroad was the issue of contact with Ireland. There was a great desire for information about contemporary Ireland and a wish to stay in touch with developments here. It was evident that the closure of Tara TV was greatly regretted by many Irish people in Britain, particularly the elderly. This indicates that the development of a culturally sensitive media service for the Irish Abroad needs to be addressed.
- 4.27 The Task Force notes that some countries recognise the value of television as a means for their citizens abroad to keep in touch with home. For example, Australia subsidises the broadcasting of domestic programmes overseas on a contract basis. One channel of Polish television – Polonia – caters for the Polish abroad. The channel carries a broad range of programmes, including topics of particular interest to emigrants, news, sport, religious programmes and a variety of Polish soap operas. It also showcases the best of Polish culture including music, art, literature, theatre and cinema. Polonia is available by satellite, at locations where the Polish have settled abroad, including Western Europe, North America and the Ukraine. Polish domestic channels are also available via satellite. Other countries provide a similar service. The Task Force recommends that consideration be given to developing the role of television as a contact point for the Irish Abroad and that funding should be made available for the provision of a service similar to that provided by Poland or Australia.
- 4.28 There are many Irish radio stations around the world, and Irish programmes on community radio stations, that are greatly valued and enjoyed by the Irish Abroad. These services would be enhanced by more extensive relaying of Irish media material. Irish radio should be available to the Irish Abroad. Demand for this service will vary from country to country and should be approached on that basis. The Task Force recommends that an assessment be made of the level of need for this service on the basis of discussion with service providers in Ireland and in the host countries, and that the necessary funding be made available to advance their conclusions.
- 4.29 The Internet is a vital tool for the communication of information in the modern world. It has enabled knowledge sharing initiatives to move forward quickly. It

allows individuals and organisations to contribute to the knowledge base and focus on planning, data collection, analysing, adapting and collecting information. It also increases networking and enables emerging technologies to be used to help individuals and organisations develop their full potential. It is seen as a worldwide forum for information, communication and collective understanding.

- 4.30 Many Irish organisations abroad have established their own websites but there is a need to link them up so as to
- create a Web-based knowledge system, in relation to Irish emigrants and emigration, which provides individuals and organisations with efficient access to quality information, including sources of information in Ireland,
 - identify mainstream websites around the world into which Irish Government Departments and Irish organizations abroad can feed and develop Internet capacity.
- 4.31 The Task Force recommends that a study be commissioned to identify the potential of the Internet and to build a communications hub to assist the Irish at home and abroad. This website should be established and maintained by the Agency for the Irish Abroad proposed in Chapter 7 below.
- 4.32 The Task Force acknowledges that the Internet is not a panacea for all problems. Some emigrants may not be proficient in its use or may not have access to a computer. Many who access a Website will still make contact by telephone or visit the office of an organisation for clarification of particular issues. In the case of welfare service delivery, there is usually no substitute for personal communication. Nevertheless, even in these cases, information available on the Internet may be useful as a means of supplementing these personal contacts.

Welfare of the Vulnerable Irish Abroad

- 4.33 The Task Force found that the most acute and pressing needs of the vulnerable Irish Abroad are in the area of welfare and health services. These needs affect both young and old. Experience shows that many people, particularly those who emigrate as a result of a crisis or otherwise without adequate preparation, either cannot or do not access their full entitlements under the welfare and health services of the host country. They are among the most vulnerable of our emigrants and are at greatest risk of becoming marginalised and socially excluded. Many of them need a “culturally sensitive” service that understands their needs and respects their sensitivities and personal circumstances.

- 4.34 It is likely, therefore, that there will continue to be a demand for the welfare services currently being provided by voluntary agencies abroad for Irish emigrants. These agencies meet a particular need that could not be met by statutory bodies as many of the people who seek their assistance would not be prepared to approach an official body. Through its existing grants, the Government provides some assistance to these agencies but the Task Force considers that more should be done to recognise and support their efforts. The aim should not be to replace the role of local statutory services but to ensure that those in need are cared for in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way.

The Elderly Irish Abroad

- 4.35 There is a demographic 'spike' in the age profile of the Irish-born community abroad at the present time as those who left Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s reach retirement age. Many of these emigrated involuntarily and were forced to take insecure, manual jobs, often enduring very difficult working conditions. Either because they did not intend to settle abroad or because of the nature of the jobs in which they were employed, they were unable to make adequate provision for their retirement and, as a result, now find themselves in a position where they are unable to cope without support. The Task Force believes that there is a responsibility on Irish society to support the voluntary agencies abroad in helping these people to make their later years as comfortable and as secure as possible.
- 4.36 The Task Force notes that many elderly Irish Abroad face a number of special problems. Some are in poor quality housing, lacking security and suitable support services. Some find themselves socially isolated and lonely, and yearn for closer contact with their fellow nationals. They may need affordable housing, with appropriate health and social services nearby. Community facilities may also be needed to enable them to meet and socialise as a way of supporting each other.
- 4.37 In view of the position set out in paragraph 4.35 above, there is an immediate need for extra assistance for the elderly Irish Abroad. The numbers involved will fall as emigration fell during the 1970s although it is likely that they will rise again when the peak numbers of emigrants who left in the 1980s reach retirement age, before falling off again as emigration fell in the 1990s. The Task Force recommends, therefore, that priority be given to the allocation of additional funds to voluntary agencies abroad who look after the welfare and health needs of elderly Irish emigrants.

Needs of the Young

- 4.38 Many young people who emigrate nowadays are well-educated and are

seeking to broaden their horizons before settling down to adult life. There are special arrangements with Australia and New Zealand to enable young Irish people obtain one-year working holiday visas for those countries quickly and easily. Approximately 9,000 Irish people availed of Australian visas in the period July 2001 - June 2002 and a further 1,000 went to New Zealand.

- 4.41 Most of these are well able to look after themselves and do not require assistance. Indeed, in many cases they promote a positive image of Ireland abroad. They also perform a vital function by interacting with settled Irish emigrants in these countries and helping them to “re-connect” with their homeland. A minority of young people require support for a range of social and economic reasons. In some locations the distance from Ireland creates its own problems for some emigrants and support services may be appropriate.
- 4.42 Many young Irish people travel abroad to work or to study. There are approximately 60,000 Irish students in Britain. In general, they do not have special needs and cope well with living abroad. Thousands of Irish students go to the United States every summer on J1 visas. There are reports that some of them are travelling there without proper preparation and, in particular, do not have pre-arranged jobs and accommodation. As a result, some are unable to manage on their own and this can result in an excessive burden being placed on the voluntary agencies there and on the local Irish communities. The Task Force recommends that the Government review, in conjunction with the student travel organisations and the voluntary agencies in the United States, the arrangements for Irish students travelling to the United States to ensure that they receive proper orientation and do not become a burden on the Irish living there.
- 4.43 The Task Force recognises that, over the last twenty years, the Irish and US Governments, with the support of Irish and Irish-American organisations, have gone to considerable lengths to find solutions to the problems of ‘undocumented’ Irish (those whose immigration status has not been regularised) in the United States. The Donnelly and Morrison visa programmes, which were among the result of those efforts, have brought great benefits. In recent years, however, the number of Irish recipients of US visas has decreased. As a result, the Task Force notes that a new and more difficult situation now exists in relation to undocumented Irish in the United States.
- 4.44 The Task Force is aware that, in recent years, there has been a perceptible change in attitudes in the US Congress towards undocumented immigrants and a growing reluctance to introduce special measures to enable them to regularise their status. This was exacerbated by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. This forced the abandonment of the passage of a Bill to extend Section 245 (i) of the Immigration Law which would allow eligible immigrants to adjust their status in the US without having to leave the country. In addition, US immigration controls have become stricter and the risks of detection and deportation have increased.

The Task Force recognises that, in the current climate of opinion in the United States, there is no early prospect of a restoration of Section 245 (i). The Task Force also notes that the Government is monitoring the situation closely and is maintaining its dialogue with the US authorities in relation to the position of Irish nationals. The Task Force recommends that the Government continue its political engagement with the US authorities in this regard.

- 4.45 The undocumented Irish in the United States often have special needs which the voluntary organisations there have sought to address. Because of the complexities of US immigration legislation, they require social service and legal advice to help them regularise their status. They are also susceptible to exploitation and, because they cannot obtain health insurance, are vulnerable in the event of illness or accident. The Task Force recognises that the voluntary agencies, especially Church-related social service agencies, provide services to undocumented Irish in the United States as well as to other Irish people who require special assistance. The Task Force recommends that the existing level of official funding for these agencies be increased.

Northern Ireland

- 4.46 While the Task Force's remit was focussed on emigration from this jurisdiction, the reality cannot be ignored that emigration impinges on all communities living on the island of Ireland. History shows that emigration is not confined to any particular geographic, political or religious group. On the contrary, it seems to affect those from Northern Ireland and the South in many similar ways.
- 4.47 People from Northern Ireland have a prominent presence in the countries visited by the Task Force. It is estimated that they may constitute a third of the total number of the Irish Abroad. They exhibit many of the same needs as their counterparts from the South although some emigrants from Northern Ireland have specific needs arising from the political circumstances that informed their decision to leave. In many countries, including Britain, they are often regarded as if they were from the South and those in need of assistance are referred to Irish voluntary agencies.
- 4.48 The Task Force considers that there is scope for cooperation between the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to provide services for emigrants from both parts of the island. The Task Force recommends that this issue be raised in the inter-governmental structures established under the Good Friday Agreement.

CHAPTER 5

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

- 5.1 The largest Irish-born community in the world outside Ireland is in Britain. The close proximity between the two countries, the shared language and the common travel area have all contributed to making Britain the most accessible and, in some ways, the most attractive destination for many Irish emigrants in the twentieth century.
- 5.2 The situation of the Irish in Britain is different from that in any of the other major destinations of Irish emigrants. Irish people have not integrated into local society in Britain to the same extent as they have done in other countries and they remain a distinct ethnic group. While Irish people are eligible for equal treatment in virtually all respects with British citizens, including in employment, social security and health matters, research evidence¹ shows that Irish emigrants in Britain as a group suffer disproportionately from economic and social disadvantage. There are widely held perceptions among the Irish in Britain that they do not always receive their fair share in the allocation of public services and resources. For all these reasons, the Task Force considered that a separate chapter on the Irish in Britain was warranted in order to highlight some of the issues that affect them.
- 5.3 The experiences of the Irish in Britain have been mixed. There are many Irish people there, both Irish born and second or subsequent generation, who have achieved successful and prominent positions in all walks of life. There is an emerging Irish business and professional class who are fully integrated into British life while retaining their Irish identity. There is a growing confidence among the Irish in Britain in expressing that identity, as evidenced by the unprecedented numbers who took part in the St. Patrick's Day Parades in London, Birmingham and other cities in March 2002.
- 5.4 At the same time, there are many Irish in Britain, particularly among those who were forced to emigrate in the years after the Second World War, who feel that they did not achieve their full potential and have a lingering sense of disappointment or even failure as a result. In addition to above-average levels of socio-economic disadvantage, there is evidence² that Irish people in Britain

¹Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain: A report of research undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality by Mary J Hickman and Bronwen Walter (Commission for Racial Equality, 1997)

²Ethnic Minority Psychiatric Illness Rates in the Community (EMPIRIC), edited by Kerry Sproston and James Nazroo (The Stationery Office, 2002); L Harrison, R Carr-Hill, Alcohol and Disadvantage Among the Irish in Britain (Federation of Irish Societies, 1992); S McCollum,

as a group experience higher than average levels of mental illness and there are issues around alcohol use which need to be addressed. Research³ shows that the health of Irish-born men in middle age is poorer than the national average. The needs of Irish-born women are less well documented and this should be rectified by further research. There is also evidence⁴ of a highly marginalised section of the Irish population using the services of Irish agencies.

5.5 There is a need to address the issues indicated by the poor health profile of the Irish in Britain indicated by existing research⁵. The Task Force recommends that this be done through the institutional arrangements proposed in paragraph 5.39 below, in particular through discussions between the Department of Health and Children in Ireland and its counterpart in Britain.

5.6 In addition to the evidence on housing referred to in paragraph 5.8 below, further evidence⁶ suggests that there are sections of the Irish population in Britain who receive less than their full entitlement of social and health services. The experience of the Irish welfare agencies in Britain is that many Irish prefer to speak to “one of their own” and that they require a culturally sensitive service to

Alcohol and the Irish in the London Borough of Brent (Brent Irish Advisory Service, 1994)

³David Owen, *Irish-born people in Great Britain: Settlement patterns and socio-economic circumstances* (Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 1995); P J Aspinall, *Age standardised rates of limiting long-term illness and permanent sickness in the born in Ireland group: An analysis of local authority variations in Great Britain* (Guy's, King's, and St Thomas's School of Medicine, 1999)

⁴U Kowarzik, *Developing a Community Response: The service needs of the Irish community* (Action Group for Irish Youth and the Federation of Irish Societies, 1994); U Kowarzik, *Irish Community Services: Meeting diverse needs* (Action Group for Irish Youth and the Federation of Irish Societies (1997).

⁵J Raftery, D R Jones, M Rosato, 'The mortality of first and second generation Irish immigrants in the UK.' *Social Science and Medecine*, vol 31 (1990); S Harding and R Balarajan, 'Patterns of mortality in second generation Irish living in England and Wales: Longitudinal study.' *British Medical Journal*, vol 312 (1996); S Harding, R Balarajan, 'Mortality of third generation Irish people living in England and Wales: Longitudinal study.' *British Medical Journal*, vol 322 (2001).

⁶*Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain: A report of research undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality by Mary J Hickman and Bronwen Walter* (Commission for Racial Equality, 1997); I Williams, *Research Findings of the Birmingham Irish Elders Project* (Irish Welfare & Information Centre, Birmingham, 1999)

meet their health and welfare needs.

5.7 The Task Force notes that, in 1995, the Commission for Racial Equality recommended the inclusion of an Irish category in all UK ethnic monitoring systems. It was also decided to include a separate 'Irish' ethnic category in the 2001 Censuses in England & Wales and Scotland. The Task Force welcomes these developments, which will enable policy makers to get a more complete picture of the Irish population in Britain through the processing of the 'Irish' data and its inclusion in Census outputs. However, the Task Force believes that more extensive ethnic monitoring with an 'Irish' category is required to determine the extent of Irish access to public services, especially health care and housing, and recommends that the relevant Departments in Ireland pursue this with their British counterparts.

The Elderly Irish

5.8 There is evidence⁷ that some older Irish emigrants in Britain are experiencing problems, such as poor housing and deprivation, to a greater extent than the average for the population in Britain as a whole. As many Irish emigrants have traditionally lived in rented accommodation, the decline of this sector, both public and private, since the 1970s has had a more profound effect on the Irish-born than on the indigenous population.

5.9 A recent study⁸ concluded that a higher proportion of Irish people in Britain endure poor housing conditions than the rest of the population. Irish people are over-represented among the homeless in London and the vulnerable Irish have a particular need for shared housing. The study found that, while more Boroughs and housing associations were aware of the needs of the Irish community, there remained much to be done. It put forward a number of recommendations including that

⁷The Return of Older Irish Migrants: An assessment of needs and issues, by Nessa Winston (Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants & the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2002)

⁸"Still beyond the Pale.....?", The response of social landlords to the housing and related needs of London's Irish Community by Helen Cope (Irish Housing Forum, 2001).

- local authorities should ensure that there is an Irish dimension to all race equality policies and schemes
- local authorities and housing associations should review their allocation policies with a view to increasing lettings to Irish people to reverse the clear trend of disadvantage
- local authorities and housing associations should work more closely in partnership with Irish agencies and Irish housing associations to develop new culturally sensitive schemes and services
- the Irish dimension should be reflected in all community care plans and supporting people programmes

5.10 The Task Force considers that this study warrants serious consideration and urges the relevant Irish authorities to engage with their British counterparts to this end. The Task Force also considers that the Irish voluntary agencies in Britain should play a central role in achieving the objectives of the study.

5.11 A number of Irish housing associations and Irish projects in Britain are addressing the accommodation needs of the elderly Irish to enable them to live and associate together. This is done by building sheltered housing or by partnership arrangements with voluntary housing associations. In both cases, statutory authorities meet most of the costs involved.

5.12 It is increasingly recognised that the provision of suitable accommodation alone does not meet all the requirements of the elderly Irish. They also need access to community facilities to enable them to support each other while living independently. In cities where there is an existing Irish Centre, or where a Community Care project can rent or lease premises, this can be used for the purpose and the benefits of leasing as opposed to building should be carefully considered.

5.13 Some older people require sheltered housing co-located with community facilities. Consideration should be given to providing funding for the community element of such schemes where statutory funding is not available and where it serves the needs of the elderly Irish.

5.14 A number of welfare agencies have reported difficulties experienced by Irish citizens in Britain in obtaining copies of their birth certificates from the General Register Office (GRO) in Dublin. In some cases, births were never registered and the procedures that now have to be completed to allow a late registration are onerous and time-consuming. The Task Force recommends that the GRO, as a priority, should designate an officer to act as a Contact Point for

Irish welfare agencies abroad to assist elderly Irish emigrants who need to late-register their births and that special procedures be put in place to minimise delays.

- 5.15 An important issue raised by the elderly Irish in Britain was the question of entitlement to a free Travel Pass when they return to Ireland. This has been refused for a number of reasons, principally that EU rules would require that it be provided also to all EU pensioners visiting this country. For many elderly Irish, the issue is not simply a question of free travel but also a sense that they are not being given their due recognition as full Irish citizens in their own country. The Task Force believes that, in the spirit of Article 2 of the Constitution, Irish-born emigrants returning to Ireland, even on short visits, should have their previous residence status in Ireland recognised for the purposes of entitlement to free travel. The Task Force recommends that measures be introduced as a matter of urgency to enable Irish pensioners living overseas to enjoy free travel on public transport when they are visiting Ireland from abroad.

Young Irish Emigrants in Britain

- 5.16 The experiences of Irish welfare agencies in Britain show that, despite economic and social developments in Ireland in recent years, there are still significant numbers of young, vulnerable Irish emigrants travelling to Britain. Many of these emigrate as a result of a crisis and leave without adequate, if any, preparation. A significant number of young people from Northern Ireland are being forced to emigrate, some by paramilitary organisations, and are arriving in Britain without the necessary social skills for independent living.
- 5.17 The Irish welfare agencies in Britain play a vital role in providing a safety net to meet the acute needs of young people where it is clear that they cannot manage by themselves. In some cases, they can persuade the person that the best course of action would be to return home. Where this is not possible, they provide emotional and financial support during the first critical weeks. Where necessary, they also arrange emergency accommodation and help them to obtain employment and a UK National Insurance number, to assist them to access their social security entitlements.
- 5.18 There should be close cooperation and co-ordination between statutory and voluntary agencies in Ireland and Britain in relation to vulnerable young people, with dedicated staff, a defined structure to review the situation and identify issues, and regular exchanges of information. The Task Force recommends that the Department of Social and Family Affairs engage with its counterpart in Britain and with the voluntary sector to find more effective ways of addressing the needs of young and vulnerable Irish emigrants in Britain.

Counselling Services

5.19 As indicated in 5.4 above, Irish people in Britain experience higher than average levels of mental illness although further research is required in this area. Where culturally sensitive counselling services are provided, they are readily taken up. However, the demand for such services seems to exceed the existing capacity. Counselling services demand a high level of skilled professional staff. Absolute confidentiality is essential, with the result that there may be difficulties in locating these services in Irish Centres or projects, depending on the facilities in these locations. The Task Force believes that this area should be given a higher priority in the allocation of welfare funds. Where suitable premises cannot be rented or leased, consideration should be given to providing capital assistance for the acquisition of special premises, where it can be shown that the running costs can be met from income generated.

Victims of Institutional Child Abuse

5.20 Although the issue of child abuse did not fall within its terms of reference, the Task Force notes that the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse has sought to ensure that the evidence of those survivors who left Ireland for Britain should be heard. The Compensation Advisory Committee has held meetings in Britain with interested parties. The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science provide funding for front line advice workers in Britain to assist survivors of institutional abuse. Funds are also being made available for culturally sensitive counselling. The Task Force welcomes these initiatives as a practical expression of the Constitutional commitment to the Irish Abroad.

Needs of Travellers

5.21 The pattern of emigration of Irish Travellers in family groups differs significantly from that of mainly single person emigration by settled Irish people. There is evidence¹ that Irish Travellers experience particular difficulties in meeting their needs both as Travellers and as emigrants, notably in relation to the availability of accommodation suited to their needs and access to health, education and social services.

5.22 The Task Force notes that some local authorities in Britain fund projects or employ dedicated workers for Travellers and that a number of Irish voluntary agencies employ staff who deal with the problems of Irish travellers. The Task

¹M Carr, *Assessment Report on the Health and Social Care Needs of Travellers in Ealing* (London Borough of Ealing Social Services/Ealing Hounslow and Hammersmith Health Authority, 1999); M Gaffney, *Needs Analysis of the Travelling Community in Southwark* (Social Inclusion Unit, London Borough of Southwark, 2001)

Force welcomes these measures and recommends that the level of support for voluntary agencies working with Irish Travellers in Britain be increased so as to find appropriate ways to address their needs in mainstream services.

- 5.23 The Task Forces notes, in this context, that following the O’Leary judgement of August 2000, Irish Travellers are considered as an ethnic group under the terms of the 1976 Race Relations Act. It is important that the implications of this judgement are taken into account in developing support services for Irish Travellers in Britain.
- 5.24 The Task Force notes also that second generation Irish Travellers in Britain experience special difficulties, notably in relation to education and health. The Task Force considers that further research should be conducted in this area to determine the extent of the needs and the most appropriate solutions.

Needs of Prisoners

- 5.25 As indicated in paragraph 1.13 above, the Task Force could not deal in depth with the needs of Irish prisoners abroad. However, the Task Force notes that some Irish emigrants who are prisoners in Britain encounter particular difficulties when they are released from prison because of the time it takes for them to access their social welfare entitlements. During this time, they have no resources to sustain themselves and are forced to rely on the services provided by Irish voluntary agencies. The Task Force recommends that emergency welfare funds should be made available through voluntary agencies in Britain to support Irish citizens in such situations, subject to appropriate criteria being established in advance.

Second Generation Irish

- 5.26 There is a substantial regional variation in the size and character of the second generation Irish population in Britain. The ratio of second generation to first generation is much higher in locations outside of London and the Southeast. There is a much larger population with Irish links in some regions than is generally recognised. Identity is a complex issue for the children of Irish emigrants. Research² shows that the majority live with hyphenated identities that encompass their region and their Irish identity e.g. London-Irish or Leeds-Irish.
- 5.27 The Díon Committee part-funded a research project³ on second generation

²P. McCarvill, *An Examination of Irish Identity: A case study of second generation Irish people in Birmingham* (Unpublished PhD, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 2002).

³M J Hickman, S Morgan, B Walter, *Second-Generation Irish People in*

Irish people in Britain, which produced the first extensive collection of statistical information relating to this category of the Irish community. The study indicated that the health of the second generation Irish is poorer than their British counterparts of equivalent age and social status. Some aspects of economic and social disadvantage in Irish-born emigrants appear to be passed on to the second generation and the ethnic particularity of this is not recognised because they are usually perceived as English, Scottish or Welsh. In line with the recommendation in paragraph 5.5 above to address the issues indicated by the poor health profile of the Irish in Britain, the Task Force considers that further, comparative research should be conducted into the health and welfare needs of the second generation Irish in Britain and recommends that financial support be provided for this.

Voluntary Agencies

- 5.28 Voluntary agencies provide an essential service to Irish emigrants in Britain. As in other countries, the Task Force notes that the commitment and dedication of staff working in these agencies is extraordinarily high. The Task Force was also impressed by the professionalism and the cost-effectiveness of their operations. The numbers of Irish in need in Britain are such that there is a strong case for increasing the level of financial assistance to these agencies. Following its visit to Britain, the Task Force concluded that there is a much greater need for their services than they can satisfy with current resources. The Task Force recommends, therefore, that the level of funding to Irish voluntary agencies in Britain be substantially increased.
- 5.29 The Task Force notes that the activities of the voluntary agencies are concentrated in England and that relatively little attention is given to the needs of the Irish in Scotland and Wales. The Task Force recommends that more research be conducted into the needs of the Irish in Scotland and Wales and that support be given to the provision of services to meet identified needs.
- 5.30 In an article in *Share*⁴ on The Irish Community in Britain: Health and Service delivery issues, the Federation of Irish Societies set out its position on the development of health services to the Irish community, which has a general application across the areas of need and service provision:

“In addition to areas that would benefit from a specific approach, there are wide areas of commonality that can generally be tackled by mainstream services through appropriate, culturally sensitive services. However, to ensure that needs are adequately met, an Irish dimension must be included in annual purchasing plans, through presentation of

Britain: a demographic, socio-economic and health profile (Irish Studies Centre, University of North London, n.d.)

⁴The Irish community in Britain: health and service delivery issues, Issue 16 (King’s Fund, 1997)

relevant information, and through Irish representation on health commissioning bodies and working parties, especially those relating to minority ethnic communities. Equally, in the present contract culture, small voluntary agencies can work in partnership with other service providers. The Irish voluntary sector in Britain has a proven track record in providing quality services to the Irish community; and while the size of the Irish voluntary sector is limited, there is room for collaboration with the statutory and non-Irish voluntary sector through joint consultation and co-operation.”

- 5.31 The Task Force endorses this view. The key to the future success of the Irish voluntary agencies is to work in partnership with statutory authorities in Britain. The voluntary agencies stress that the major part of the costs of meeting the needs of Irish people in Britain should be met from mainstream resources and programmes to target inequality so that Irish people should feel part of the fabric of British society where they make a significant contribution.
- 5.32 The ability of the Irish voluntary sector in Britain to access funding streams, designed to address inequalities, is a recent development. The move away from block grants to contracts has allowed an increasing number of Irish agencies to draw down statutory funding for specific services. This has been added to funding from a number of charitable trusts. Some Irish voluntary agencies in Britain have also benefited from National Lottery funding there.
- 5.33 Increased capacity in the Irish voluntary sector in Britain would enable more effective representation and service delivery, and promote improved access to culturally sensitive mainstream services and the inclusion of an Irish dimension in race equality schemes. Capacity building is, therefore, a key element in strengthening the ability of the Irish voluntary sector to provide representation and advocacy for Irish needs. The personnel involved in capacity building should prepare a strategic plan, have the ability to assist voluntary agencies in accessing funding, have appropriate networking skills and the ability to prioritise. The Task Force notes that support for capacity building within the Irish voluntary sector was included in the Díon Strategic Plan 2001-03 and that 25% of the 2001 allocation was given for this purpose by funding new administrative posts and co-ordinators in many existing organisations. The Task Force recommends that increased support be given to the Irish voluntary agencies in Britain to help them build their capacity to raise funds from other sources in Britain.

Díon Committee

Díon Funding

5.34 The Díon committee has played a significant part in sustaining the Irish voluntary sector in Britain. It has helped develop capacity within the Federation of Irish Societies and has lent support to a number of maturing service organisations as they have broadened their funding base, extended their activities through the acquisition of professional staff and through the development of volunteering. The doubling of the Díon budget in 2001, which was maintained in real terms in 2002, has facilitated the balancing of a series of inherited commitments to existing voluntary sector organisations with the need to support the development of services in new geographical and service delivery areas. The Task Force notes that the Díon Strategic Plan 2001 - 2003 includes a number of policy changes to reflect current practice and proposed strategy for the future. The most significant changes are:

- the provision of funding for capacity building measures
- an increase in the grant ceiling to €82,530 (IR£65,000) per project (from €57,140 (IR£45,000) per agency previously), with provision for annual review
- the possibility for the Díon Committee to commission its own research into policy-related issues of concern to the Irish community in Britain, and
- the inclusion of two categories of activity previously excluded: (i) counselling and (ii) social support for the elderly

5.35 The Task Force considers that Díon funding has been very effective in helping to meet the welfare needs of the Irish in Britain by enabling the voluntary agencies there to strengthen their capacity to assist Irish citizens to access statutory services and to provide voluntary services directly where appropriate. The importance of the Díon Fund is evident from the facts that

- The level of grants to individual agencies is now substantial - as high as €139,670 (IR£110,000) in one case
- The Fund now supports 97 voluntary sector jobs - more than double the number funded in 2000. About 30% of jobs in Irish voluntary agencies are now supported by Díon while 12 of the jobs supported are in non-Irish agencies
- From information supplied to the Díon Committee by grant recipients, it is estimated that the number of Irish people assisted in 2000 by established Irish welfare agencies was over 20,000, with a further 2,500 in new projects and up to a further 3,000 in non-Irish managed agencies - a total of more than 25,000

5.36 At the same time, the Task Force notes that some voluntary agencies have criticised restrictions in the Díon funding because it covers basic salary costs

only and does not include provision for expenses such as administrative overheads or State pension contributions for staff. The Task Force is aware that these restrictions were introduced to enable the funds available to be spread as widely as possible. However, in the context of the increased level of funding proposed in Chapter 8 below, the Task Force recommends that eligibility for Dón funding be reviewed to enable these costs to be covered.

The Political Context

- 5.37 The Good Friday Agreement has brought about a new dynamic in British-Irish relations. This provides a fresh context in which the needs of the Irish in Britain can be addressed. There have been many signposts of the continuing development of better relationships between the peoples of these two islands including statements and visits by public figures in recent years and the decision to open Irish Consulates in Scotland and Wales. There is a growing desire to strengthen links with Britain on a mature, complementary and equal basis.
- 5.38 In this new positive atmosphere, it is vital that the Irish community in Britain, many of whom suffered during the difficult years of conflict, are seen to benefit in full. Measures to achieve this should be taken at the institutional, political and symbolic levels.
- 5.39 At the institutional level, there is a need to establish a structured arrangement for contacts between Irish statutory authorities involved in providing services to Irish emigrants and their British counterparts. This arrangement should also include the Irish voluntary agencies in Britain. The Task Force recognises that improvements have already taken place. Liaison between Irish Government Departments and their British counterparts has expanded in recent years. This practice should be encouraged and strengthened across all Departments whose activities have a bearing on the situation of the Irish in Britain.
- 5.40 At the political level, the Task Force recommends that, perhaps through the structures of the Inter-Governmental Conference established under the Good Friday Agreement, the two Governments should express their support for the intensification of contacts. The Task Force considers that there should be regular meetings between Irish and British Ministers to discuss issues relating to the Irish in Britain. In particular, there should be at least one occasion each year where the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister take stock of progress on these issues.
- 5.41 These political contacts should be underpinned by symbolic measures, which are vital in the context of confidence building. Prime Minister Blair, in his speech to the Oireachtas on 26 November 1998, recognised the benefits which this generation and previous generations of the Irish community in

Britain had brought to that country, as their adopted country and their home. Both he and other British Ministers have attended functions hosted by the Federation of Irish Societies, as have Irish Ministers. Such recognition further supports the confidence of the Irish in Britain and reinforces the message that addressing their needs is a priority for both Governments.

CHAPTER 6

RETURNING EMIGRANTS

- 6.1 The terms of reference required the Task Force to examine further measures to encourage and facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration of emigrants and their families, especially the vulnerable and the elderly. In discussions with both emigrants themselves and with voluntary agencies abroad, the Task Force found that a desire exists for the provision of essential information, advice and assistance to enable emigrants make informed decisions in this important area.
- 6.2 One of the key issues raised was the need for awareness-raising about the reality of returning, especially about the many changes that have taken place in Ireland in recent years. Another significant issue was the potential loneliness and isolation that may result from returning, particularly in the initial stages. Other important concerns were a desire to obtain in advance information on welfare benefit entitlements and access to health and other public services. Difficulties with the recognition of qualifications were also raised. Among younger families, the possibility of being able to obtain suitable employment was critical. The single most important obstacle to returning raised was the difficulty in obtaining affordable housing.

Information

- 6.3 Emigrants who return to Ireland can encounter difficulties in reintegrating into Irish society. As in the case of those emigrating for the first time, they may need information and advice on such matters as social security and health care entitlements, accommodation/housing, job opportunities and education for children. If people are considering returning after a prolonged period abroad, they may need special counselling to assist them in making a decision that is in their best long term interests. There may also be a need for 'reorientation' to help them understand and cope with the changes that have taken place in Ireland since they left.
- 6.4 The Task Force notes that some progress has already been made in this area. The Department of Social and Family Affairs has published a booklet 'Returning to Ireland' in partnership with Emigrant Advice. It also funds the 'Safe Home Programme' to issue monthly newsletters to advise workers in Irish voluntary agencies in Britain. Funding has been provided to the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants to conduct research on the needs of emigrants should they choose to return to live in Ireland. In addition, the Department provides input and personnel for Information Seminars for Irish Advice workers in Britain organised by the Federation of Irish Societies. A code of practice has been established by the Department and the Federation, in consultation with the Irish Embassy in London, for the exchange of

information between the agencies.

- 6.5 As in the case of pre-departure services, the Task Force considers that the voluntary sector has an important role to play alongside statutory agencies in providing information to emigrants contemplating a return to Ireland. The Task Force recommends that financial support be made available to voluntary agencies engaged in this work to enable them to provide coordinated information and advice.

Employment and Training

- 6.6 Some returning emigrants may require assistance with employment and training. The Task Force recognises that FÁS has already provided assistance in this regard through the provision of labour market information and detailed advice on working in Ireland. The Task Force recommends that FÁS be asked to develop these services for returning emigrants and that appropriate support be provided for this purpose.

Recognition of Qualifications

- 6.7 The recognition of qualifications and professional experience, including foreign driving licences obtained abroad, was raised with the Task Force as being a significant impediment for some people who would wish to return to work in Ireland. The difficulties they face in this regard may prevent their accumulated skills and experiences from being harnessed on their return.
- 6.8 The Task Force recognises that this is a complex area. Decisions on the recognition of qualifications are a matter not just for statutory agencies but also for professional bodies which are not directly subject to Government control. The Task Force understands that this issue is being addressed at EU level. However, it is a source of concern for Irish emigrants returning from non-EU countries also. The Task Force recommends that further consideration be given to this matter by the relevant bodies to ensure as far as possible that regulations in this regard do not present insurmountable obstacles or disincentives to emigrants and their families who wish to return permanently to Ireland.
- 6.9 The Task Force understands that Irish driving licence regulations are required to operate within the framework of a harmonised EU system. This has the advantage that a person who holds a driving licence issued by another Member State of the European Union or of the European Economic Area may exchange their licence for an Irish driving licence without having to take a test if they return to live in Ireland. However, it has the disadvantage that, where EU requirements differ in significant respects from those of non-EU States, the Irish authorities cannot enter into a bilateral agreement that would permit

holders of driving licences issued by those countries to be recognised in Ireland.

Elderly returning emigrants

6.10 The Task Force has found that, while some of the elderly Irish Abroad may wish to return to live in Ireland, this is no longer a viable option for many of them. They have been away for so long that the Ireland they left has changed out of all recognition. To return home now would be like 'emigration in reverse' and might bring as many problems as they faced when they first left. Many of them also have family ties in their host country which make it difficult for them to return. A recent study¹ suggested that up to 27% of older Irish emigrants in Britain might wish to return although it cautioned that this number might be an overestimate. The Task Force recommends that every effort be made to provide appropriate assistance to them. The circumstances of elderly emigrants at present in social or sheltered housing abroad should be given special consideration. Some of them may be frail and vulnerable and may not be able to make expensive pre-return trips to have their needs assessed in advance of their return.

Accommodation

6.11 The assessment of housing needs made by each Irish housing authority in its area every three years focuses exclusively on people whom the authority believes are unable to provide accommodation for themselves. Housing authorities only include in their assessments persons already residing within their own or a contiguous local authority area, and applications for housing from persons living abroad are not considered. The Task Force notes that returning emigrants can apply for social housing on their return to Ireland and, in such cases, they will then be assessed in the same way as any other applicant. However, with the high numbers already on waiting lists for social housing in Ireland, the Task Force recognises that there could be strong resistance from persons already on these lists to any proposal to give priority to returning emigrants.

6.12 The Task Force welcomes the initiative launched in November 2001 by the Department of the Environment and Local Government to facilitate the provision of social housing for elderly returning emigrants by the voluntary housing sector, by way of funding through the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme of that Department. Under the amended terms of the Scheme, up to 25% of sheltered housing accommodation, funded up to a limit of 95% of the capital cost of the project, may be allocated to elderly emigrants who satisfy certain eligibility criteria.

¹The Return of Older Irish Migrants: An assessment of needs and issues, by Nessa Winston (Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants & The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2002)

- 6.13 The Task Force notes that, under this initiative, elderly emigrants applying for such accommodation may be assessed as being in need of social housing in Ireland without the requirement to have first returned permanently. To qualify, they must be living either in existing social housing abroad (e.g. provided by a local authority, housing association, etc.) or in private rented accommodation. In addition, their circumstances must be such that they cannot afford suitable accommodation themselves on their return.
- 6.14 Coordinating the operation of the initiative and assessing the applicants for accommodation under the Scheme is carried out by the 'Safe Home Programme', Mulranny Co. Mayo. The Task Force notes that funding has been provided by the Díon Committee to the 'Safe Home Programme' and to the Return to Ireland 'Aisling' project in London which also provides advice and assistance to elderly Irish who wish to return to live in Ireland. It also understands that some funding has been provided to 'Safe Home' in the form of grant-in-aid by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.
- 6.15 The social housing initiative is in its early stages of operation and it is too early yet to assess its effectiveness as a suitable model for accommodating elderly emigrants. The Task Force recommends that the operation of this initiative be kept under review by the Department of the Environment and Local Government and that all voluntary housing bodies undertaking projects under the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme be encouraged to allocate accommodation to elderly returning emigrants, where the need arises. The Task Force also recommends that the necessary funding be made available to ensure maximum effectiveness of the initiative.

Care and support services for elderly returning emigrants

- 6.16 In its discussions with voluntary organisations and individuals abroad, it was evident to the Task Force that the provision of housing will not in itself resolve the difficulties facing returning emigrants with special needs. The Task Force considers it essential that a well-resourced support system be put in place to help them. This would facilitate their reintegration into the community to which they return without the need for institutional care in the case of the more vulnerable and frail returnees. Without such support, there is a risk that the potential benefits of returning will not be realised to the full in all cases.
- 6.17 The Task Force considers that care and support services for elderly returning emigrants can best be provided in the context of a funding scheme being made available generally for such services in sheltered voluntary housing projects. The Task Force recommends that priority be given to the establishment of a funding scheme for the provision of care and support services in supported housing accommodation provided under the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme.

Holidays in Ireland for the elderly

- 6.18 As noted in paragraph 6.10 above, it is unlikely that most elderly Irish emigrants will be able to return to Ireland on a permanent basis. The possibility of introducing grant assisted holidays, perhaps in the off season, was raised as an alternative means by which elderly Irish emigrants could retain existing links with relatives and friends at home. The Task Force notes that at least one other European country provides such a facility. It also notes that some voluntary bodies already fund such holidays for emigrants in Britain and that these are successful. The Task Force recommends that a 'Holiday in Ireland' scheme be introduced for elderly Irish emigrants resident in Britain on a pilot basis, to be reviewed after three years with a view to the possibility of extending it to other countries.

CHAPTER 7

RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRUCTURES

- 7.1 At present, responsibility for policy on emigration is spread across a number of Departments. The Department of Foreign Affairs provides support for emigrants through its network of Embassies and Consulates abroad. Other Departments and statutory agencies provide services to emigrants, both before they depart and after they return. These include the Departments of Social and Family Affairs; Health and Children; Environment and Local Government; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Education and Science; and FÁS.
- 7.2 The existing mechanism for coordinating Government activity in relation to emigration is the Inter-Departmental Committee on Emigration (ICE). This committee was established under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1988. Its terms of reference are:
- In cooperation with embassies and consulates abroad, to monitor developments affecting migrants
 - To exchange information and ideas between Departments and Government agencies, in particular regarding pre-departure advice and information as well as advice and information services for emigrants and prospective returnees from abroad
 - To coordinate relevant activities of Departments and statutory agencies
 - To develop an information base on emigration issues
 - To identify matters about which action is necessary or desirable
 - To identify the Department or Government agency responsible for action in a particular area and
 - To make recommendations for future action, if necessary, through the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- 7.3 The ICE is chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and includes representatives of the Departments of Social and Family Affairs; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Finance; Health and Children; FÁS; and the Central Statistics Office. It normally meets four times a year.

- 7.4 While the ICE has been a useful forum for exchanging information, it has not become an effective vehicle for coordinating activities or making recommendations for future actions to improve services for emigrants. The Task Force believes that an essential weakness of the ICE structure is that it does not include representatives of the voluntary agencies, which are key providers of services to Irish emigrants, at home and abroad. In addition, it plays no role in the allocation of Government funding for emigrant services, and this inhibits the elaboration of a coherent and coordinated approach in this area.
- 7.5 The Task Force believes that new structures are required to achieve the policy objectives and to implement the practical measures proposed in this report. These structures should include both the statutory and the voluntary sectors. There is need for a broader input into the development of policy-making on emigration at Government level. A more coordinated approach between statutory and voluntary agencies in relation to emigration services is also required.
- 7.6 The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for maintaining contacts with the Irish Abroad and for providing consular assistance and support to Irish citizens overseas. As such, it is well placed to view the needs of the Irish Abroad in the broader context of international relations with the countries in which they reside. For these reasons, the Task Force considers that overall responsibility for policy on emigration should rest with the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- 7.7 The Task Force recommends that a new structure – the Agency for the Irish Abroad - be established under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs to coordinate the provision of services to the Irish Abroad. Initially, this Agency should be set up on a non-statutory basis with its secretariat provided in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Once it is fully established and operating successfully, however, consideration should be given to constituting it as an independent agency on a statutory basis.
- 7.8 The board of the Agency, to be appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, should be drawn from representatives of the Government Departments and statutory agencies most closely concerned with emigrant issues, as well as the voluntary agencies, social partners and other sectors of civil society, in Ireland and overseas, that touch on the interests of the Irish Abroad.
- 7.9 To be effective, it is essential that the new Agency becomes a real instrument for influencing Government policy and for coordinating the work of the statutory and voluntary agencies involved so that all available resources are used to maximum effect. The role of the Agency should be to:

- Advise the Government, through the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on official policy regarding emigrants and the welfare of Irish citizens abroad
- Review existing services and draw up an overall strategy, for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, for the provision of assistance to emigrants and the Irish Abroad; monitor the implementation of the strategy; review its operation at three yearly intervals and propose further Action Plans for subsequent three yearly periods
- Allocate official funding provided for services to the Irish Abroad
- Identify developments affecting Irish citizens abroad, in cooperation with Embassies and Consulates and voluntary agencies overseas
- Develop an information base on emigration issues
- Coordinate activities of the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies and promote increased communication and consultation between agencies at home and abroad

7.10 The Task Force believes that this new Agency, by providing effective and properly resourced services, would enable the Government to give concrete expression to its commitment to the Irish Abroad. The inclusion on the Board of the Agency of representatives of Government Departments with an involvement in emigrant services would also help to mainstream this issue in the elaboration and implementation of Government policy generally and would promote the coordination of services for the Irish Abroad. In addition, the inclusion of representatives of voluntary agencies at home and abroad would demonstrate the Government's commitment to deal with the issue on a partnership basis. The inclusion of representatives of the social partners and other sectors of civil society would help to ensure that the diversity of interests of the different Irish communities abroad were fully addressed. By acting as a clearing house for best practice and innovation, the Agency would be well placed to ensure the dissemination of knowledge and experience and to be a repository of institutional knowledge to the benefit of all concerned in this area.

7.11 A new Unit should be established in the Department of Foreign Affairs to provide the Secretariat for the Agency for the Irish Abroad. The Task Force recommends that the Chief Executive of the Agency should be an officer at Counsellor/Principal level, with support staff at appropriate levels, including additional staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs to support the work of Irish Diplomatic and Consular missions and Honorary Consuls in providing services to the Irish Abroad.

- 7.12 The Task Force recognises that the support given by Irish Missions and Honorary Consulates to the Irish Abroad and to the work of the voluntary agencies providing welfare services is greatly appreciated. However, given the size of the Irish community in certain countries, the Task Force believes that a strong case exists for increasing the number and level of diplomatic and consular staff dealing with this work abroad. The Task Force recommends that, in the first instance, additional officers at Counsellor/Principal level should be assigned to Missions in the United States, Australia and the UK to act as high-level points of contact for the Irish in those countries and to support and encourage the activities of the Irish voluntary agencies in their areas of accreditation. It would be important that these posts be adequately resourced and supported to enable them to function effectively. In addition, the Task Force considers that there is an immediate need for the assignment of additional administrative staff to the Embassy in London to assist with the processing of applications for Díon funding.
- 7.13 Traditionally, the principal criteria for deciding on the establishment of Honorary Consulates have been the extent to which there was a need for consular services or a need to promote trade links with Ireland. However, the Task Force recommends that the extent to which they can support the local Irish community in maintaining their Irish identity should also be taken into account in considering the establishment of Honorary Consulates.
- 7.14 Because of its extensive network of public offices in Ireland and its established links with the voluntary sector and with social security institutions abroad, the Department of Social and Family Affairs is well placed to play a key role, particularly in relation to co-ordinating the provision of pre-departure services and services for returning emigrants. Other Departments and agencies that could be involved include the Departments of Health and Children; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Environment and Local Government; Education and Science; FÁS; Comhairle; and the Combat Poverty Agency. The Task Force recommends that additional resources be provided to relevant Departments and statutory agencies where necessary to extend and improve the services they provide to Irish emigrants.
- 7.15 The Task Force considers that the present arrangement, whereby the Díon Committee makes recommendations on the allocation of grants to voluntary agencies in the Britain, works well and should continue. This arrangement enables the local knowledge of the Irish community to be harnessed in a partnership arrangement with the dedicated support provided by the Embassy to ensure the most effective use of the available resources. The Task Force considers that the Díon Committee offers a suitable model of how welfare support can be delivered effectively to the Irish Abroad and recommends that similar committees be established in the United States and Australia. Applications for assistance from voluntary agencies should be referred in the first instance to these Committees, where they exist, for their recommendations before decisions are taken on the allocation of grants by the

Agency for the Irish Abroad.

- 7.16 The members of Díon Committees should be appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the recommendations of the Agency for the Irish Abroad and should include representatives of the Embassy and the local Irish community.

Coordination between Irish agencies

- 7.17 One of the key roles of the new Agency should be to encourage and support closer cooperation and communication between statutory and voluntary agencies at home and abroad in relation to the provision of services to emigrants. The Task Force is convinced that greater networking and dialogue between Embassies, Consulates and voluntary agencies abroad would lead to a higher level of professionalism in the services offered and a more effective use of the available resources. There should be regular and structured meetings between these groups to ensure maximum coordination. Moreover, the Task Force believes that involving Irish social, educational, cultural and sporting organisations abroad, as well as Irish professional networks, in this process would help them to play a more active role in serving the needs of the Irish Abroad.
- 7.18 The Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) in Britain has established a framework for coordinating the activities of its members in the welfare area and there is a close and productive working relationship between the FIS, the Embassy in London and the Díon Committee. The Consulate General in New York chairs an Immigration Advisory Committee that brings together the voluntary agencies in New York and Pennsylvania to exchange information on welfare matters. In addition, the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres in the US meets once a year and provides an embryonic framework for closer cooperation between the voluntary agencies there.
- 7.19 The Task Force believes that there is scope for improving the functioning of these networks and for extending this mechanism to other countries or regions, particularly areas with dispersed Irish communities such as Australia, New Zealand and the European Union.
- 7.20 There is a need for a structure at the national level for the Irish Abroad in these countries, properly resourced, to effectively represent the interests of the voluntary agencies and other interested groups. The Task Force considers that personnel from each Embassy and Consulate involved in providing assistance to Irish emigrants in the country concerned and representatives of the Agency for the Irish Abroad should attend meetings of these structures, as well as representatives of other Government Departments and statutory agencies as appropriate. There should also be annual or bi-annual meetings in Ireland of representatives of these national structures and

the Agency for the Irish Abroad to exchange information and share experiences.

7.21 The role of these structures should include:

- To compile an overview of current needs and trends in relation to the local Irish community, based on information supplied by affiliated agencies, in the fields of service provision, legislation, culture and citizenship
- To contribute to a coordinated sharing of information and experience among the affiliated agencies involved in the national structure
- To track legislative issues and keep members informed
- To help give voice to the Irish in the host country
- To develop a network and provide information to relevant agencies in Ireland.

7.22 In line with the recommendations in paragraphs 4.29 - 4.32 on the use of the Internet for promoting greater communication and access to information in relation to services for the Irish Abroad, the Task Force recommends that the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the websites of other relevant Departments and statutory agencies and Irish Missions abroad, should include material on the services provided for the Irish Abroad, including the names and contact details of staff dealing with emigrant issues.

CHAPTER 8

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1 At present, Government funding is provided for emigrant services from three principal sources:
- The Department of Foreign Affairs provides grants to voluntary agencies in the US and Australia for the provision of welfare services to Irish emigrants. In 2002, the allocation for these grants is €375,000
 - The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provides grants to voluntary agencies in Britain for the provision of welfare services to Irish emigrants. In 2002, the allocation for these grants is €2,708,000
 - The Department of Social and Family Affairs provides grants to voluntary agencies in Ireland for the provision of information in relation to benefits available to emigrants and returning emigrants. The Department also provides an annual grant to the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres (CIIC) in the US towards the cost of an annual information exchange seminar. In 2002, the total allocation is €127,000
- 8.2 A significant increase in the level of official funding for emigrant services will be necessary to implement the recommendations in this report. The Task Force is convinced that there is compelling justification for such an increase. There is need for a sea-change in the approach to funding for emigrant services and the low level of support currently being provided should not be used as a baseline. The Task Force considers that the determination of resource requirements should be based on an assessment of the needs of the Irish Abroad as identified in this report and the proposals made to fund new or expanded services for the Irish Abroad. It should also take into account that funding from the Irish Government enables voluntary agencies abroad to access additional funds available from other sources in their host country.
- 8.3 The Task Force considers also that funding for emigrant services should be viewed in the context of the substantial sums of money sent back by emigrants over the years in remittances to their families in Ireland and the significant savings to the Exchequer arising from the net outflow of people from this country. The Task Force notes that emigration has been a significant factor in Ireland currently having the lowest percentage of elderly people among the Member States of the European Union. Substantial levels of expenditure would have been required to support them in old age if those who emigrated had remained in Ireland. For example, in 1999 the elderly in Ireland represented 11.4% of the total population, compared to an EU average

of 16.1%, and the level of expenditure on public pensions in Ireland amounted to just 3.4% of GDP compared to the EU average of 12.1%. In addition, while the proposals below represent a significant increase on the existing levels of support, they do not amount to more than a small fraction of total Government expenditure.

- 8.4 The Task Force estimates that an annual budget of €18 million in 2003, rising to €34 million in 2005, is required to provide fully the services for the Irish Abroad proposed in paragraphs 8.5 - 8.14 below.

Support for voluntary agencies abroad providing welfare services to the Irish Abroad

- 8.5 In view of the scale of the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised Irish Abroad, the Task Force believes that an overall allocation of €21 million is justified. However, it recognises that it will take time to expand capacity in the voluntary sector to use these resources effectively to meet the needs of the Irish Abroad. It suggests, therefore, that an initial allocation of €11 million be provided in 2003 building to €21 million in 2005.

- 8.6 The Task Force considers that these amounts should be distributed in 2003, broadly as follows:

- €8 million for services in Britain (increasing to €12 million in 2005)
- €2 million for services in the United States (€6 million in 2005) and
- €1 million for services in the rest of the world (€3 million in 2005)

- 8.7 This funding should be made available for the main purposes spelt out in this report including:

- Grants to voluntary agencies for the provision of welfare and information services
- Assistance towards the establishment and operation of networks to link up voluntary agencies at home and abroad
- Research into the needs of Irish emigrants and the Irish Abroad

- 8.8 In proposing these figures, the Task Force has taken into account the following:

- To attract and keep good quality staff, voluntary agencies must be able to offer them professional terms and conditions of employment. In addition, there is an increasing need in some countries to recruit lay people to work in voluntary agencies to fill the gap created by the decline in religious vocations
- The Díon Committee received applications in 2002 amounting to €4.6 million, almost twice its allocation of €2.7 million. Proposals have been submitted for a substantial increase in the funding of services in the United States
- The numbers of elderly Irish-born emigrants abroad are increasing substantially at present as those who emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s reach retirement age. As a result, there is an immediate need for greater levels of support
- The provision of Irish Government support enables voluntary agencies to build their own capacity to 'leverage' funds from other important sources
- The Task Force is recommending that funding be provided for new and expanded services including the removal of existing restrictions on Díon funding in Britain

Support for pre-departure services

8.9 The Task Force recommends that an initial allocation of €2 million be provided under this heading in 2003 rising to €3 million in 2005. This funding should be made available for the following main purposes:

- Grants to voluntary agencies for the provision of services
- Assistance towards the cost of producing and distributing information materials for potential emigrants

Support for services for returning emigrants

8.10 The Task Force recommends that an allocation of €1 million be provided in 2003, rising to €2 million in 2005 to be used for

- Assistance towards the cost of producing and distributing information materials for emigrants who are considering returning to Ireland
- Assistance towards the cost of 'Holidays in Ireland' for elderly Irish emigrants who are not in a position to return home permanently

Support for activities that help maintain Irish identity abroad

- 8.11 The Task Force recommends that a minimum allocation of €1 million be provided under this heading with provision for an increase to €2 million in 2005 if necessary. If funding is to be provided for the provision of Irish television and radio services for the Irish Abroad, a further €2 million approximately would be required.

Agency for the Irish Abroad

- 8.12 The principal costs that would arise under this heading would include travel and subsistence costs for members of the Board of the Agency, advertising of services, and research. The Task Force estimates that the full year costs in 2003 would be in the region of €1 million. The costs of staff and administrative overheads for the Secretariat of the Agency are included in paragraph 8.13 below.

New posts in the Department of Foreign Affairs at home and abroad

- 8.13 The Task Force estimates that the cost of these posts, including administrative support costs, would be in the region of €2 million in a full year.

Establishment of a Communications Hub for the Irish Abroad

- 8.14 The Task Force recommends that an initial allocation of €100,000 be provided to commission consultants to establish a website to act as a communication hub to link up Irish people and organisations at home and abroad. The maintenance of the website should be the responsibility of the Agency for the Irish Abroad.

Funding for other recommendations

- 8.15 The funding for other recommendations made in this report, including free travel for elderly emigrants, care and support services for returning emigrants, and research on the poor health status of certain groups of Irish emigrants, should be provided in the normal way through the Votes of the relevant Government Departments. Estimates of the costs involved should be made by those Departments.

Allocation of Resources

- 8.16 The Task Force considers that the fragmentation of funding sources across several Government Departments at present does not make for the best use

of the funds available. The Task Force recommends, therefore, that responsibility for the allocation of funds be given to the Agency, subject to the overall approval of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the basis of three-year strategic plans.

- 8.17 The Task Force recommends that the funding provided for services to the Irish Abroad be grouped together in a new subhead of the Vote for Foreign Affairs. The Agency should draw up an annual programme for the disbursement of these funds for approval by the Minister on the basis of consultations with the statutory and voluntary agencies involved. This programme should identify the amounts to be allocated for pre-departure services, welfare services for the vulnerable Irish Abroad, community services to support the Irish Abroad, services for returning emigrants, research and other relevant activities.
- 8.18 The Task Force recommends that allocations for pre-departure services and services to returning emigrants be decided by the Board of the Agency, on the basis of proposals from the relevant voluntary agencies, following consultation with Departments which have statutory responsibilities in those areas.
- 8.19 In relation to funding for welfare services abroad, the Agency should allocate amounts for each country to be disbursed on the basis of recommendations by the Díon Committee in the case of Britain, and by similar committees to be established in other countries such as the United States and Australia. In the case of grants for community organisations and cultural and sporting activities abroad, the Agency should take into account recommendations from Irish Embassies and Consulates. The Agency should have discretion to delegate to Heads of Mission the authority to disburse small grants for support services or activities, on the recommendation of Díon committees in countries where they exist. The levels of these delegated budgets should be set annually by the Agency with the approval of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- 8.20 The Agency should have the authority to commission research on its own initiative or to collaborate in research undertaken or funded by other bodies.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The members of the Task Force have been privileged to serve on this important committee. Throughout its work, they have been greatly moved by the warmth of the welcome they received from the Irish Abroad and by the strong desire of so many of them to maintain their links with Ireland. The Task Force believes that they constitute an enormous resource of goodwill and support that can broaden and enrich the quality of the relationship that binds the Irish at home and abroad together.
- 9.2 It is evident from the research study commissioned by the Task Force that, while the number of Irish emigrants has declined significantly in recent years, a substantial number continues to leave every year. It is evident also that the patterns of Irish emigration are changing. For these reasons, the Task Force has sought to propose a new policy approach that would be sufficiently flexible to be capable of responding to changes in the composition and needs of the Irish Abroad.
- 9.3 A key thread running through this report has been a conviction that the Irish Abroad are an integral part of the Irish Nation and must be recognised and treated as such. As the Constitution recognises, nationality is essentially about identity, not territory. Those who have left this country remain part of what we are as a Nation. It is not enough to remember them; we must also value them, as they do us. This is not just a moral imperative: there are important benefits to be gained for people in Ireland through closer ties with Irish people abroad, as the generosity and influence of those who have gone abroad shows.
- 9.4 It follows from this that the relationship between the Irish at home and abroad should be developed on a partnership basis. The Task Force has proposed new structures to provide services to the Irish Abroad, a significant increase in resources and the main-streaming of emigration issues in all areas of public policy. However, none of these measures will achieve their desired effect unless statutory and voluntary agencies at home and abroad work closely together, communicating effectively and coordinating their activities to make the best use of the available resources. The Task Force hopes that the proposals in this report will help in some way to achieve this goal.

APPENDIX I

Membership of Task Force on Policy regarding Emigrants

Paddy O'Hanlon	Chairman
David Begg	General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Rev. Paul Byrne, O.M.I.,	Director, Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants
Mahon Hayes	Former Ambassador and Legal Adviser, Department of Foreign Affairs
Joe Harrington	Department of the Environment and Local Government (Voluntary & Cooperative Housing Unit)
Professor Mary Hickman	Professor of Irish Studies & Sociology, University of North London and Visiting Professor, Europe- Australia Institute, Victoria University, Australia
Gerry Mangan	Department of Social and Family Affairs (EU/International Unit)
Máire McCluskey	Chairperson, Dion Committee, Embassy of Ireland, London & Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Joe McDonagh	Chief Executive Officer, Foras na Gaeilge
Monsignor James Murray	Project Irish Outreach, New York

Alternate Members

Adrian Flannelly	Emerald Isle Immigration Centre, New York
Seán Hutton	Community Care Coordinator, Federation of Irish Societies in Britain

APPENDIX II

Public Contributions to the Task Force

List of Written Submissions

Action Group for Irish Youth (AGIY), London
Aishling Return to Ireland Project, London
Australian Irish Welfare Bureau & Resource Centre (Illawarra) Inc.
Baines, Bridie
Bergin-Corri, Siobhan
Brady & Mallalieu Architects
Brasseur, Guy
Brennan, Donal
Britain's Irish Travellers
Buckley, Thomas
Camden Elderly Irish Network
Cara Irish Housing Association, London
Carey, Bridget
Carroll, Vincent
Clarke, John J.
Cleary Patrick
Comhairle
Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann in Britain
Conaghan, Thomas F.
Courtney, William J.
Cowley, Ultan
Craig, Ann
Curran, Michael J. cfc
Deery, Stephen and Maeve
Devine, Thomas J.
Doherty, Alex
Doherty, Hugh
ÉAN - The Emigration Network
Ellis, Donna Gay
Emigrant Advice
Emerald Isle Seniors Society, Toronto
Episcopal Vicar for Immigrants, Archdiocese of Sydney
Fahy, Patrick
Federation of Irish Societies in Britain
Fenton, John
Finnegan John
Galvin, T.
Harrington, Mrs. P.

Higgins, Veronica
Huddersfield Irish Centre
Hurley, Patrick
Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy (ICAP), London
Irish Apostolate USA, New York
Irish Australian Welfare Bureau & Resource Centre NSW Inc
Irish Canadian Aid & Cultural Society of Toronto
Irish Charitable Trust, London
Irish Community Care Merseyside
Irish Council for Social Housing
Irish Emigrant Publications
Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants
Irish Centre Housing
Irish Immigration and Pastoral Center of Philadelphia
Irish Immigration Centre, Boston
Irish Immigration Working Committee, New York
Irish Pastoral Centre, Quincy
Irish Welfare and Information Centre, Birmingham
Isherwood, Edward John
Kerry Emigrant Support Housing Association Ltd.
London Gypsy and Traveller Unit
Leeds Irish Health and Homes
London Irish Elders Forum
London Irish Centre
Loughney, Brian
Lynch, Mrs. O.
Lyons, M.
Maloney, Kevin
Manning, Kathleen
Martin, Mrs. Gertrude
May, Mrs. J.
Mayo Immigration Liaison Committee
McGrath, David
Mullarkey, Joe
Nee, Brendan
Ní Ghríofa, Máire
Northampton Irish Support Group
O'Brien, Doctor Rosaleen
O'Connell, P.J.
O'Connor, John
O'Domhnallán, Seán
O'Hagan, Máire
O'Hara-Hawley, Martina A.
Oideas Gael

O'Sullivan Donal
O'Sullivan, Michael
Patton, Henry
Robb, Andrew Bruce
Ryan, Martin
Ryan, S. F.
St. George-Kennedy, James
Sheehan, John
Single Homeless People of Irish Origin, London
South London Irish Association
Southwark Irish Pensioners, London
Sullivan, John
The Gaelic Club Ltd. Surry Hills, NSW
The 'Safe-Home' Programme, Mulranny
Triskellion Theatre Company, Nottingham
Tunney Frank
Twomey, Patrick
Walsh, Patrick
Warren, G. F.
Waters, Robert

List of Oral Presentations

Cowley, Dr. Jerry, T.D., The 'Safe Home' Programme, Mulranny, Co. Mayo
Delaney, Tadhg, Department of Health and Children, Dublin
O'Donovan, Anne, Emigrant Advice, Dublin
Punch, Aidan, Central Statistics Office, Dublin
Walter, Dr. Bronwen, Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge
Winston, Dr. Nessa, Department of Social Policy & Social Work, University College, Dublin

List of Groups met abroad

In Britain

Action Group for Irish Youth
Aisling
All Party Irish in Britain Parliamentary Group
An Teach Irish Housing Association
Birmingham Irish Community Forum
Brent Irish Advisory Service
Cairde na Gael
Camden Elderly Irish Network
Cara Irish Housing Association
Coventry Irish Society
Federation of Irish Societies
Gear Projects, Gloucester
Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre
Haringey Irish Community Care
Huddersfield Irish Society
Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy
Innisfree Irish Housing Association
Irish Chaplaincy in Britain
Irish Centre Housing
Irish Housing Forum
Irish in Greenwich
Irish Diaspora Foundation/Irish World Heritage Centre
Irish Community Care Manchester
Irish Support and Advice Service, Hammersmith
Irish Community Care Merseyside
Irish Business Group, Birmingham
Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas
Irish Welfare and Information Centre, Birmingham
Irish Travellers Movement
Job Powerhouse
Justice for Travellers, Leeds
Leeds Irish Health and Homes

London Irish Women's Centre
London Irish Centre Advice Centre
London Irish Elders Forum
London Irish Councillors Network
London Gypsy and Traveller Unit
Luton Irish Forum
Noah Enterprise, Luton
Northampton Irish Support Group
Nottingham Irish Community Association
SafeStart Foundation
Sandwell Irish Community Association
Sheffield Irish Forum
South London Welfare Society
Southwark Irish Pensioners
Southwark Irish Cultural and Arts Development Centre
Southwark Travellers Action Group
Teach na hÉireann/Irish Elders Resource Centre Coventry
Tyneside Irish Centre

In Australia

Aisling Society, Sydney
Australian Aid for Ireland, Sydney
Australian Ireland Fund, Sydney and Brisbane
Australian-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group, Canberra
Australian Irish Welfare Bureau, Melbourne
Australian-Irish Heritage Association, Perth
Ballarat Irish Association
Canberra Irish Club
Celtic Club, Melbourne
Celtic Club, Perth
Claddagh Society, Perth
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí, Canberra
Committee for the establishment of a Chair of Irish Studies in UNSW, Sydney
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Sydney
Eureka Stockade Museum, Ballarat
Friends of Ireland, Canberra
GAA, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth
Hardgrave, Hon.Gary MP, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs,
Canberra
Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce, Melbourne
Irish Australian Welfare Bureau, Sydney
Irish Australian Welfare Bureau, Wollongong
Irish Business Association, Perth
Irish Chaplaincy, Sydney

Irish Chartered Accountants Association, Sydney
Irish Club, Perth
Irish County Associations, Sydney
Irish Echo, Sydney
Irish Government Agencies active in Sydney (Tourist Board, Enterprise Ireland & IDA)
Irish Local Radio, Melbourne
Irish National Association, Sydney
Lansdowne Club, Sydney
National Museum of Australia, Canberra
Noone, Dr Val, Publisher Táin Magazine, Melbourne
Public Diplomacy, Consular Services and Passports Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra.
Queensland Irish Association, Brisbane
Ronayne, Dr Jarlath, Victoria University, Melbourne
Soorley, Hon. Jim, Lord Mayor of Brisbane

In the US

Aisling Irish Center, New York

Emerald Isle Immigration Center, New York

Immigration Lawyers - Jim Byrne & Suzanne Bogue

Immigration Resource Center, Philadelphia

Irish Apostolate, USA, New York

Irish Bishops Conference in US, Chicago, Bishop Raymond Boland

Irish Cultural Centre, Boston

Irish Embassy Hostel, Boston

Irish Immigration Centre, Boston

Irish Immigration & Pastoral Center, Philadelphia

Irish Immigrant Support, Chicago

Irish Immigration Working Committee, New York

Irish Pastoral Centre, Boston

Project Irish Outreach, New York

Residential Builders Association, San Francisco

United Irish Cultural Center, San Francisco

Undocumented Irish Community - Representatives

Ulster GAA, Club San Francisco