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Review of Employment Pacts

In Dublin and Midlands Region since 2004

Commissioned by Pobal

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Introduction

Local Development Social Inclusion Programme

The Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (1994 . 1999) sub-programme for the Integrated Development of Disadvantaged and Other Areas designated 38 areas throughout Ireland as disadvantaged and funded Partnership Companies to implement action plans under the Local Development Programme. A further 33 Community Groups (later known as Community Partnerships) were set up in non-designated areas to assist local communities in tackling problems stemming from unemployment and social exclusion under an agreed action plan.¹

In 2000, the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) succeeded the Local Development Programme (LDP). The overall objective of the LDSIP was

to counter disadvantage and to promote equality and social and economic inclusion through the provision of funding and support to Partnerships, Community Groups and Employment Pacts that adopt a partnership approach to tackling issues on the basis of comprehensive, integrated local development plans designed to counter social exclusion and to equitably target the opportunities and benefits of development to the most disadvantaged individuals and groups within their areas.²

The concept of social exclusion is intended to incorporate aspects of disadvantage beyond income deprivation. It recognizes the separation experienced by some groups and individuals from the benefits and opportunities enjoyed by most people in society. The concept is defined in the National Development Plan, 2000 . 2006 and Partnership 2000 as

“cumulative marginalization from production (unemployment), from consumption (poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision making and from an adequate quality of life.”

Under the LDP and subsequent LDSIP, the Partnerships and Community Partnerships have had flexibility to prepare local development plans that respond to local economic and social needs. While actions funded by the LDSIP involve integrated responses to the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, they are grouped into three areas of activity:

- Services for the Unemployed
- Community Development
- Community-based Youth Initiatives

The list of target groups has grown since the beginning of the LDP and today, the following disadvantaged individuals and communities are specifically named amongst the target groups of the LDSIP:

The long-term unemployed; Disadvantaged women; Disadvantaged young people; Travellers; Older people; People with Disabilities; Homeless people; Ex-prisoners and ex-offenders; Low-income farm households; Asylum seekers and refugees; Migrant workers; Substance mis-users;

¹ Dept. Tourism, Sport & Recreation, 20 Questions on Local Development in Ireland, 1999, p.5

² ADM Ltd, 2000, p.8

Lone parents; The underemployed; Lesbians, gays and bisexuals; Early School Leavers; Young people at risk; Disadvantaged communities living in isolated rural areas or deprived urban areas.

Territorial Employment Pacts

Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) originated in 1998 as an initiative of the EU aimed at developing local, participatory and coordinated actions targeting unemployment and new employment opportunities in regions, cities, towns, rural areas and employment catchment areas that share certain socio-economic characteristics. 85 TEPs were established throughout the EU.

The TEPs (now called Employment Pacts) were initiated as a response to persistent high unemployment across the EU. The Commission view was that EPs should encourage widespread regional or local partnership in high unemployment areas.

Given that Ireland had already put in place the Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (OPLURD) at local and district level, which encompassed much of what EPs intended to address, four Irish EPs were established, each with a different type of regional focus - Westmeath, Dundalk-Drogheda, Limerick and Dublin.

In 2001, responsibility for the Employment Pacts was transferred from the Department of the Taoiseach to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and mainstreamed within the *Local Development Social Inclusion Measure* of the S&E and BMW Regional Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan, administered through Pobal (then Area Development Management Ltd).

In common with other LDSIP delivery agents, the Pacts were assigned a Liaison Officer by Pobal and are required to submit Strategic Plans, Annual Reports and Programmes of Activities. They are not required to participate in the SCOPE monitoring system as they do not interact with individuals.

In 2003, after a review and consultation process, both Dundalk-Drogheda and Limerick Employment Pacts were subsumed into local Partnerships i.e. Dundalk Employment Partnership and PAUL Partnership (Limerick).

The remaining Employment Pacts, in Westmeath and Dublin have focussed in varying degrees on strategic policy issues, innovative employment projects, active research in local labour market issues and dissemination of best practice. The results and learning have impacted on local, regional, national and EU-level policy development.

Economic and employment growth together with increased globalisation in recent years have brought a greater need for knowledge based skills and general upskilling of the labour force. Other factors such as a burgeoning services sector, increased participation by women, changes in employment practices and net immigration pose major challenges into the future. Employment Pacts have contributed to the body of learning to meet the employment needs of the most disadvantaged.

2002 Review of Pacts

The Fitzpatrick report³ in 2002 highlighted a number of key items related to the future role of Pacts. Referring to the crowded local development pitch, the report pointed to the need for the EP's relationship to existing structures to be more clearly defined.

The evaluators suggested that EPs can play a valuable role in relation to research and analysis informing both regional socio-economic development and work undertaken by Partnerships in targeting the most marginalized and ensuring that opportunities arising from economic development be tilted towards the socially excluded.

They further recommended that EPs might undertake pilot work that is neither feasible nor appropriate to Partnerships, but which would assist, enhance or support the Partnerships' work in meeting the objectives of the LDSIP. The evaluators suggested that the focus of EPs should lean towards research/analysis, especially research related to addressing the needs of disadvantaged target groups.

Where EPs become involved in projects, they recommended that this engagement should be clearly linked to the need to provide learning for Partnerships in carrying out their social inclusion remit. Similarly, EPs should avoid becoming an implementer of supports that are not prioritised by local Partnerships.

2004 Review of Pacts

Following on from Fitzpatrick's review, Pobal published a paper on the future roles of the EPs after consultation with the delivery agents in 2004⁴. This recommended, inter alia, that EPs should

- Take a strong social inclusion focus in their work
- Assume a complementary, overarching or flanking support to Partnerships and Community Groups in developing their work brief . i.e. focusing on research, regional development strategies, socio-economic analysis that will inform or add value to their work;
- Interact with other development agencies, including regional and local authorities and statutory agencies
- Take a target group focus within a regional or sub-regional context as appropriate across the 2 relevant Measures of the LDSIP in tracking progress and developing strategies to enhance the condition and status of target groups;
- Facilitate mainstreaming of the work of EPs and other organisations within the LDSIP;
- Be organised on a regional or sub-regional basis and be closely linked to the operational area of a range of local development players.

It added that EPs should be solely focused on the (a) Employment Measure and (b) education within the Community Based Youth Measure as it impacts on career opportunities and socio-economic life chances.

Current Review – Aims and Method

The purpose of the current review is to track progress in moving towards the roles envisaged in the Fitzpatrick's and Pobal reviews, to establish the contribution of the work of the Employment

³ Fitzpatrick Associates & Mentor Economic Developments Ltd , 2002, *Territorial Employment Pacts in Ireland*

⁴ Pobal Discussion Paper, 2004, *The Role and Purpose of Employment Pacts within the LDSIP*

Pacts to the objectives of the LDSIP currently and to identify the potential role they may play in a future Social Inclusion Programme.

A key question arises from the integration of Pacts into the LDSIP, their ability to add value to the Programme, and their capability to alter their focus to a social inclusion one focused on the target groups of the Programme.

A further question relates to their relationship with Partnerships, and their place in the consolidated landscape brought about through the Cohesion process. Their continuing location within the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme is dependent on a clear determination of their contribution and role within the LDSIP into the future.

The positioning of EPs within the LDSIP also poses a challenge to Pobal and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to analyse the contribution that the Pacts make (both now and in the future), recognise their distinctive features from other LDSIP delivery agents and, thus, ensure that the relationships and/or contracts in place are designed to empower the Pacts to make the greatest possible contribution to future Social Inclusion Programmes.

This review is intended to inform these deliberations and decisions. Specifically it aims to

- Assess the impact of Employment Pacts (EPs) in terms of their contribution to social inclusion and the aims and objectives of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and, in particular, the added value, if any, brought to the Programme
- Ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of Pacts in addressing the employment needs of the most marginalized in the context of the changed environment that they now operate in
- Make proposals regarding the future of Pacts and in particular the role, if any, that Pacts might assume within a new Programme under the NDP 2007 - 2013, the nature of the relationship with the Programme, and the contractual relationship with Pobal.

The research process meets the project brief and objectives through the following approach:

- Examination of key records proffered by Pobal and the Employment Pacts
- Review of Existing Literature on the work of Employment Pacts
- Structured qualitative interviews with 15 key stakeholders
- Examination of current and emerging policy and operational contexts
- Consideration of delivery structures and corporate structures and their fitness for future needs i.e. their potential contribution to the aims and objectives of the LDSIP and its successor.

As the principal purpose of the Review is to facilitate the consideration of future options, it has relied on existing evaluations of impacts rather than engage in any primary measurement of these. Sources are listed in the appendix.

Dublin Employment Pact

Early Years

The Dublin Employment Pact was established in 1998 to promote integrate action on employment issues at a Dublin regional level. It brought together key social partners to develop a regional perspective on and response to employment and social inclusion issues in the metropolitan area.

The key factors behind the need for such a body were an unemployment rate of 14% in the city and poor co-operation and territorial integration in tackling employment and local development issues in Dublin. Thus, the primary purpose of DEP when founded was,

“ to create a strategic alliance of the key actors in the Dublin Region to focus on Dublin’s unemployment problems and to develop policy responses to assist in solving them.”

The initial partners to the Pact included ICTU, IBEC and the Department of An Taoiseach. These were joined by Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Congress Unemployed Centres, the Dublin local authorities, the Dublin enterprise boards, FÁS, the Dublin Regional Authority, the educational sector and the Dublin Local Partnerships.

The initial action areas were . Long-term Unemployment; Youth Unemployment and Education; Social Economy, Policy and Coordination; New Target Groups.

By 2002, DEP had concentrated its focus on those in employment for a number of reasons . the economy had reached almost full employment levels, in-work poverty was growing, international trends in competitiveness and labour inputs were increasingly requiring Ireland to provide knowledge rather than manual inputs. With 80% of the 2020 Dublin workforce already in today’s workforce and lifelong learning not widely available or practiced amongst low paid workers, the DEP’s analysis was that the city’s lower skilled workers are particularly vulnerable to the changes required to serve domestic and export markets.

These trends were identified in research commissioned from the ESRI by DEP and the Dublin Regional Authority in 2000 and conducted by DEP itself in 2001. Hence, the Pact’s Strategic Plan for 2004 . 2006 focused on low skilled employed groups and on understanding and addressing the labour market and social position of new immigrants whose arrival was predicated on the recent economic and political changes.

Actions and Impacts Since 2004

In this period, the Pact has operated four core strategies:

- Building Integrated Social Inclusion Strategies
- Creating a more open, accessible and inclusive labour market
- Enhancing creativity and innovation in local enterprise programmes
- Developing innovative solutions to education and skill disadvantage in the labour market

The outputs arising from these strategies have been subject to evaluation by, inter alia, Pobal and Hibernian Consulting. The following headline achievements have been recorded through previous evaluations, annual reports and Pobal reviews and through interviews with key personnel conducted for this review⁵:

- Agreement of comprehensive social inclusion programme for Dublin agreed with DRA (representing 4 local authorities) and the local development sector.

⁵ For list of interviewees, see appendix

- Integrated Labour Market Services Initiative (with Partnerships, RAPID etc) and Equal at Work (with 48 partner organisations) project have brought about a wide range of policy and practice developments in the regional labour market that have benefited low skilled workers and employers (both public and private sector) as well as focusing the agenda and service provision of training agencies. The Pact's Equal Initiative operates 15 programmes including the development of a diverse recruitment strategy with a number of key hospitals and employers.
- The Learning at Work Initiative operating in five Partnership areas has provided pathways to education completion for early school leavers in employment and has further potential for development within a strategic framework.
- In conjunction with Dublin Partnerships, the Pact piloted the recruitment of people to the public service without the required formal qualifications by formulating a competency model for the assessment of skills for the job. This resulted in a ministerial order opening up 6,000 jobs and creating specific opportunities for marginalized groups.
- Equality and access issues have been progressed consistently through the labour market pilots and programmes
- The Pact's work on the digital divide led to a policy outcome as the Information Society Commission recommended that the community-based approach be adopted as a mainstream method⁶
- DEP report (in conjunction with WEP, Pobal and Clann Credo) on Social Finance has influenced the Minister for Finance to make budgetary provision for a social finance programme

Sample Case Study Impacts

Equal at Work

The Equal at Work project centred on reforming Human Resources policies and practices in the Dublin labour market to achieve outcomes for low skilled and low paid employees. Over two rounds of the project, there have been over sixty partners including agencies, NGOs, employer groups, trades union, public and private sector employers. All Partnerships and Local Authorities in the catchment area were involved, making it one of the biggest Equal projects in Europe.

The project was part of the EU Equal Initiative and had a budget of " 3.4m over both rounds . 70% from ESF and the remainder from public and private sources, including LDSIP inputs.

Key outcomes have included:

- Development of competency-based job profiles for local authority positions and acceptance of these as entry route for positions through Partnership agreement and signed by ministerial order in 2004.
- Job rotation pilot (with Northside Partnership) was approved for mainstreaming by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS as a labour market insertion tool.
- Agreement of third level progression path with Dublin City University for FIT graduates without Leaving Certificates.

Besides these outcomes, Equal has impacted on the Dublin labour market in the following ways that were dependent on collaborative actions .

⁶ Cf. Information Society Commission, *Learning to Innovate*, 2005

- Through Equal at Work the work of the Pact became more relevant to Dublin Partnerships as it provided a concrete, resourced way to pull together what the individual Partnerships were doing and also assisted them to recognize the need to act on a regional basis.
- The transnational link was with urban centres comparable to Dublin in scale, thus facilitating learning on urban labour market issues that was not available in Ireland.

Learning @ Work

This initiative arises from research and analysis showing Dublin to be the second lowest county in retaining students to Leaving Certificate level and identifying obstacles to unskilled young people staying and progressing in the labour market. It provided training to young workers who do not have a Leaving Certificate through five Partnerships who brought together a range of training providers (FÁS, VEC, NALA, schools, private training agencies), employers and other key players.

The initiative received approximately " 500,000 from FÁS and the Department of Education & Science in the years 2001 . 2006 and has been the subject of comprehensive evaluation by Hibernian Consulting.

DEP played a central role in convincing FÁS to fund this pilot and, as a result of positive evaluation, FÁS have adopted the approach as a central element of its policy for low skilled workers, investing over " 1 million in a mainstreamed programme in 2008 . 2009.

Immigrant Workers Initiative

In 2005, DEP set up a Steering Group to support migrant workers and their families in conjunction with Pobal, the MRCI, NCCRI and three Partnerships (including one rural one). This group commissioned a research study, '*An exploration of local strategies for the integration of migrant workers and their families*'.

This led to the further research on the role of migrant workers in providing essential but usually low-paid and often invisible work in the city, '*Realising Integration: Migrant Workers Undertaking Essential Low Paid Work in Dublin City*'.

Published by MRCI, this work benefitted from key inputs from DEP. On one level, they helped to guide the focus of the research especially in areas where they had acquired expertise e.g. subcontracting, manual labour, local authority services and the context of a global working city. At the level of building on the research, they ensured strong publication standards and relevant, targeted dissemination.⁷

A key recommendation of the research is the adoption of an anti-discrimination clause in all public projects at a city level. This is proposed as an effective means to counteract exploitation of migrant workers whether directly employed or working for subcontractors. This clause can be seen as a concrete outcome of the Pact deploying its learning effectively in a multi-agency project

Overall, the initiatives described above provide evidence of influencing agencies, departments and NGOs to change their policies and services in innovative ways based on the research, collaboration work and pilots undertaken by the Pact.

Interaction with Development Agencies, Regional/Local authorities and Statutory Agencies

Himmelman's model (1992) of Integrated Service Delivery proposes a continuum from networking, through coordination and cooperation, to collaboration. Networking involves the simple exchange of information for mutual benefit. The other three relationships involve the

⁷ Interview with Helen Lowry, MRCI, 14th April 2008

increasing alteration of activities by different organisations of their own activities or practices to achieve a common purpose.⁸ The Pact has established high level, working links with all the key players in the training, local development and local government sectors in Dublin. These include the Department of Education & Science, FÁS, CDVEC, all local authorities and CDBs in the region, Dublin Regional Authority, all Partnerships, etc.

Two examples are outlined to demonstrate the type of linkage involved and the level of influence that DEP can exert:

FÁS

- Board membership . FÁS Regional Manager on DEP's board since latter's establishment
- Information Exchange . DEP meets regularly with FÁS's Research & Planning Unit as well as Community and Industry sections. A concrete example was the bringing of UK consultants, Job Rotation to meet personnel from the programme development side of FÁS (and DETE) to brainstorm on in-work upskilling.
- Piloting . FÁS has a key mission to upskill low skilled workers and DEP has influenced them to pilot the now mainstreamed Learning @ Work project. This delivers VEC trainers to lower skilled workers who are identified through Partnerships's link with employers. This project has become a major element of FÁS's strategy for low skilled workers as a result of positive evaluation of the pilot project.
- Influence . DEP can be seen to have influenced FÁS in number of ways . through pilots; through their Annual Labour Market Survey that FÁS now carries out; though its representativeness that gives credibility on account of the presence of those involved in the provision of training. DEP, a small organisation with limited resources, can be seen to have positive access to and influence on the policy and programme development of FÁS, a large agency with 2400 staff and wide-ranging responsibilities and resources

Dublin Regional Authority

- Two elected members of DRA and the director are on DEP board, gives democratic legitimacy
- Gives DRA access to expertise . DEP has more expertise and resources in labour market area
- Strong networking tool and gives added value to DRA in providing it with high level access to the state's enterprise and training agencies
- Allows the managers of the 4 local authorities to get frequent reports on the labour market issues affecting the region through the DRA's director . DEP gets quick and seamless access to the 4 managers also
- Project level - joint projects have had success e. g. The Enterprise and Employment Strategy and Agenda for Dublin, joint conferences on Dublin Economy and Creative Cities

In relation to local authorities, the Pact has, since 2003, submitted its plans to the CDBs for endorsement and support. The Pact board includes members of each of the four Dublin CDBs.

In addressing the integration of the Dublin labour market through these agencies and the local development sector, the Pact can be seen to be making significant progress towards facilitating key players to practice Himmelmann's definition of collaboration.

Expenditure and Funding Sources

DEP's reported expenditure from Pobal funding was " 2, 092,833 for the period 2000 . 2006. In 2007, they spent " 314,949 from Pobal and an additional " 1,802,368 from other sources.

Expenditure headings for the Pobal funding were as follows:

⁸ Cf. Himmelmann, 1992

Period	Administration	Measure A	Measure C	Performance Monitoring	Total
2000 . 2006	" 1,156,962 (55.3%)	" 659,182 (31.5%)	" 276,688 (13.2%)	0	" 2,092,833 (100%)
2007	" 192,251 (61%)	" 85999 (27.3%)	" 28,698 (9.1%)	" 8001 (2.5%)	" 314,949 (99.9%)*

*Rounding applied

An additional " 1,802,368 was expended in 2007 using funds from non-Pobal sources, equivalent to approximately 85% of total spending in the year. The principal sources of these funds were Equal Community Initiative (" 681,418), Department of An Taoiseach ASC Initiative (" 583,800), Private Sector (" 233,833), Local Authorities (" 217,070), Department of Education & Science (" 43,952) and FÁS Services to Business (" 41,433).⁹ Whilst leveraged funding provides a high percentage of overall expenditure, LDSIP funding remains core and central.

Contribution to LDSIP

The Pact has addressed the needs of the marginalized under LDSIP Measures A and C, responding to changing operational contexts by shifting focus to those in work (with low skill levels) and new migrant workers. It has mainly worked through Partnerships, bringing a regional dimension to their work by

- Giving scale to pilot projects
- Gathering and disseminating learning at a regional level
- Coordinating a range of high level statutory actors who could not be mobilised at local Partnership level and makes the LDSIP significant to these actors
- Coordinating NGOs whose work cuts across the boundaries of Partnerships e.g. MRCI
- Ensuring regional mainstreaming outcomes - this is highly significant role, given the difficulties that individual Partnerships and Community Groups nationally have in getting pilot projects mainstreamed.

In 2003, Haase and McKeown summed up the regional aspect of the Pact's function as follows,

*"The DEP has taken on a distinct role in elaborating on the individual experiences of different Partnerships at the regional level. It therefore does not involve itself in the direct implementation of projects on the ground, but aims at providing a strategic forum which seeks to influence policy making for the Greater Dublin Area.... it has brought about a significant number of studies which are largely based on the evaluation of the Partnerships' experiences and which are characterised by a strong policy focus."*¹⁰

The examples above show a continuing trend in this regard in recent years. The work of the Pact can, therefore, be seen as complementary, overarching and distinctive to that of the Dublin Partnerships and the LDSIP in the region.

⁹ DEP, Annual Report, 2007

¹⁰ Haase & McKeown, 2003, p.36

Distinctive Features of Dublin Employment Pact

The following features demonstrate the added value DEP brings to the LDSIP. They also demonstrate the Pact's uniqueness in that its role and functions are not replicated by any other body or structure on the training, labour market, local government or local development landscape.

- The Pact has the capacity to act regionally across Partnership areas
- DEP can take a hit on pilots that do not lead to successful delivery as it isn't embedded in local communities who might have expectations of successful local delivery . allows for more innovation and experimentation
- It can ensure uniform and consistent evaluation of pilots across Partnership territories ensuring consistency and independence in research. Its dissemination activities are aimed at and listened to by a wide range of influential bodies.
- The regional scale of pilot projects allows for greater impacts when projects are mainstreamed.
- It has the capacity to encourage and often to engineer collaboration between departments, agencies, LDSIP delivery agents and NGOs. Whilst networking and inter-agency work has been increasing on the Irish public service delivery landscape in recent years, it has not generally reached the type of collaboration described by Himmelmann. The Pact has encouraged agencies quite far in this regard and has created a trusted environment in which shortcomings can be recognised and innovative solutions proposed. There is much further potential in this work.
- As an inter-agency facilitator, it has unique composition and function . unlike SIM groups, it includes employers and enterprise agencies; unlike CDBs, it has a specific social inclusion focus to upskilling issues.

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Westmeath Employment Pact

Early Years

The Westmeath Employment Pact was set up in 1997 when Westmeath Community Development (Partnership) was invited by the Government to implement a Territorial Employment Pact in its area. It continued under WCD's operational auspices until 2001. It has been the only rural Pact in the country.

WEP built a range of almost 50 partners and supporters to assist in the implementation of the Action Plan. These included employers and their representatives, educational institutions, State agencies (e.g. FÁS, Teagasc, DSFA, and Midland Health Board etc), farming interests, tourism bodies, the local authority, trade union groups and community organisations. Board membership consisted of statutory agencies and local area-based initiative representatives.

The strategic objectives of the original Action Plan focused on the following groups: long-term unemployed, underemployed farmers disadvantaged young people and Travellers. The principal strategies and action areas to meet the needs of these groups were largely centred on labour market initiatives e.g. training, meeting the skill needs of local employers, development of employment networks, enterprise funds, piloting of social economy actions, farm diversification pilots and early school leaving preventative actions.¹¹

The Fitzpatrick Associates evaluation noted many organisational and performance strengths in this period e.g. the focused application of the EP ethos in a rural setting, the translation of appropriate strategies objectives into specific course of action, wide representation and involvement of local stakeholders, strong pilot projects capable of mainstream funding support, effective promotion of increased co-operation and coordination at county level, effective identification of target group needs.¹²

The evaluation noted that the implementation of the Action Plan had not been as smooth a process as might have been anticipated and identified a number of challenges that needed to be met e.g. stronger definition of the relationship between WEP and Westmeath Community Development, increasing the number of partners to projects, avoiding the risk of operationalising those area-based supports not prioritised by WCD and involving employer to a greater degree. The report identified potential for more consultative work leading to the development of policy responses rather than project work¹³

In subsequent discussions with Pobal, these issues were elaborated and refined, finding expression in the 2004 -2006 Strategic & Implementation Plan as follows:

- A move towards research and policy work
- A move to regional responsibility including a bridging role between the region and its constituent counties and sub-county units
- A focus on responses to rural issues, especially rural exclusion¹⁴

The Strategic Plan envisaged WEP evolving from a Westmeath-based and focused entity into a regional player within the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), taking on a

¹¹ *Fitzpatrick Associates, 2002, p. 16*

¹² *Ibid p. 19-20*

¹³ *Ibid p. 20-21*

¹⁴ *WEP, 2004, pp. 15-16*

remit in the area of research/policy, and piloting/coordinating initiatives beyond the scope of individual organisations funded under the LDSIP but which add value to their work.

Three strategies were adopted to meet these goals viz.

1. Regional Strategy . Creating regional structures which will bring the region to a competitive advantage thereby promoting responsibility for the employment situation.
2. Area Based Strategy . Supporting a number of pilot actions in specific areas of extreme disadvantage based on the treatment of selected target groups and the promotion of innovative local employment initiatives.
3. Policy and Research . Linking of labour market and employment policies with structural and economic policies in local and regional levels.¹⁵

There is an overarching labour market focus in each of these strategies.

Actions and Impacts Since 2004

The following actions are an illustrative sample of the work of the Pact since the adoption of the 2004 . 2006 Strategic Plan.

Regional

These actions reflect the Pact's repositioning of itself as a regional entity capable of piloting/coordinating a strategies and actions relevant to the LDSIP and adding value to the work of LDSIP funded groups in the Midlands Region.

- Social Finance Network . Midlands Region. Research with over 100 BTWE (Back to Work Enterprise Allowance) clients and consultation with local Partnerships and Credit Unions leading to Report of WEP in conjunction with DEP, Pobal and Clann Credo) that influenced the Minister for Finance to make budgetary provision for a social finance programme. WEP has participated in an IFSRA/CPA study on Financial Exclusion and has supported several groups by giving technical assistance or providing access to social finance. It has run a conference on Social Finance with Tullamore Wider Options.
- Migrant Workers Information/Support Network . Commissioned study on Building and Inclusive and Diverse Westmeath with Westmeath Equal in 2004. One of the conclusions was that a regional, rather than countywide, approach was required. As a consequence, the Pact has established a regional network of groups working with, or seeking to support, Migrant Workers. This initiative has also led to the training of 15 women to do Community Translation Studies across the four counties of the region. These skills are now available to Area Partnerships, Local Authorities, SIM Groups etc in the region. 48,000 multi-lingual leaflets providing information for migrant workers have been prepared and distributed in English, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and Russian.
- Settlement and Reintegration Project . WEP has assisted in the evaluation of the Midland Simon Community's *Settlement and Reintegration Project* and has collaborated with Simon to examine the feasibility of a loan guarantee fund to provide repayable rent deposits for individuals who have been blacklisted by the Local Authorities or whose deposit is in excess of that available through the Local Authority, and how Simon might use Social Finance in the purchase of property. WEP has also worked with Simon to develop a set of interagency protocols by which clients can receive service and supports from local authorities and the HSE. The protocols were accepted and agreed in 2007 and a final report on the project published.
- Older Persons' ME Plan 50: Article 6 project - this is an ESF funded partnership aimed at combating age discrimination. Themes include active citizenship, lifelong learning, retention/ reinsertion of older workers into the workforce etc. This project, led by the Pact, involved FÁS, DSFA, Midlands Regional Authority, WCDL and the National Counselling

¹⁵ WEP, 2004, p.22

Institute of Ireland. The outcomes have been a survey of 170 persons in the target age group and work is underway to deliver a diploma in Redeployment Guidance Counselling that will address issues of relevance to HR managers as well as to the wider rollout of LDSIP supports to this group regionally and nationally.

Area-Based Strategies

- Traveller Services were identified by WEP as needing specific inputs. As Chair of the Inter-Services project for Travellers in Athlone, the Pact's role was to work with services providers to ensure that they take an integrated and long-term approach to work with Travellers. This led to the completion of a Community Audit that formed the basis for the Community Development Worker's work plan as well as an agenda for the Inter-Services Group. Other actions and outcomes include securing funding for a mediation project to address funding.
- Athlone Education Initiative (Community Based Youth Services) - This collaboration between the Pact, ACT and WCDL addressed educational disadvantage in Athlone by supporting a Home School Liaison Project to fund counselling for individual students, parenting programmes/helping your child with homework, etc. This initiative targeted two schools whose pupils are mainly drawn from the RAPID area in Athlone. The action was later supported financially through the Cohesion Process.
- Equal DP 9 . through this project, WEP and its partners have 1) developed and secured accreditation for six modules that of a proposed modular degree in Guidance Counselling and Psychometric testing, 2) supported Lifebuoy and Lifeplan projects to deliver career planning and progression options for young people in Mullingar and Edenderry, 3) supported Partnership, youth service, Pobal and statutory agency staff to participate in psychometric and ancillary training

Research/Policy

These actions seek to inform local development companies and statutory agencies of new and emerging issues, and to shape policy and practice at local and regional level.

- Northwestmeath Initiative . although based in one county, this is a research action, co-funded with WCDL , on asset-based community development, currently at draft stage. It links with the New Rural Economy action that is concerned with identifying and testing responses to rural social exclusion. In 2005, as part of its agreed work programme with WCDL, and incorporating its action to promote volunteering, the Pact co-funded a piece of research into the needs/situation of communities in North Westmeath. As the only rural Pact, WEP has sought to map the distribution of LEADER and LDSIP resources in the area against certain socio-economic criteria. A number of key issues have been identified including access to services, reluctance on the part of communities to acknowledge social exclusion and a lack of focus for actions across the area.
- Women in Crisis Project: Approaches to Progression - The final report entitled An Assessment of the Education and Training Needs of Women who have experienced Domestic Abuse in County Westmeath was presented to providers and stakeholders in February. The service was able, subsequently, to access places for some of its clients on the Killucan BTEI project, and made links with a number of providers. The issue was then taken up by Athlone RAPID.
- Partner with Westmeath County Development Board in developing an Integrated Plan for Older People 2005 . 2007 covering work, social, transport and self-development needs.

In addition to the foregoing, broad actions and strategies, WEP has been engaged in a range of other shorter discrete actions e.g.

- Part -funding of Community Worker with enterprise brief for Athlone RAPID.
 - Support for community groups applying for Community Support Programme
 - Assessment services for Offaly LEADER for CSP applications
-

- Digital Inclusion project for Older Persons
- High Support Programme for HSE clients with alcohol and mental health difficulties
- Training and Progression project for persons with disabilities or long-term illnesses.

None of the actions listed have been subject to external evaluation in the period since 2004.

Sample Case Study Impacts

Migrant Workers Initiative

Arising from the Building and Inclusive and Diverse Westmeath (with Westmeath Equal in 2004) reports conclusion was that a regional, rather than countywide, approach was required, the Pact has established a regional network of groups working with, or seeking to support, Migrant Workers. This Network includes Laois County Development Board, Tullamore Wider Options, Westmeath County Development Board, Westmeath Community Development, Athlone Community Taskforce, New Horizons, Longford Women's Link, Global Longford and Longford Community Resources, PEAT (CDP).

The initiative has led to the training of 15 women to do Community Translation Studies across the four counties of the region. These skills are now available to Area Partnerships, Local Authorities, SIM Groups etc in the region.

48,000 multi-lingual leaflets providing information for migrant workers have been prepared and distributed in English, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and Russian.

The process of putting together this partnership has been illustrative of the difficulties in the move to a regional approach. It has not been possible to use comparable or similar structures in each of the four counties on account of several factors e.g.

- Agencies and Partnerships in each of the counties were not necessarily prioritising the issue at the same time.
- Territorial integration, regional identity and operational coherence has not taken root to the same degree as in Dublin
- Greater presence of Community Partnerships rather than Area-Based one and hence, much of the geographical area does not have LDSIP coverage
- Large staff turnover in partner organisations.

On account of different structures and services in each of the counties, the process of identifying needs takes a different pace. For instance, Tullamore Wider Options has quickly and unilaterally decided that multilingual information was needed because of the volume of requests coming through their Jobs Club whereas in Laois, with little LDSIP coverage, it took CDB/C&E to prioritise the issue. By the time that the desirability of publishing multi-lingual leaflets had become established in a potential partner organisation in each of the four counties, the original plans and needs of TWO had been slowed down.

The leaflets were part-funded by Comhairle but the Pact led the project. Although a training role was envisaged for the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, this did not happen.

Whilst the publications project achieved its original aim, it offers some lessons for the regionalisation of the Pact's work e.g.

- In implementing a regional project, the Pact had no regional structure to replicate. In attempting to put such a structure together, early movers were slowed down
 - The Pact's role in relation to the information provision did not utilise Comhairle's expertise to its potential. Together with the non-involvement of the MRCI, this highlights the duplication that can happen when a regional Pact initiates projects where specialist partners already have expertise.
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- Whilst Comhairle has a core competency in information provision, it does not have the local and regional coordination role in relation to needs identification and dissemination with a social inclusion programme focus. A regional Pact could have a more defined focus in pulling the regional structure together and providing the interface with specialist and national bodies.

Social Finance

The Pact has been at the forefront of pointing out underdeveloped nature of policy responses in the area of social finance. To this end, it has collaborated with Pobal (then ADM), the Dublin Employment Pact and Clann Credo to produce research that has had significant impact on government thinking and provision.

Since the completion of the research and the response of the Department of Finance, the Pact has worked with a number of Partnerships, Credit Unions, banks and others to 1) develop delivery mechanisms for the provision of social finance and 2) enhance the capacity of Partnerships and local communities to identify social finance needs and exploit opportunities. For instance, Tullamore Wider Options has called on the Pact's expertise to facilitate discussions between providers and users and this has led to the issue being prioritised in Cohesion discussions and a Social Economy worker being recruited. Other Partnerships have engaged in direct relations with Clann Credo and begun to develop their own in-house expertises.

The Pact has supported several other groups by giving technical assistance or providing access to social finance and has run a conference on Social Finance with Tullamore Wider Options. At local level, WEP has met with over 100 BTWE clients to establish who they borrowed from and in particular the role/use of Credit Unions.

The main outcome of the various meetings/discussions held with Partnerships, Community Groups and Credit Unions was the identification of a skills/capacity deficit amongst would-be borrowers and amongst agencies (Partnerships, Community Groups and others) supporting these groups. While moves are underway at Irish League of Credit Union level and within the Department of Finance to address supply side issues, there is clear need to address demand side issues.

The numbers of projects involved to date is very small and there is a lack of pilot actions with demonstrator value that could stimulate demand. There is a real danger that the work to date will lose momentum and focus unless 1) the role that the Pact can play in linking national strategy to on-the-ground players is clarified and resourced, 2) demonstrator projects be defined as such and given extra supports by the Pact, 3) the Pact's role as a regional technical support provider and conduit to national supports be formalised.

These issues mirror much of the learning from the Migrant Workers Initiative i.e. that the Pact has a difficulty in establishing a distinct role for itself in the social inclusion/local development sector because its relationships are not comparable across the four counties of the Region. This reflects on local attitudes to regional structures as much as to the Pact's work in building linkages. The lack of uniformity is seen as a threat to the viability and sustainability of the Pact's work as it will be impossible to avoid ad hoc measures and plugging gaps left by other agencies.

Interaction with Development Agencies, Regional/Local authorities and Statutory Agencies

The Pact is now submitting its Actions Plans for endorsement by each of the regions four CDBs. This has taken some time as the relevance of the Pact to each county has developed at different paces and there has been no overall directive or protocol to local authorities establishing the type of relationship they should have with the Pact. The Pact has a close relationship with the Midlands

Regional Authority who provides it chair and with the Department of Social & Family Affairs. Two linkages are outlined as examples.

Laois County Council

WEP began to develop its links with Laois County Council in 2006 as the latter was developing its Local Anti- Poverty Plan. Although there is no link at board level, executives meet every four to six weeks. The linkage currently centres on the following target groups:

- Older Persons: proposed research
- Money Lending: strategy currently being rolled out
- Migrants: Community Translations
- Travellers: Conflict Resolution

WEP have been a strong resource for the local authority in the past two providing accessible, practical and cost-effective responses to significant issues e.g. the training of Community Translators who will give hours to Laois County Council. The key contribution of WEP here was coordinating the training, the provision of funding and bringing the local authority into the project so that they could make use of the output.

This pattern of relationship has not developed across the other counties, illustrating the difficulties for WEP in operating without formal protocols or roles having being put in place once the role became a regional one. On the other hand, the Pact has assisted the local authority to link to social inclusions initiatives in a practical way and this demonstrates the potential to be achieved if clarity over the local authority . Pact relationship within the context of a regional brief is established/provided.

Department of Social & Family Affairs

DSFA's Regional Employment Coordinator has been on the board of the Pact since its establishment. His DSFA remit includes Unemployment, Disability and Lone Parents and the role links to FÁS and the HSE to identify progressions paths and reduce service gaps. The Pact has played a coordinating role in connecting services by setting up the Westmeath Employment Network and bringing the statutory and community sectors together.

The Pact has influenced the work of the DSFA in the region through 1) research and 2) by acting as a conduit. An example of research was the Needs of the Unemployed in the County by Fitzpatrick Associates. This identified obstacles to progress through interviewing over 300 persons and DSFA changed programme responses on account of the deeper insights gained through linking with the Pact.¹⁶ DSFA has also utilised research on Older Persons employment and Travellers conducted by the Pact to inform their thinking and provision. This has been important to the Midlands Regions DSFA as they have little access to local research.

The Enable Your Life project typifies the broker role where WEP handled the funding and administered the tender for a DSFA funded employment support project for those with disabilities.

In the recent past, the Midlands Region of the DSFA has undergone significant structural changes and all counties in the region have been reassigned to one of three other regions (West, North-east and Mid-West). This will have the effect of forcing other organisations in each of the Midlands counties and FÁS Midlands to look to different DSFA regions, thus dismantling local linkages on employment supports issues. The Pact may be in a position to coordinate this work and ensure a regional coherence to research, co-ordination and brokerage work on employment supports and progression paths actions.

¹⁶ Interview with DSFA, Regional Employment Supports Coordinator 28/04/08

Expenditure and Funding Sources

The Pact reported expenditure from Pobal funding was " 930,191 for the period 2000 . 2006. In 2007, they spent " 162,179 from Pobal and received an additional " 164,110 from other sources.

Expenditure headings for the Pobal funding were as follows:

Period	Administration	Measure A	Measure C	Total
2000 . 2006	" 370,263 (39.8%)	" 503112 (54.1%)	" 56,816 (6.1%)	" 930,191 (100%)
2007	" 54,256 (33.5%)	" 101,094 (62.3%)	" 6829 (4.2%)	" 162,179 (100%)

The principal sources of non-Pobal funds in 2007 were Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment (" 125,476), Department of Social & Family Affairs (" 55,260), Newport & Gwent Article 6 Funds (" 48,073), National Counselling Institute of Ireland (" 41,800) and FÁS Services to Business (" 41,433). Non-Pobal sources provided approximately 50% of receipts in 2007. The equivalent figures were 77% and 63% for 2006 and 2005 respectively.¹⁷ Whilst leveraged funding provides a high percentage of overall expenditure, LDSIP funding remains core and central.

Contribution to LDSIP

The Pact has played an important role in addressing the needs of key LDSIP target groups and supporting those working with them e.g. Travellers, those experiencing homelessness, vulnerable HSE clients, Older Persons, disadvantaged young people etc, especially in addressing the employability of such marginalised groups. It has provided valuable technical expertise to state agencies, CDBs, Partnerships and community organisations on issues such as social finance, conflict resolution and human resource/ labour market activation issues.

However, in redefining the Pact's post 2004 role, no road map to regionalisation was produced and Pobal's support, liaison and monitoring functions were not revamped to take account of the new circumstances and objectives.

WEP has thus been isolated in attempting to establish its own relationships with local authorities. Whilst Partnerships have had a recognised and partially prescribed role in the local development process that is recognised by all, the Pact has had to create relationships without such a framework. As allegiances and commitment to regional structures vary across local authorities and the territorial integrity of the region is not as well established as in Dublin, the Pact has not been able to achieve uniform relationships with each of the local authorities.

The Pact has also had to attempt to establish new linkages with Partnerships and Community Partnerships across the region. The current review has established that there is an uneven understanding, and in many cases confusion, as to the Pact's role. This has been compounded by a patchy approach on the part of the Pact to establishing the new links with the Region's Partnerships. A tendency to use other, existing contacts in the new counties has led to poor

¹⁷ There was a delay in receiving some non-Pobal funding due in 2007. Therefore, leveraged funding may not be on a downward trend.

linkage with Partnerships. Some of this may be explained by the Pact's previous focus on employment in the Department of An Taoiseach and the changed objectives of the new funding programme, the LDSIP.

The liaison and support function provided by Pobal does not appear to have assisted in providing a model for the rollout of Pact activities through the Partnerships and Community Partnerships of the three new counties or to establishing a new relationship with WCD post 2004.

There has been no independent evaluation of any PACT initiatives in the period since 2004. This would also have been expected to be required and requested through the liaison and monitoring process.

The research function of the Pact has been ill-defined. A new research agenda has not been put in place since 2004 to capture issues relating to the changing operational landscape that can feed to the region's LDSIP delivery agents.

The Pact currently has no programmes or activities operating across Partnership or local authority boundaries in a uniform way in which learning can be assessed against comparable criteria and fed to Partnerships. Where the Pact has made been an initiator (e.g. in the area of social finance, protocol development for homeless, labour market activation and influencer of DSFA), progress has not been built on through pilots with opportunities for structured learning that can be applied in other Partnerships in the region.

In terms of its regional objectives and its relationship to the LDSIP Programme Measures, the Pact's actions have lacked coherence. There are too many disparate actions and linkages for the size of budget and staff. Budget cutbacks (of 40% in 2004) were instrumental in forcing the Pact to chase funding in multiple directions and this has diluted the focus of the work.

Board composition is not currently fit for the purpose intended. Without CEB, VEC or employers representatives, it is difficult to maintain the required focus on labour market activation as all the key players in the sector are not present. Their involvement is necessary to ensure effective planning, piloting, funding and programme leverage, evaluation and dissemination. There is no Partnership or Community Partnership representation from outside Westmeath and this is considered essential to establishing the Pact as a regional research and pilot resource for the LDSIP.

The Pact's work also points to considerable potential to contribute to the LDSIP. Many of the deficiencies noted stem from the lack of agreement of a clear brief and the fact that the Pact has been a legacy to the LDSIP from the Department of An Taoiseach. The Pact has maintained a strong focus on the employability of the most marginalised target groups and developed learning, linkages and policies that can be built upon. The positive impacts in the area of social finance, furthering the social inclusion agenda through Laois County Council, labour market activation for Older Persons further demonstrate the role that can be played.

Such a role will be dependent on establishing a clearer and distinctive modus operandi based on research, pilots, dissemination and consistent linkage to Partnerships, agencies and local authorities.

Distinctive Features of Westmeath (Midlands) Employment Pact

The following distinctive characteristics summarise the added value that the Pact can bring to the LDSIP nationally:

- As the LDSIP has not covered all parts of the Midlands Region to date and will soon move to provide complete geographical coverage post-Cohesion, the Pact is the only social inclusion structure with operational knowledge of the entire area.
- It has the potential to initiate and undertake pilots as well as engineer inter-agency facilitation and collaboration in support of social inclusion goals. These objectives are dependent on achieving the correct board composition for such tasks.

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Conclusions and Future Options

The purpose of the review is to track progress in moving towards the roles envisaged in the Fitzpatrick¹⁸ and Pobal reviews, to establish the contribution of the work of the Employment Pacts to the objectives of the LDSIP currently and to identify the potential role they may play in a future Social Inclusion Programme.

These questions are posed in the context that their continuing location within the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme is dependent on a clear determination of their contribution and role within the LDSIP into the future.

Since 2004, on foot of the Fitzpatrick Associates and Pobal reviews, the Pacts have been requested to re-orientate towards a role that is a) overarching and complementary to Partnerships through research, piloting, analysis and dissemination and b) regional in scope and distinctive in relation to other actors. These goals encapsulate the potential of the LDSIP identified later by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) Developmental Welfare State report in 2005.

This envisaged a need ~~for~~ innovative, pro-active measures... akin to the R&D sphere of the Developmental Welfare State¹⁹ to be undertaken by community, public and private organisations to respond to ~~unmet needs~~ Typical needs would be *helping jobless people to participate in the open labour market, stemming educational disadvantage, combating social exclusion and area disadvantage, responding to homelessness etc.* These needs would be met ~~initially in a particular and once-off manner but with implications for mainstream service provision that are systematically identified.~~¹⁸

The NESC Report outlines the failure thus far to exploit the potential of Partnerships to implement such activist measures,

*Area-Based Partnerships seek to improve the inclusiveness of Ireland's labour market by appropriately supplementing or influencing active labour market policies at national level so that more of their clients in deprived areas can access Ireland's stronger economy. However, it is not clear if they primarily constitute a further layer of administration required if central funds are to be properly targeted, or are there to innovate complementary activities which enhance the local take-up of centrally-directed programmes, or are major players which central bodies are there to support.*¹⁹

In support of this argument, NESC cite

1. The centrally set, uniform for Partnership spending
2. The danger of central agencies viewing Partnerships as delivery vehicles for national programmes rather than seeing themselves at the centre as supporting local agents who are best placed to determine how to translate public resources into outcomes
3. National programmes often have design features that limit their usefulness and Partnerships don't have the authority or autonomy to tailor these to local circumstances
4. The considerable body of research produced through Partnerships¹⁹ work since 1993 has produced ~~few firm and widely agreed conclusions~~

The work of two Pacts since 2004 can be seen as a response to the challenge for the LDSIP laid down by NESC as well as an attempt to rise to the potential of the LDSIP also identified by NESC.

In a Dublin context, the work of the Pact has begun to contribute to the Programme's potential to meet the R&D role envisaged by NESC and has further potential to do so. This can be argued on the following grounds

¹⁸ NESC, 2005, p. xx

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.190

- It facilitates research and agreed analysis of labour market issues amongst public, private and NGO spheres
- It brings these spheres together for pilot R&D actions
- The evaluation processes is shared and discussed and leads to joint ownership of results
- The dissemination process is resourced
- The presence and collaborative willingness of essential actors improves the mainstreaming potential.

In these ways, the DEP is overcoming some of the shortfalls that NESC identify in the role that Partnerships play in the R&D sphere of the Developmental Welfare State.

Dublin has historically suffered from insufficient territorial integration and collaboration and the Pact has successfully begun to address this deficit in the creation of a socially inclusive labour market.

Given the distinctiveness of DEP's characteristics outlined in a previous section, there is a strong argument for a continuation of the DEP's work to get its core funding from a Social Inclusion Fund and that its relationship to that source should reflect the desirability of maximising the contribution that DEP's work can make to social inclusion and employability issues citywide.

In particular, the Pact's effectiveness in recent years in bringing about mainstreaming outputs (with FÁS, CDVEC, Dublin City Council etc) demonstrates that it has the experience and skill to offer a strategic support role to the region's Partnerships. At present, however, it lacks the formal framework/contract to provide such support on a wider, systematic basis and this is an area for possible future negotiation.

The Westmeath (latterly Midlands) Employment Pact has demonstrated some success and further potential to enhance the LDSIP in a context where the territorial identity and allegiances of the Midlands Region are not well established as is the case in Dublin.

Whilst the Pact has encountered significant obstacles in adapting to its post 2004 brief, there is an argument for a mechanism in rural Ireland to undertake regional research, pilots, evaluation, dissemination and the promote collaboration between local, regional and national actors.

Such an argument needs to be placed in the context of the current restructuring of the local development sector through the Cohesion Process. This will lead to complete geographical coverage of Partnerships in the Region for the first time. The Pact has not been a part of the Cohesion Process in the Region to date.

Cohesion and new countywide coverage will lead to new opportunities to promote greater integration of local structures and co-operation between organisations. Partnerships will henceforth be in a better position to carry out actions to support community groups and target groups outside current LDSIP areas.

Without a clearly defined brief, there is a considerable danger that the Pact will become marginal to the core objectives of the LDSIP, picking up non-prioritised work of Partnerships or actions identified at SIMs or CDBs that do not have a lead or coordinating agency.

As the LDSIP (or its successor) moves to complete national coverage, it will move into many new rural territories for the first time. Many of the 33 Community Partnerships operate in provincial towns and so the task of promoting social inclusion in rural areas is soon to expand greatly. As this will happen in the context of merging with rural development organisations, the consequent potential dilution of the social inclusion ethos necessitates a renewed focus on research highlighting what works and disseminating best practice in a rural context.

The need for a research and piloting capacity across LDSIP delivery boundaries does not presuppose whether such a mechanism be a separate organisation or alternatively a funded procedure to operate an intermediate role assisting Partnership to act in consortia.

DEP has shown that a separate organisation can carry out this role in an operational territory with a strong identity and geographical loyalty. Whether a separate organisation can carry out a similar function in a less integrated territory is questionable. Furthermore, the Midlands Region's social profile is not likely to offer adequate opportunity to act as a research and piloting laboratory for rural Ireland. A key challenge exists in how to construct and manage such a rural laboratory.

Options

The principal options to meet the ongoing objectives of the LDSIP are to 1) use the existing Pacts as research and development arms of the LDSIP or 2) set up an innovation fund to contract such work from multiple sources.

In consideration of the first option, the call made in the Fitzpatrick Review, 2002, for the relationship of the Pact to existing structures (Pobal, Partnerships and/or incoming companies operating LEADER/LDSIP programmes, local authorities and CDBs), to be clarified still holds.

The relation of the Pacts to Pobal will need to be redefined if Option 1 is pursued. Pobal will need to consider how to formalise the deployment of contracted agencies to create testing grounds and sharing learning and best practice across Partnership boundaries at regional level.

Before a reporting and liaison structure is put in place, all parties should generate an understanding of the potential of the new brief and relationship. There is a need to create a new POA framework, new reporting structures and new assessment criteria that accommodates a regional brief, a partnering role and a focus on achieving mainstreaming outputs.

These will take into account the substantive difference between LDSIP delivery agents (e.g. Partnerships) and organisations with an intermediary, research and dissemination role (Pacts). The generation of such an understanding and such criteria is necessary to record, resource and productively support the work of organisations with such an enhanced role.

In addition, the following issues would need to be taken into account

- The Pacts role must be defined in a way that a) avoids duplication with Partnerships, local authority Community & Enterprise departments and SIM groups.
- The expertise of DEP, and to a lesser extent WEP, lies mainly in the labour market area. Consideration will need to be given to expanding and resourcing a wider brief if the focus of Pacts is to go beyond employability in contributing to the LDSIP and its target groups.
- Whilst the existing relationships to key agencies and departments show examples of leverage and collaboration, this does not necessarily equate to unidirectional influencing. Agencies themselves have ongoing budgetary and resource challenges and may have vested interests in deploying certain actions through collaboration with Pacts. Therefore, it is important to continually ensure that such actions promote the overall objectives of the LDSIP.
- The developmental opportunities and enhanced geographical coverage that is due from the Cohesion Process create a much changed operational environment in rural areas. This will necessitate a strong focus on the promotion of social inclusion goals in 1) new rural areas and contexts and 2) in an integrated delivery context alongside the LEADER programme.

The second option recognises the need to generate and disseminate learning in different environments across Partnership boundaries and in wider territories than the operational areas of existing Pacts. It has flexibility to adapt to issues of scale, changing environment in rural, remote

and provincial town environments but may lack the structural consistency and human resource experience that exists in the current organisational setting.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is the conclusion of this review that the following options be explored:

In Dublin, a new relationship should be explored with DEP to formalise the provision of research, piloting and dissemination services to the new LDSIP programme. These would focus on Dublin-wide actions to realise specific aims of the LDSIP with regard to 1) raising basic skill levels among people with educational needs who are in employment, 2) development of the social economy and 3) the integration of immigrant communities into an equitable labour market.

These equate to the Pact's current strategies in relation to employability. The potential role of the Pact in relation to other social inclusion themes should also be addressed whilst clear delineation should be set out for those Pact activities that lie outside the objectives of the LDSIP such as the development and management of a Forum of Partnerships and human resource supports for community sector employers.

The current operational structures and geographic remit of the Midlands Employment Pact does not offer adequate opportunity to meet the research, piloting and dissemination needs of socially excluded rural groups and individuals in a new nationwide LDSIP.

Whilst the weakness/lack of updated central support protocols has been highlighted in this review, the weakness of the territorial integrity in the Midlands and its lack of demonstrator potential for other rural territories must also be acknowledged as a significant ongoing barrier to working across Partnership boundaries. A continuation of the current regional role centred on the Midlands Region will not meet the wider objectives of the LDSIP with extended rural coverage, notwithstanding the efforts of MEP staff and board.

It is recommended that Pobal enter discussions with key players in the delivery and management of the LDSIP in different rural environments to begin the process of designing a mechanism to support them through research, piloting and dissemination.

This option will require discussions with MEP on the future of its activities and the fulfilment of its existing contracts and projects. Whilst there is no long-term basis for sustaining activities at the current regional level, their work on the employability of Older Persons, Migrants and Travellers at county level is a significant contribution to tackling social exclusion for highly marginalised groups. There would be merit in documenting and evaluating this work with a view to a) wider dissemination and b) continuing or developing the work through possible reintegration into a countywide structure post Cohesion.

Appendix - Sources

Individuals Consulted

David Connolly	Chairperson, Equal @ Work and Manager, Dublin City Partnership
Catherine Durkan	Education Coordinator, Blanchardstown Partnership
Larry Fullam	Manager, Midlands Employment Pact
Eamonn Henry	Offaly Sports Partnership and (formerly) Tullamore Wider Options
Breda Kennedy	Pobal
Anna Lee,	Former Chairperson, DEP and Manager, Tallaght Partnership
Aiden Lloyd	Pobal
Helen Lowry	Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland
Yvonne Murphy	Laois County Council
Eamonn McCormack	Employment Supports Coordinator, Department of Social & Family Affairs
Philip O'Connor	Manager, Dublin Employment Pact
Joe Potter	Manager, Westmeath Partnership
Patricia Potter	Director, DEP and Dublin Regional Authority
Jim Stone	Director, WEP and Midlands Regional Authority
Frank Walsh	Director, DEP and Director, FÁS

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