

Section

7

Conclusion

The remarkable transformation of the Irish economy in the last decade came about because certain crucial strategic, long term and farsighted policies were put in place. These included, for example, the decision to invest heavily in the education system; the introduction of free secondary education and school transport in the 1960s; the movement towards a more open economic model and EU membership in the 1970s and the social partnership approach adopted in the 1990s. These supported other factors such as the expansion of the technology and services sector in Ireland.

Common to all of these individual policy ventures was a sense of knowing what needed to be done and taking a long-term view in terms of achieving it. A longer-term visionary approach is the hallmark of a mature, stable and dynamic country that can sustain good long-term economic prospects. In this context, continual vigilance and responsiveness to changing global and national trends will be required to maintain Ireland's recent success. The NSS is part of the many responses that will be required into the future to achieve

- continuing national economic and employment growth
- consolidation and improvement of Ireland's international competitiveness
- balanced regional development
- social inclusion
- strong policies for environmental protection.

These policies will need to be formulated and implemented in an integrated way to support the objective of sustainable development.

The National Spatial Strategy adds a spatial dimension to these priority policies. A realistic yet ambitious framework is now in place to be used and developed by the various partners in progressing towards the national objective of balanced regional development.