

INOU STRATEGIC PLAN 2007 – 2010



Introduction from the INOU Chairperson

I am very pleased to introduce this new 3 years Strategic Plan for the INOU.

2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the organisation. Much has changed in the intervening years, particularly in the last ten years where the country has experienced very significant social changes and economic growth. The period has also seen significant numbers of returning Irish emigrants, who left during the jobs famine of the 1980s and early 1990s, together with increased migration of other nationalities to Ireland to take up work. As an unemployed organisation, we welcome these developments.

However, we also believe that the economic and employment growth has not been shared equally and we do not accept the apparent consensus that Ireland has achieved full employment. From our work, we know that economic exclusion remains an issue facing unemployed people and others distant from the labour market. There are infrastructural issues facing people, for example: a lack of suitable jobs in local areas; public transport deficiencies; and a lack of affordable childcare. There are structural issues, for example: the impact of educational disadvantage on securing employment; the inter-generational dynamics in disadvantaged areas; and the realities of discrimination. There are also social issues that impact on both the individual's employment prospects and that of their community, for example drug dependency. In Ireland over 500,000 people are dependent on social welfare: payments that are inadequate to lift people out of poverty despite recent increases.

We also know that, whilst unemployment has remained relatively static during the last three years, so too has the number of people who lost their jobs as a result of redundancy. Over the last five years, over 120,000 people lost their jobs as a result of redundancy. We anticipate that the overall level of redundancies will remain at this high level over the period of this new Strategic Plan; and we would be particularly concerned at redundancies in the higher end of the labour market.

Our new Strategic Plan has been formulated following discussions and consultation with INOU Staff, the National Executive Committee, INOU affiliated organisations and other groups and I would like to thank everyone for their input to the document. I would also like to thank Mary Murphy who facilitated a number of strategic planning sessions with the National Executive Committee and senior staff.

The Plan recognises that the social and economic context within which the INOU operates has changed significantly since the organisation was founded. The Plan reflects the need for the organisation to re-evaluate its role and presents a call for economic and social inclusion built around access to decent and well-paid work for all who want it, and access to an adequate welfare income for those who need it. Over the next three years, the INOU is committed to taking a lead role in the policy debate about economic inclusion and to working with our affiliated organisations to enable people and communities experiencing social and economic discrimination to access decent work.

I hope you will find our new Strategic Plan interesting and informative. Should you have any queries about any aspect of the Plan please do not hesitate to contact us.

Ann Fergus
INOU Chairperson

INOUE Mission Statement

The INOU is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOU represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. We promote and campaign for policies to achieve full employment for all. We also campaign for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents. The INOU is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation, which promotes equality of opportunity within society.

Background to the INOU

The INOU was formed in 1987 against a backdrop of spiralling unemployment and mass emigration. At the time, the scale of the unemployment crisis was such that collective action was needed both to bring forward potential solutions and to ensure that unemployed people had access to programmes and services and reasonable social welfare payments whilst unemployed.

Today, the INOU continues to work, at local and national levels, on issues affecting unemployed people. We support local groups through services such as training, information and analysis of Government policies. The INOU has a Northern Ireland division, the Organisation of the Unemployed Northern Ireland (OUNI). The INOU is also a Social Partner and participated in the negotiations of the last four Partnership Agreements.

INOUE Aims

The aims of the INOU are set out in the organisation's Constitution. These are to:

- Seek to represent the interests and views of all unemployed people and their dependents at a national level;
- Campaign for an acceptable standard of living for all unemployed people and their dependents;
- Campaign towards the achievement of full employment at an acceptable rate of pay;
- Assist the establishment and development of local unemployed groups;
- Develop close liaison with the Trade Union movement while ensuring the autonomy of the INOU;
- Build on the common interest between the unemployed and employed;
- Build links with other national & international bodies that share the same interest.

Context for the Strategic Plan



The social and economic environment in which the INOU operates has changed dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years. During this period, Ireland has moved from economic crisis characterised by high unemployment, low participation rates, long-term unemployment and emigration to a relatively competitive modern economy with higher economic participation rates, low unemployment and reduced long-term unemployment. Today, we seek new ways to define¹ joblessness or working aged welfare dependency that reflects a broader equality and more inclusive agenda.

The country has also experienced significant migration to fill both high and low skilled labour market shortages. Yet at the same time there has been a significant marginalisation of the INOU's traditional target group and others living in poverty. Economic restructuring has seen employment rise steadily since 1995 to over 2 million. Women's participation in the labour force has also increased. In its Spring 2007 Quarterly Economic Commentary the ESRI notes *"Employment is expected to grow strongly in 2007 before slowing in 2008"* and that this slowdown *"will contribute to a small upward move in the unemployment rate"*.

Redundancies have jumped to well over 20,000 a year since 2001. A very significant number of job losses have been in low skilled manufacturing while the construction and services sectors have produced most of the jobs growth. Service jobs now comprise two thirds of employment. However, concerns have been raised about the sustainability of much of this employment: and interestingly 'other services' is now the category with the greatest number of redundancies.

Though there has been a significant drop in consistent poverty, the CSO's 'Measuring Ireland's Progress, 2006' report noted that *"unemployed people were most likely to be in consistent poverty"*. The recent attainment of a benchmark of 30% of Gross Average Industrial Earnings (GAIE) for the basic social welfare rate is very welcome: however this payment is insufficient to lift recipients out of poverty.

The INOU does not believe that the experience of economic growth and restructuring has been equal. There remains a

clear need to promote equality by working to eliminate class and other types of discrimination and structural obstacles to economic and social inclusion. Despite the impressive growth in employment in recent years, there is still an unacceptable divide between rich and poor in Irish society. As the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2013 noted *"While unemployment has a major impact on the individual, it also affects children – the majority of children in poverty live in jobless households"* (p23). The latest figures (for 2005) show an 18.5% rate of at-risk-of-poverty. This is one of the highest rates in Europe. In spite of the continued buoyant economy, there still remains very significant numbers of people who are unemployed and others who would work if other circumstances were right. The EU-SILC data for Ireland showed that in 2005 the overall consistent poverty rate was 7%; while for unemployed people it was 21.6%.

Against this background, the focus of INOU policy over the next three years will be to campaign for adequate welfare payments and to ensure that related child payments are sufficient to meet child-rearing/child care needs. Childcare continues to be a key issue and until there is plentiful supply of good and affordable childcare, many parents and in particular women will not be able to participate fully in the labour market.

The focus of labour market policy has been on attracting high skilled jobs that will contribute to the development of a knowledge-based economy. However, we know that there has also been a significant growth in low skilled service jobs and this raises serious issues of low pay and sustainability. Given the life cycle approach adopted within a range of policy documents, a key challenge for the INOU will be how these policies are rolled out so that unemployed people and others distant from the labour market can develop their skills to gain access to better quality jobs. The continued reduction in the numbers working in agriculture and manufacturing will also have a negative impact on unemployment in the future. In addition, increasing globalisation is likely to continue to result in companies relocating to other parts of the world.

The INOU will continue to call for greater efforts to be made to up-skill, retrain and

¹ Unemployment in Ireland is measured using the International Labour Organisation's tightest definition i.e. that you were looking for work over the past four weeks and would be available to take it up over the next two weeks.

provide Life Long Learning opportunities to enable people who have been made redundant (or who are at risk of redundancy) to obtain new jobs, or to retain their existing jobs.

There are also serious structural problems, with youth unemployment (aged 18-24) at 10% and growing by 6,000 per annum, early school leaving unemployment at 22%. Long Term Unemployment is up since 2002 and in Quarter 1 2007 stood at 26,000. Specific groups suffer hugely: Travellers and people with disabilities have joblessness rates running very significantly higher than the overall population. According to the Census 2006 there are 62 electoral districts where unemployment runs at three times the national average. 35 of these 62 areas are in the cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford.

Access to decent i.e. well paid and sustainable employment is crucial; and is seen by many as the best route out of poverty. However, it is clear that there are those for whom a job is not, at least in the short term, a route from poverty. This group need adequate welfare entitlements, high supports, social integration and participation guarantees.

Social policy focusing on work activation is an important tool to address socio-economic exclusion. However, the reality of the 'working poor' and the issues they face must also be noted and addressed. According to the Central Statistic Office's EU-SILC report on 2005, 7% of people in employment now at risk of poverty. It is necessary to build-up the data and analysis to ensure that employment and related social policies are adequately addressing socio-economic exclusion. While the subject of low pay is traditionally seen as a matter for the trade unions, the issue of the working poor and making work pay is a cross cutting theme which needs more attention. The definition of unemployment is also

widening to include joblessness and the INOU believes this should now be framed as a 'decent work for all' issue.

We believe that during the period of this Strategic Plan there will be a significant and ongoing transformation of all aspects of the context in which the organisation works. The organisation will also need to change to reflect the current and future policy and institutional challenges and the work envisaged is outlined in the second part of this plan: organisational objectives.

The key policy areas for the INOU over the next three years are:

- Decent jobs for all.
- Eradication of long-term unemployment.
- Making work pay.
- Positive activation.
- Income adequacy and other supports.
- Diverse unemployment / employment issues.
- Life Long Learning, training and education.

Building on a key objective of the last Strategic Plan, project work will be developed to meet specific INOU's strategic policy objectives. And though the organisation has a strong track record in project management and delivery, a key focus of this plan will be to further develop the organisational capacity in this area.



Strategic Policy Objectives

Decent Jobs for All

In the current debate about full employment and the perceived need to up-skill the existing workforce to avail of future employment prospects, the INOU is concerned that access to sustainable long-term employment will continue to elude unemployed people and others distant from the labour market.

The organisation would also be concerned with part of Goal 5 set in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion which states: "with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016." If meeting such a goal results in more people accessing well-paid employment, all well and good. However, there is a real concern that people will find themselves encouraged off welfare payments into poorly paid unsustainable employment and as a consequence the overall² poverty goal set within NAPSI will not be met.

To address these concerns the organisation believes it is important to define the concept of 'decent work' and in keeping with the other strategic policy objectives map out a progression path.

We aim to:

- Undertake research on the quality of work.
- Influence the debate around full employment.
- Highlight issues around the precariousness of certain types of work and the quality of jobs.
- Ensure that unemployment and joblessness remains on the political and social agenda.
- Lobby for job creation initiatives including the development of tourism and agri-tourism (such as outdoor activities, hiking, walking etc).

The Elimination of Long Term Unemployment

This is a key policy issue for the INOU. Although long-term unemployment has reduced significantly in the boom years since 1995, the rate of long-term unemployment remains at 1.2% and represented 26,000 according to the first quarter 2007 results from the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey. The Government's NAPS target to eliminate long-term unemployment by 2007 will not be achieved; and has not been re-iterated in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. When we have eliminated long-term unemployment from Irish society, then and only then, can we say that we are on course to achieving full employment.

We aim to:

- Campaign for a new Government target for the elimination of long-term unemployment.
- Promote best practice in active labour market programmes (ALMPs) to assist long term unemployed people to move into decent employment.
- Lobby for the re-invigoration of Jobs Initiative programme as it provided an important access point for older unemployed men in particular.
- Seek improvements to the operation of the National Employment Action Plan to reduce long-term unemployment in a systematic way.
- Lobby for clear progression paths for unemployed people and others distant from the labour market so that they can benefit from job creation.
- Lobby to ensure that quality employment and progression opportunities are available at local level.
- Lobby for greater promotion of local agency services to employers in order to maximise the potential for unemployed people to secure employment.
- Lobby for increased recruitment of long-term unemployed people by employers.

² This Goal states "To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition."

The elimination of employment barriers and Make Work Pay

While many thousands of unemployed people have taken up jobs during the last 10 years, there are still significant numbers of people who are prevented from accessing employment opportunities. The INOU's view of unemployment is that it includes those who are jobless i.e. those who do not figure in the unemployment statistics because of the nature of their welfare payment and those who would work if other issues/barriers were addressed. The INOU will advocate for increased employment rates for all groups in society, given that a job at a reasonable rate of pay is a key route out of poverty. The removal of the remaining barriers to employment will be an important priority for the organisation over the next three years.

We aim to:

- Collaborate with representative organisations to identify policies and solutions to eliminating barriers to employment.
- Work with key statutory agencies to ensure positive and supportive approaches are used in addressing the barriers.
- Work for tax, social welfare and public services that make-work pay and protect against poverty.
- Work towards the elimination of restrictive recruitment practices in the public sector. These act as a barrier to unemployed people, migrant workers and others distant from the labour market from accessing jobs in many parts of the Public Sector.
- Work in conjunction with other organisations to identify and address constructively other discrimination issues in the labour market.
- Lobby for the provision of comprehensive and accessible information in relation to job seeking supports in local agencies offices. The information should be made available in different formats and languages.

Activation

The National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) preventative strategy and the recently announced Active Case Management approach are the two major mechanisms designed to systematically assist unemployed people and others distant from the labour market into work. The lead agency on the NEAP is FÁS and its parent Department, Enterprise, Trade and Employment; while the Department of Social and Family Affairs will be the lead agent for the latter. The NEAP impacts on all those on the Live Register for 3 months or more; while the DSFA's Active Case Management will come into play when someone applies for a welfare payment.

As of yet it is unclear how these two mechanisms would work together to ensure constructive outcomes for those in receipt of welfare payments. It is also unclear how these developments will impact on long-term unemployment, as they appear to be targeting those in short-term unemployment.

This is particularly worrying given the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion's target to reduce long-term welfare dependency by 20% by 2016 and the lack of clarity as to how this target will be met.

We aim to:

- Lobby for a constructive understanding of activation and ensure that there is good feedback between national developments and local experiences.
- Undertake research on and work for a greater range of options for unemployed people engaging with the NEAP and the DSFA's Active Case Management.
- Lobby for the implementation of coherent labour market strategies that have at their core the development of an inclusive and accessible labour market.
- Lobby for the provision of pro-active and supportive one-to-one person centred services.
- Lobby for the enhancement of job seeking supports whereby local agency staff acquire detailed knowledge and understanding of the

type of local work available and employer requirements in terms of skills, knowledge, experience and education qualifications required to do the job.

- Lobby for follow-up supports for those who move into employment to support their continuing employment and pursue their progression options.
- Monitor the reduction in dependency on long-term social welfare payments and lobby to ensure that recipients are moved out of poverty.

Continue our outreach with newly redundant workers. The INOU will examine ways of continuing its successful outreach programme developed through the Welfare to Work Development Project.

- Work with other organisations on the issues facing older workers including the retirement age and people's right to choose.
- Campaign for policies whereby Migrant Workers' employment and welfare rights and entitlements are respected and enforced.

Tackling Diverse Unemployment / Employment Issues

As indicated, the low overall unemployment rate hides pockets of unemployment, which are clearly visible when official statistics are disaggregated. For example, youth unemployment runs at 8.2% in comparison to 4.2% for the population overall. This figure rises considerably for young people who are early school leavers to 19%.

Unemployment and joblessness for disabled people and Travellers greatly exceeds the national average. In the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion the employment rate for Travellers is 17% (Census 2002) and for disabled people 37% against an overall employment rate of 68.6%.

Regional variations in unemployment and participation rates are also evident. According to the CSO's QNHS Q1 2007, the state's unemployment rate was 4.2%, while the rate ran at 5.5%, 5.2% and 4.6% in the Border, Mid-West, and South-East regions respectively.

We aim to:

- Formulate policies and potential solutions to the growing levels of Youth Unemployment. The INOU will work collaboratively with other organisations to research this phenomenon and to formulate policy recommendations to government.
- Work collaboratively with other organisations to research job losses and job creation in rural areas to formulate policies and potential solutions in this area.

Income Adequacy and other supports

Ideally a focus on income adequacy should ensure that all policies in relation to income support (e.g. employment, tax, social welfare, pensions) provide sufficient income for a person to move out of poverty.

However, there are other related issues that impact on unemployed and other marginalised people's ability to participate in Irish society. Access to proper accommodation and medical services are two key issues that arise with regard to secondary benefits and a person's ability to take up employment.

Public services are particularly important to address issues associated with social exclusion. Activation of long-term unemployed people, Lone parents and people on disability payments will be ineffectual unless the inadequate supply of other services are addressed. The provision of accessible transport to locations of education, training and employment provision is an important issue for many people. The lack of adequate and affordable childcare provision impacts on many potential employees or those in employment who wish to up-skill.

We aim to:

- Campaign for improvements in Secondary Benefits and the elimination of associated poverty traps.
- Campaign for adequate social welfare payments for recipients: and at the very least the maintenance of the basic

social welfare payment at 30% of Gross Average Industrial Earnings (GAIE).

- Campaign for the development of expertise in each social welfare/FÁS office on supports for unemployed people taking up work, such as Family Income Supplement (FIS), Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) and Retention of Secondary Benefits, and for a dedicated person to take the lead in each office to ensure that customers receive all relevant information.
- Campaign for the provision of adequate and timely information and if required an automatic / triggering mechanism for payments like FIS.
- Work with other organisations on the issues of adequate and accessible transport and childcare provision.
- Campaign for the provision of adequate resources, improved integrated planning and delivery to bring Irish public services up to the EU standard.

Life Long Learning

Training and educational qualifications are vital if unemployed people and others distant from the labour market are to gain sustainable employment. The link between educational attainment and economic exclusion is well established. Therefore access to life long learning opportunities to improve one's skills is vital: for example, it could create a vehicle to address the skills gap arising from early school leaving.

It is also an issue for workers in low skilled jobs and evidence suggests that workers who are gaining access to LLL opportunities are those with relatively high levels of skills. The Expert Working Group on Future Skills Needs noted that if there is no policy change and Ireland moves forward to an increasingly knowledge based economy, then there will be a considerable skills gap between the jobs coming on-stream and the existing workforce. Such a dynamic has the potential to further exacerbate socio-economic exclusion.

We aim to:

- Work for more and better education and training options to be made available for unemployed people and others distant from the labour market.
- Campaign for improved local access through, for example either local provision; enhanced transport services; and accessible information technologies.
- Work with Trade Unions and all key players on the issue of access to life long learning opportunities and in particular on the issue of portable skills.
- Lobby for improved integrated delivery across the broad education and training spectrum.
- Explore the potential of Accredited Prior Learning to building up people's recognised skills levels and qualifications.
- Build on the organisation's own training initiatives and incorporation into the FETAC system.



Organisational Objectives

The changed economic and social context within which the organisation operates requires that the organisation examines not only how to meet the policy challenges arising from these changes but also how to meet the organisational and institutional challenges that they pose.

Despite the reduced focus nationally on unemployment, the INOU remains well placed to provide effective leadership to lead the new debate around joblessness and the quality of work. Over the period of this new plan, the opportunity will be taken to examine a number of aspects relating to the INOU as an organisation. These include:

- A review of the role of the General Secretary and the development and implementation of a leadership and staff skills strategy for the organisation;
- The role/composition of the National Executive Committee and the Officers Board;
- The development/implementation of a re-branding plan given the policy challenges that have arisen over the last 10 years;
- An examination of how to ensure that those most affected by unemployment can play a central role in the development of the organisation's work; and to review individual membership structures in light of widening joblessness and organisational priorities;
- Explore ways of maintaining and developing the Organisation of the Unemployed Northern Ireland (OUNI).

Other organisational objectives include:

- Maximising the participation of INOU affiliated organisations in the work of the organisation;
- Increasing the Affiliate and individual membership base of the organisation;
- Ensuring the continued recognition of the issues faced by unemployed people and maintain the profile of the INOU in the national and local media;
- Maximising the use of the Welfare to Work Information and Advocacy Services.

The National Executive Committee (NEC)

The NEC is the governing body of the INOU and is responsible for ensuring that resolutions agreed at the Annual Delegate Conference are factored into the work of the organisation for the year ahead. The NEC is also responsible for the overall management of staff and the funds and assets of the organisation. NEC members are elected from amongst the wider membership of the organisation at the Annual Delegate Conference and normally serve for an initial term of two years.

The NEC comprises of up to 20 members and meets a minimum of 11 times a year.

We aim to:

- Examine ways of maximising the involvement of all National Executive Committee (NEC) members in the work of the organisation over the next three years.
- Support the active involvement of NEC members in policy development and ensure members are kept informed through regular briefings.
- Create the conditions for the active involvement of unemployed people and others distant from the labour market in the work of the INOU.
- Continue to use issue/theme based Sub-Committees to progress key aspects of the work of the organisation.
- Develop a constructive format for the NEC Induction/Planning day following each Annual Delegate Conference (ADC).
- Organise appropriate training for NEC members in areas deemed to be relevant to their work as NEC members.
- Continue to review the planning and operation of the ADC through the NEC ADC Sub-Committee.
- On alternate years hold the ADC at a venue outside of Dublin.

INOU Affiliate Membership

The INOU is a federal organisation of over 170 groups throughout the country, North and South. There are 6 categories of membership, four voting and two non-voting. The membership categories are:

Category 1:

Local community based organisations tackling unemployment.

Category 2:

Local community based organisation concerned with particular communities of interest or delivering specialist services of assistance to unemployed people.

Category 3:

National NGO organisations concerned with related issues.

Category 4:

Trade Union/Trades Council in membership.

Category 5:

Area Partnerships/Community Groups/LES.

Category 6:

Organisations expressing solidarity or seeking access to training or information.

INOU policies are set by the membership at our Annual Delegate Conference (ADC). The ADC will continue to be the primary means by which affiliated organisations may influence the work of the INOU.

We aim to:

- Review the existing membership categories with a view to determining their continued relevance.
- Increase the affiliate base of the organisation.
- Examine ways of deepening the current links with our affiliated organisations.
- Provide networking opportunities for affiliates.

Individual and Branch Membership / Involvement of Unemployed People

Unemployed people or people on active labour market programmes may join the INOU as Individual Members. The purpose of an individual membership and branch structure is to develop a broader representative and activist base for the organisation. On joining, Individual Members may, subject to certain constitutional requirements, become members of the INOU General Branch. The General Branch was established to support the direct participation of unemployed people in the work of the INOU.

We aim to:

- Examine ways of deepening the involvement of unemployed people and others distant from the labour market in the work of the organisation.
- Increasing the numbers of active Individual/General Branch members.
- Review and update the current Individual Membership database.
- Review the eligibility requirements for membership.

Provision of information and advocacy services

The INOU is recognised as an expert provider of welfare to work information and advice. Our principal publication, Working for Work, is the most comprehensive publication available that lists welfare rights, education and training options.

We aim to:

- Develop our role as a recognised 'expert' / 'specialist' and promote awareness of the information & advocacy service with both individuals and other service providers.
- Pro-actively advocate on behalf of unemployed people and others distant from the labour market to ensure appropriate service levels, access to entitlements and relevant supports.

- Build and develop strategic relationships and partnerships with other mainstream information/advocacy services.
- Further enhance and develop the capacity of the INOU website as an e-information tool for individuals and other service providers.
- Enhance our capacity and ability to meet increased demands for information producing information materials in Irish and other languages and formats to meet the needs of users.
- Publish and develop our flagship publication Working for Work each year.

Training

The INOU is committed to providing a high quality training service to INOU affiliated organisations and other groups. The INOU agreed its quality assurance policies and procedures with the Further Education and Training Awards Council in 2006. This is a major achievement for the organisation as it means that we are now registered with FETAC as a training provider offering programmes leading to FETAC awards.

We aim to:

- Build on the organisation's own training initiatives on social welfare, employment and other related issues.
- Develop 'in-house' programmes that, subject to FETAC approval, will lead to FETAC awards.
- Given our incorporation into the FETAC system develop the organisation's range of training programmes.

Media

The need to ensure the continued recognition of the issues faced by unemployed people and to maintain the profile of the INOU in the national and local media will be paramount over the next three years. The INOU has successfully developed links with media organisations and social affairs correspondents and this has enabled the organisation to contribute informed commentary on unemployment, including labour market, income adequacy and regional development issues.

There is an on-going need to inform a public debate that increasingly portrays Ireland as having achieved full employment. The challenge for the organisation over the next three years will be to inform this debate by focusing on the reality that unemployment still affects tens of thousands of people and that there are many reasons why people remain unemployed including a lack of suitable jobs locally, childcare difficulties, deficiencies in public transport and education disadvantage.

Maintaining a media profile will require a significant input in terms of staff resources. Our capacity to undertake this work will, therefore, be contingent on the level of resources available during the period of the plan.

We aim to:

- Maximise the organisation's communication potential and media influence, subject to available resources.
- Continue to inform public debate on the reality of unemployment by maximising the links with media organisations/spokespersons.
- Change the media perception of full employment.
- Continue to develop and expand access to information on unemployment and INOU policies to journalists, media researchers, broadcasters and producers etc.
- Continue to promote the INOU as a representative organisation, with democratic structures and a mandate from its member organisations.
- Examine ways to capitalise on local media through NEC / affiliate activity where practical and appropriate.
- Develop the INOU website as a key communications and information resource.

Human Resources

Our ability to deliver on our strategic policy and organisational objectives over the next 3 years will be determined by the organisation's ability to recruit, retain and develop its staff. The INOU is also committed to applying the best possible terms and conditions of employment consistent with the financial resources available to the organisation. We are also committed to ensuring that all staff policies, procedures and practices are consistent with best Human Resource Management practices.

We aim to:

- Review the current staffing structure in order to determine whether the existing structure will enable the organisation to meet its objectives over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of staff policies and procedures in order to ensure their continued effectiveness and relevance.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of Health, Safety and Welfare Policies, Procedures and Practices
- Continue to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of the Staff Support Process.
- Undertake a training/skills analysis for the organisation.
- Provide on-going human resource management and other management support to the INOU's CE Project.
- Develop the office facilities, IT capacity and administrative systems of the organisation.

Building

Araby House is a considerable resource the INOU is delighted to have the use of as its office and base. The INOU will continue to work with the owners of the building, the Full Employment Trust, to undertake the upkeep, maintenance and development of the building as both a resource to the INOU and other organisations.

As an old building Araby House is not readily accessible to people with disabilities. This is an issue the INOU will work towards resolving over the lifetime of this plan.

Financial Resources

The organisation receives funding from a variety of sources including the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, project funding, affiliation fees, training fees, rental income and other miscellaneous income. Our ability to continue to employ staff to undertake the work of the organisation is determined by the amount of funding we receive in any given year. During the period of this plan, we will continue to 'make the case' to our key funders for the continuation of the vital funding that we currently receive. We will also continue to explore new ways of securing funding for the organisation.

Organisation of the Unemployed Northern Ireland (OUNI)

OUNI is the Northern Ireland Division of the INOU. OUNI has its own Constitution and articles of association and is governed by the Northern Ireland Council (NIC). The head of the INOU is also the head of OUNI.

Whilst the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland is currently the lowest ever achieved at 4.1% (January 07), the figures mask very significant numbers of economically inactive. OUNI is experiencing a very serious funding crisis, which threatens the future viability of the organisation. This presents a challenge to the INOU to meet its aims below when the OUNI itself has no staff to carry out its day-to-day work.

We aim to:

- Seek to maintain OUNI as the Northern Ireland division of the INOU.
- Support the development of OUNI through the provision of dedicated management support from the INOU.
- Develop the North/South Sub-Committee with a view to strengthening the links between the INOU NEC and OUNI NIC.
- Continue to hold one meeting of the INOU NEC in Northern Ireland.
- Continue to hold a joint NEC/NIC meeting annually.
- Build links with the North/South Consultative Forum.