

TELEWORK IN IRELAND

—Telework beyond your home—

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COLOPHON

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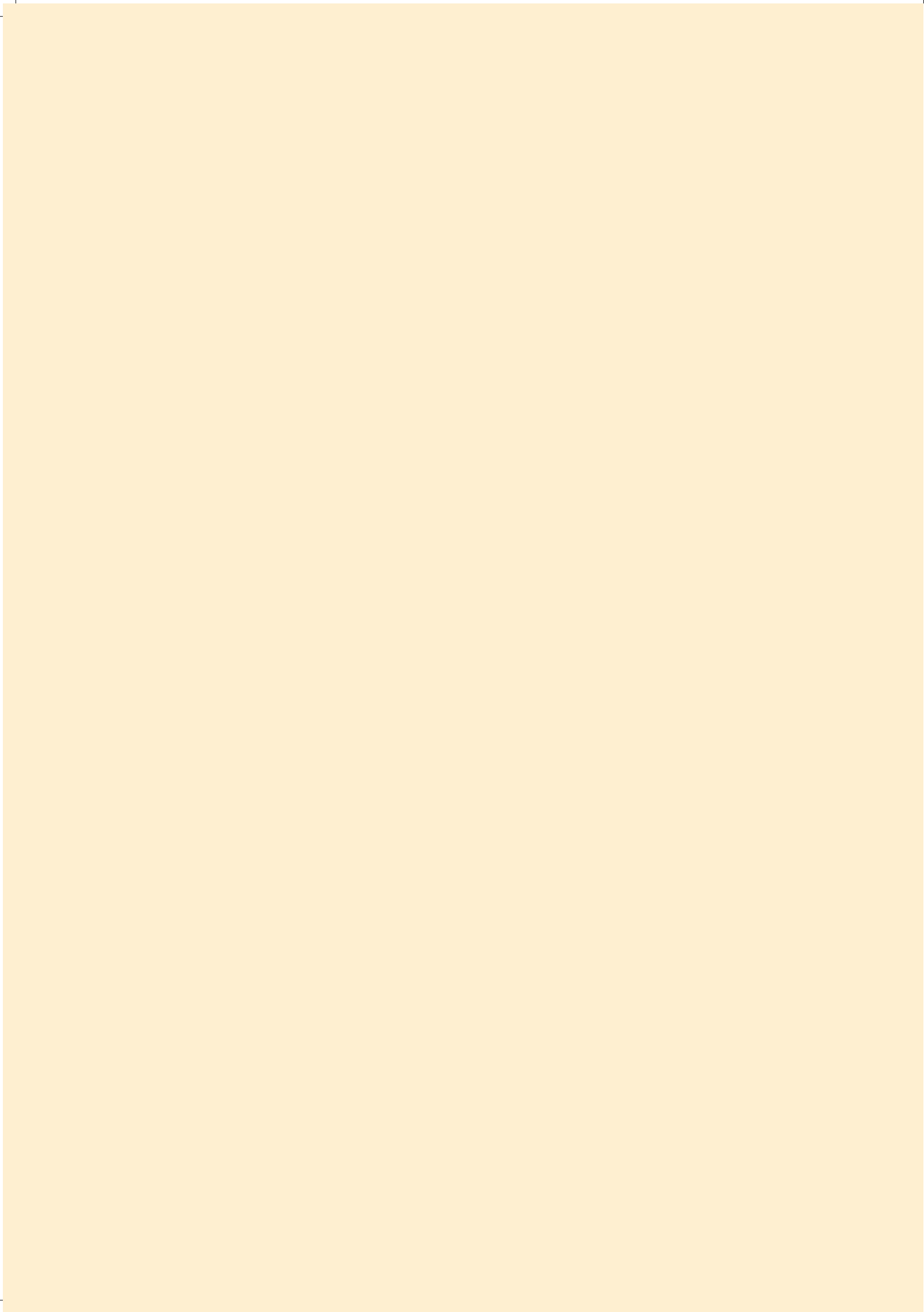
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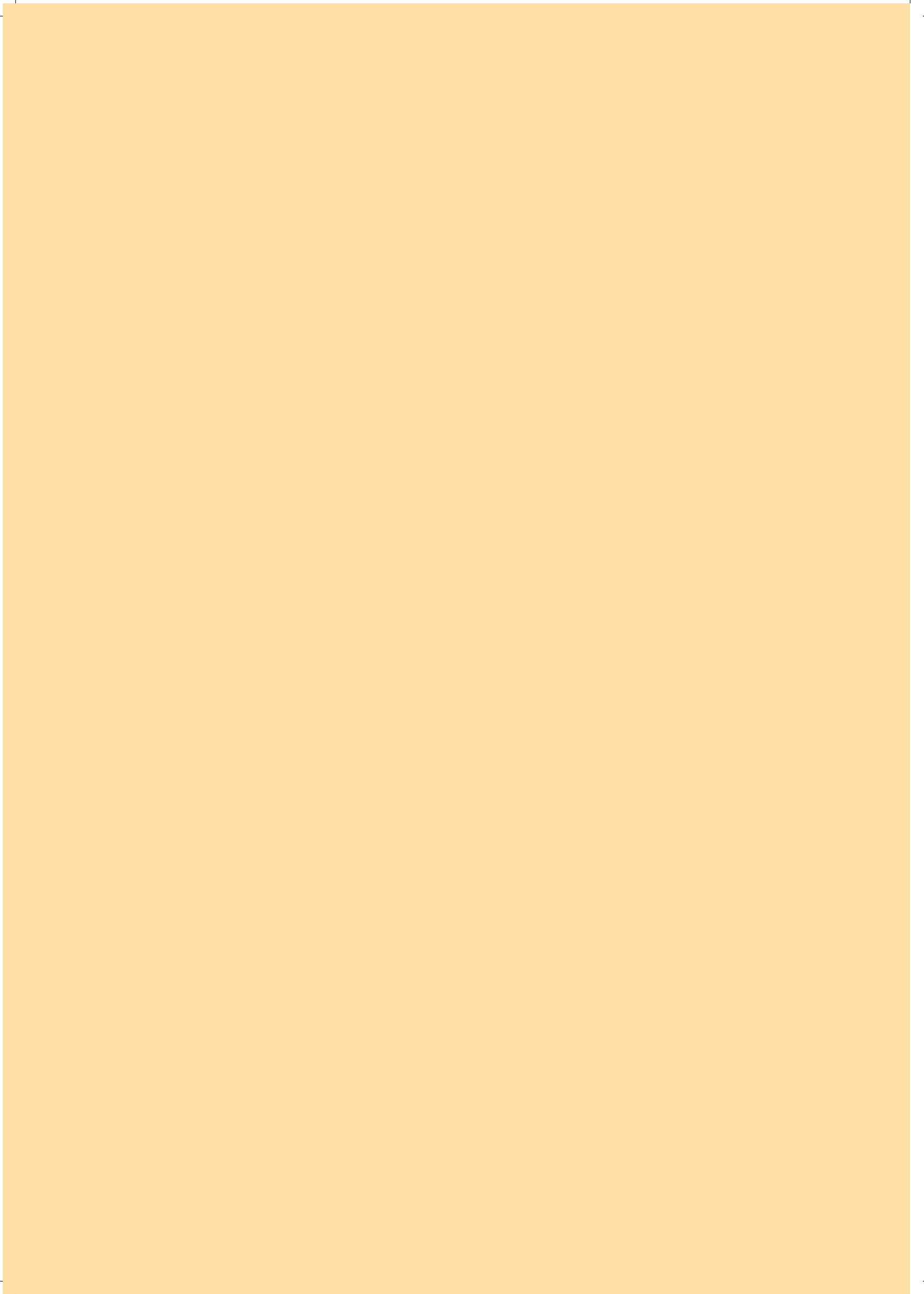
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Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main trigger in Ireland when telework was introduced consciously on a large scale was the regional and peripheral challenge facing the country given its underpopulation and island location on the West Coast of Europe. Thus marketing for inward investment has been a mainspring of economic development here since the late fifties and to such an extent that Ireland is regarded as the leader in this field. This success also brought with it a demand for the latest in telecommunications and other economic infrastructure and thus the state was well positioned when the first indications appeared that working from a distance might be economically viable. The first inspiration for a product in this area came significantly from the Shannon Airport Development Company which realised that the 5 to 7 hour time distance between Ireland and the USA could be used to good effect for data entry and fulfilment operations, given the fast physical link which the transatlantic airport provided. Thus a spate of companies taking application forms by plane from the USA for data entry and retransmission home during their night was established in this region. This significant marketing success of the Irish government in attracting a new type of company offices labelled 'satellite offices' long before the term 'teleworking' was in vogue placed Ireland firmly on the list of leaders in this developing field in the 80's.

Other development agencies and carer bodies took notice of the high profile publicity generated by this rapid and dramatic success and teleworking became the possible solution for the development of 'remote' areas and for the employment of the disabled. The economic east/west divide in Ireland meant that the rural population were more aware or receptive to teleworking as an alternative to unemployment and thus were aware of its potential much earlier than their east coast urban counterparts.

Several of the bodies catering for the disabled, such as Ability Enterprises, Ballindine, County Mayo and the NRB (National Rehabilitation Board) in Dublin adopted this new method of working and/or marketing channel and continue to do so successfully.

Ironically, the continuing economic east-west divide, in terms of infrastructure, makes it difficult to adopt teleworking nowadays in rural areas as the telecommunications links are poor compared to the Greater City areas. This is a particular problem where broadband is involved.

1.2 GOVERNMENT TELEWORK INITIATIVES

The Department of Public Enterprise set up a Teleworking Group which reported in March 2000 and set out a 15 point plan for the implementation of teleworking in the Department. It was recommended that a pilot phase be introduced with 5 persons participating. Of the 64 respondents to their survey, 90% were interested in home-based working on a split week basis and only two expressed an interest in using satellite office/ serviced centre. On the other hand, the five department sections that responded expressed an interest in suburbanisation.

A number of other Departments/Offices, in separate initiatives, have also instituted pilot projects. For example:

- > 12 month Pilot Project in the Houses of the Oireachtas since March 2002, expanding to include 9 staff.
- > 6 month Pilot Project in the Health and Safety Authority with 11 staff completed in March 2002. Due to the positive outcomes of the pilot, it is intended to introduce a formal eWorking policy into the organisation.
- > A Pilot Project in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with 11 staff, formally reviewed at the end of 2002.

1.3 GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION INITIATIVE

Though criticised by some as an artificial and inept form of decentralisation, the fact that the 2003 proposal to move civil service offices out of Dublin to a large number of towns throughout the country is proceeding will dictate that many government offices will have to be equipped with high quality video conferencing links thus ensuring that broadband will be spread throughout the regions more rapidly than anticipated earlier.

1.4 URBAN QUALITY OF LIFE DETERIORATION

The most significant trigger for telework in recent years has been the dramatic deterioration in urban quality of life caused by unrealistically high house prices combined with traffic congestion that is causing serious stress. Commuting has become widespread but, when this is combined with inadequate transportation, the result is that the vast majority have opted to stay with the car despite 2+ hour commutes in both directions of the island.

Surveys show that the number of teleworkers and companies that offer teleworking are considerably higher in Dublin and the surrounding region than elsewhere in Ireland. There are some indicators that companies in Dublin are considering the use of neighbourhood centres at the behest of their long-suffering employees. There may be an opportunity here for fully serviced centres whether financed by the public or private sectors.

Labour market: statistics on telework (1999–2003)



2.1 NUMBER OF TELEWORKERS

2.1.1 Sources of statistics

There are four sources of statistics for teleworking in Ireland for the period from 1999 to the end of 2002. In chronological order, they are:

- > ECaTT Project (EU-wide survey), 1999
- > MRBI Surveys undertaken on behalf of the eWork Action forum in 2000, 2001 and 2002.
- > Module on Teleworking in the QNHS (Quarterly National Household Survey) undertaken by the CSO (Central Statistics Office) in the 3rd quarter of 2002.
- > SIBIS Project (EU-wide survey), 2003

It must be said that the lack of national statistics with large population samples on eWork in Ireland makes it very difficult to monitor, in any comprehensive fashion, the uptake and incidence of eWork.

The QNHS (Quarterly National Household Survey) undertaken by the CSO (Central Statistics Office) in the 3rd quarter of 2002 contained a Module on Teleworking. This provides the most accurate figures available for people teleworking from home in Ireland. This was achieved in collaboration between the STILE Project, of which the CSO and Cork Teleworking Centre are the Irish partners and the e-Work Action Forum, the activities of which are described in detail in a later part of this document.

2.1.2 Numbers of teleworkers

According to ECaTT, there were a total of 64,000 teleworkers, or 4.4% of the labour force in Ireland in 1999. These figures include all types of teleworkers - permanent, alternating and supplementary teleworkers, self-employed teleworkers and mobile teleworkers. The different types of teleworkers and their numbers are defined and broken down further in section 2.2.

The CSO Telework Module undertaken in 2002 found that there were 39,300 teleworkers working from home to some extent in Ireland, or 2.3% of all those in employment, after workers in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector were excluded. It must be noted that mobile teleworkers are **not** included in this survey. The CSO figures do however include permanent, alternating and supplementary teleworkers, as well as self-employed teleworkers.

In 2003, the SIBIS Project shows all types of teleworkers as 10.9% of the labour force, compared to 26.4% in the Netherlands and 24.6% in the US. These figures again include all types of teleworkers as defined in the ECaTT survey.

2.1.3 Percentage of companies employing eWorkers in certain business functions

The following table, extracted from the 2002 MRBI survey, shows the percentage of companies that have eWorking employees in certain business functions.

Function	Enterprise Ireland Client Companies	General Business
Sales and Marketing	48%	51%
IT/Computer Support	56%	44%
Engineering	33%	23%
Finance	33%	37%
Production Management / Supervision	15%	18%
General Admin	26%	34%
Secretarial	26%	26%

2.2 FORMS OF TELEWORK

2.2.1 Telehomework

ECaTT defines home-based teleworkers as employees working from home for at least one day per week, using ICTs as an integral part of their work. According to **ECaTT**, 1% of the labour force are home-based teleworkers working at home for more than one day a week.

In addition, 0.6% are self-employed in SOHOs, and 2.6% of the labour force are supplementary teleworkers, which are those working from home less than one day per week.

The 2002 **MRBI** survey does not provide any statistics on mobile teleworkers.

The **CSO** figures show 39,300 home-based teleworkers in Ireland. These consist of mainly of two categories, employees and entrepreneurs. The **CSO** Quarterly National Household Survey for Q3 2003 puts the employed teleworkers as 19,100 and the self-employed teleworkers as 20,000 which is 1.13% and 1.18% of the labour force. The remainder are carers assisting relatives. These figures do also include supplementary teleworkers.

According to **SIBIS**, and using the same definition as ECaTT, 0.5% of the labour force are home-based teleworkers, 3.3% are self-employed teleworkers in SOHOs and 5.5% are supplementary teleworkers.

2.2.2 Mobile or nomadic telework: telework on location and on the road

The **IBEC** statement on Family Friendly/Work Life Balance defines mobile teleworkers as nomadic workers who increasingly use mobile phones, laptops and other forms of technology and includes the traditional occupations of engineers and sales representatives.

ECaTT defines mobile teleworkers as those who 'work at least 10 hours per week away from home and from the main place of work, and use online computer connections when doing so'. Only 0.3% of the labour force were mobile teleworkers in 1999 according to this survey.

Neither the **MRBI** nor the **CSO** survey provide statistics on mobile teleworkers. According to **SIBIS**, 4.2% of the labour force are mobile teleworkers.

2.2.3 Telework in satellite office

Satellite offices are established by individual companies to enable their employees to avoid long commutes and work closer to home. They are not open to the public, or shared with other companies. There are few satellite offices in Ireland, and these are operated by the large multi-national companies. There are no statistics that show the actual number of employees working in these satellite offices.

ECaTT shows that 28% of the Irish labour force would be interested in teleworking in a telework centre. The **SIBIS** pocketbook does not go into details, but it is interesting to note that EU-wide, 55% of employees are interested in centre-based telework, be it in a satellite office or telecentre.

2.2.4 Telecentres: teledocks, telequarters, telecottages, televillages

Telecottages or telecentres are a popular method of adopting teleworking in Ireland. On occasion, they have been seen as a possible solution to a major organisation pulling out of Ireland (eg Digital from Galway in 1994) when the Galway Technology Centre was established and the skilled workforce was provided with units and support to allow them to set up their own enterprises. This centre was in turn inspired by the already existing GCom Teleserv Centre at Na Forbacha in West Galway County. GCom also has telecentres in three other locations.

A number of telecottages were also established around this time and by far the most successful example of these is East Clare Telecottage in Scarriff, Co Clare. This telecottage not only services the local region but has also developed major telework based businesses in training and translation.

In an evaluation carried out by KPMG as far back as 2000 on behalf of the eWork Action Forum (which was set up by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment), it was noted that there was a need for 'Plug and Work' facilities but that the risks involvement in developing these would be too high. Plug and Work facilities were buildings where all categories of teleworkers could fee book a hotdesk and were distinguished from Internet cafes in that they would be more conducive to business with enhanced security and privacy and greater work space. A proposal was made to Government for targeted tax incentives be introduced which would be similar to the 'Park and Ride' scheme which already existed.

Space2Work

In December, 2002, a new Irish venture called Space2work planned to open three high-tech eWork centres around Dublin in response to the growing difficulties faced by commuters travelling into the busy city. The firm would offer large employers space at the centres for workers based outside the city who otherwise faced long delays in traffic to reach city centre offices.

Space2work director, Jonathan Dempsey, conducted a survey of companies and commuters to help define the facilities that would be in most demand, and the preferred locations of such centres. He stated that the company planned to offer the service by the second quarter of 2003.

However, the company did not go ahead with implementation of these eWork centres. Telework Ireland's experience with corporate eWorking suggests that the following reasons may have played a role in this decision:

- > General managerial reluctance to allow employees to eWork, leading to relatively low numbers of eWorkers in Ireland.
- > eWorking tends to be unstructured, and relatively few companies have a formal eWorking policy in place. Use of these eWork centres necessitates that eWork policies become more formalised.
- > Employees were feeling less secure in their jobs after the bust of the 'dot.com bubble' and therefore less able to approach their employers to ask for eWork options.
- > Reluctance by corporate clients to allow their staff to use the centre because of:
 - Dilution of corporate identity
 - Security issues
 - Confidentiality
- > Insufficient long-term commitment by corporate clients to rent workspaces for their eWorkers. This lack of guaranteed income is likely to make the venture too risky.

eTowns Project

In 2004, Shannon Development, the development agency for the Mid-West Shannon Region, launched the 'eTowns' project, which aims to develop the high-tech potential of rural towns in the region by creating an advanced working environment.

Miltown Malbay in County Clare has become the first of four towns where the Shannon Development eTowns initiative has kicked off. According to Shannon Development, the project will help small service oriented businesses in Miltown Malbay, and in the other towns involved in the project, to conduct business on a world scale through higher speed Internet hook ups.

In each town, complexes will be constructed which will feature 10 houses that also include a workplace—buildings that Shannon Development refers as 'work-life accommodation.' Each accommodation unit will feature a living area, similar to regular housing, with additional office space. All units will be equipped with broadband, which, according to the backers of the projects, will allow the businesses that will buy the homes to work effectively in the so-called 'knowledge economy.'

The construction of each complex will cost between EUR3 million and EUR4 million. This cost is being funded by a public private partnership. There is the additional cost of EUR100,000 per town for training, connectivity and marketing. The European Union, which liked the idea of the project, will be providing 90 percent of the training, connectivity and marketing costs through the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly's Regional Programme of Innovative Actions.

The towns for this project were chosen by Shannon Development based on a population figure of approximately 1,000, having a site within the town which would be suitable for the construction of the complex and the further location requirement of being situated approximately 35 kilometres from the nearest urban town. The three other towns that will roll out this initiative are; Cappamore, Co. Limerick, Newport, Co. Tipperary and Tarbert, Co. Kerry.

2.3 TYPES OF TELEWORKERS

2.3.1 Marginal teleworkers

Marginal teleworkers are defined as those who telework irregularly, less than one day a week. This corresponds to the ECaTT definition of supplementary teleworkers. ECaTT shows this as 2.6% of the labour force, compared to 5.5% of the labour force listed in SIBIS. This is a confirmation of the growth of 'ad-hoc' teleworking, which is generally not regulated by companies through employment contracts or telework policies.

2.3.2 Substantial teleworkers

Substantial teleworkers are defined as people who are teleworking regularly at least one day a week.

The 2002 MRBI survey combines those working one day a week or less, resulting in 38% of teleworkers in general businesses, and 28% of teleworkers in Enterprise Ireland client businesses. The CSO figures do not give an answer to this question, as they combine all homebased teleworkers irrespective of time spent teleworking. Neither do the ECaTT and SIBIS surveys, which combine substantial and primary teleworkers and list them under the headings of home-based, mobile and self-employed teleworkers.

2.3.3 Primary teleworkers

Primary teleworkers are defined as people who telework regularly 3 or more days a week. The MRBI survey distinguishes between teleworkers working one day or less and teleworkers working more than a day. Those working more than a day are 40% of teleworkers in general businesses and 54% of teleworkers in Enterprise Ireland client businesses surveyed. Again, neither the CSO, ECaTT and SIBIS surveys give an answer to this question, for the reasons outlined under 2.3.2.

2.4 DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENTIATION OF TELEWORKERS

The QNHS (Quarterly National Household Survey) undertaken by the CSO (Central Statistics Office) in the 3rd quarter of 2002 contained a Module on Teleworking. This was achieved in collaboration between the STILE Project, of which the CSO and Cork Teleworking Centre are the Irish partners and the e-Work Action Forum, the activities of which are described in detail in a later part of this document.

This survey confirms many of the trends that have been noted in previous research:

- > Two thirds of all teleworkers are male.
- > More than 70% of teleworkers have a third level qualification compared with only just over 40% of the non-agricultural workforce in general.
- > Nearly 80% of teleworkers fall into the managerial, professional and technical occupational categories, whereas these workers account for only a third of all non-agricultural workers. This pattern is similar for males and females. 6.7% of the overall workforce in the managerial occupational group telework, as well as 5.5% in the professional and 4.4% in the associate professional and technical group.
- > Nearly 40% of all Irish teleworkers reside in the Dublin region. Both Dublin and the Mid-East regions have the highest levels of teleworkers at 2.8% of their working population. This is probably accounted for—in part at least—by the fact that telecommunications and general infrastructure is better in this area. In addition,

a significant proportion of teleworkers in the Dublin Region are corporate employees. The Midland and Mid-West regions have the lowest level of teleworkers, at 1.5% and 1.4% respectively.

- > Teleworkers are aged between 25 and 54. In the case of female teleworkers, those who are part of a couple with at least one child under 5 years of age are the most likely to be teleworking (3.2% of the workforce in this category, compared to the average of 1.7% female teleworkers in the overall workforce).
- > Over 40% of teleworkers work in the Financial and Other Services Sector. Nearly 10% of all males and 4% of all females in this sector telework to some extent.
- > Teleworkers work longer hours. The average working week for teleworkers was 43.5 hours, in contrast to the 37.0 hours average for non-agricultural workers in general.

eWork surveys undertaken by MRBI for the eWork Action Forum

The eWork survey undertaken by MRBI in October 2002 on behalf Enterprise Ireland's eWork Business Awareness Campaign was the third annual survey of its kind. The first phase of the survey was conducted in September 2000, and the second phase in October 2001. MRBI used the same definition of eWork and questionnaire in all three surveys, enabling the monitoring of changes in eWork practices and attitudes over time.

Key findings from the 2002 survey are as follows:

- > Between 2000 and 2002, the proportion of Irish businesses with one or more employees eWorking has been maintained at 10%. Although the 2002 figures show a decline from the high of 12% recorded in 2001, maintaining the 2000 levels can be viewed as a positive development in view of the recent slow down in the Irish economy.
- > The number of employees in those companies using eWork increased, from 4.5 employees in 2000 to an average of 5 employees in 2002. This positive development is tempered somewhat by the result of the 2001 survey, recording a high of 6 employees.
- > 37% of businesses have increased their number of eWorkers since 2000, 58% have remained at the same level, and only 3% have less.
- > 92% of businesses rated their experience with eWorking as 'very or fairly' successful.
- > However, only 22% of eWorking businesses have a formal eWorking policy, and only 20% of eWork managers and 30% of eWorkers have had training provided. This is relatively unchanged from 2001.
- > A 'typical' eWorking company is located in Dublin (54%) and has more than 11 employees (67%).
- > A typical eWorker is a male full time employee with a third level qualification who eWorks part-time.

Policy on telework

3

3.1 GOVERNMENT

3.1.1 Legislation and fiscal policies to facilitate / promote / support teleworking

eWork Action Forum:

The eWork Action Forum (eWAF) was established in late 1999 in response to the 1999 report of the National Advisory Council on Teleworking (NACT) to drive the eWork agenda and monitor and implement the recommendations of the NACT report. Both the NACT and the forum were established by Noel Treacy TD, then Minister of State for Science, Technology and Commerce in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The purpose of the forum was:

'To provide a focal point for the ongoing development of an environment, which will stimulate telework employment opportunities and ensure that this method of working achieves its full potential in contributing to economic growth and an improved quality of life.'

In October 2002, having reviewed the achievements of the Forum, Michael Ahern, TD, Minister for Trade and Commerce considered that with completion of the Awareness Campaign and the successful launch of the on-line training course, that the Forum had substantially fulfilled the mandate given to it by the National Advisory Council on Teleworking, and should not continue beyond the end of the year.

The Report of the eWork Action Forum 2002 gives an overview of its considerable achievements during its three year term. Actions undertaken related to:

- > eWork Business Awareness Campaign
- > Code of Practice on eWorking
- > Pursuit of eWorking opportunities in Government Departments
- > Fiscal Environment
- > Training
- > Statistics

eWork Business Awareness Campaign

This campaign was focussed on business decision makers and aimed to increase awareness of the business benefits that eWorking can offer to their firms. It was conducted throughout the three year period and included:

- > national radio and press advertising campaigns undertaken between September and early November in 2001 and 2002.

- > eWork survey undertaken in 2000, 2001 and 2002 to monitor eWork practices and trends in Irish businesses.
- > eWork helpdesk, production and dissemination of eWork literature, and creation and maintenance of the eWork website, www.ework.ie

The Code of Practice on eWorking in Ireland

A Code of Practice on Teleworking was produced as part of the final NACT report. It was endorsed by the Government, IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Federation) and ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) and launched in May 2000 as 'The Code of Practice on e-Working in Ireland'. In November 2000 the Code of Practice won an EU eWork award as the 'Best Framework Agreement'.

eWorking opportunities in Government Departments

The NACT recommended that all Government Departments should be required to introduce eWorking options into their mainstream working and, additionally, that all publicly funded organisations should formulate an eWorking Policy for implementation in 2002. Some examples of eWork projects in Government Departments/Offices are:

- > The Health and Safety Authority has introduced a formal eWorking programme into the organisation, due to the successful completion of a pilot project during 2002.
- > The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is currently reviewing a pilot project and a decision on the introduction of a formal eWorking policy will be made following the evaluation.

Developments for further progressing eWorking options in Government Departments are underway. Under arrangements established under the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, the Department of Finance and the staff unions are discussing policy guidelines for Departments which will encourage the introduction of eWorking and set out the main administrative and managerial arrangements that must be addressed in introducing formal eWorking options.

Statement of Practice on tax implications of eWorking

Uncertainty surrounding taxation issues had been identified as a barrier to the uptake of eWorking in Ireland in a report commissioned by the eWork Action Forum in 2000 from KPMG. Following consultations and negotiations, the Revenue Commissioners agreed to issue a leaflet 'eWorking and Taxation' (IT69), which favourably clarifies these aspects of the tax code in relation to employees engaged in eWork arrangements.

- > Benefit in Kind
- > Home Expenses
- > Other Expenses
- > Capital Gains Tax

Clarification on Planning Issues

The National Advisory Council recommended that the Department of the Environment and Local Government commences a consultation process with the Local Authorities to establish guidelines on the limits of the use of a home office and the concept of 'development' within the planning code. The Department, given its current workload and staffing levels, was unable to commit itself to preparing guidelines for planning authorities at this stage. However, it provided the following clarification in relation to different categories of teleworkers:

- > Teleworking/telecommuting from home (either part-time or full-time where all that is involved is a computer terminal).

In relation to teleworking it would be difficult to argue that there is any material change of use involved here and accordingly it would not be an issue from a planning point of view.

- > Home as an office with staff and dedicated space for use.

This is quite a different concept and would involve a material change of use and would consequently come within the scope of the planning code. To date the only non-residential activities permitted in a dwelling house are medical and related consultants. Many local authorities are, however, moving toward allowing certain types of home-based economic activity within dwelling-houses, e.g. Dublin Corporation. However, there would be a requirement to go through the normal planning process and be subject to third party objections etc.

A nationally recognised and accredited eWork Training Course

The Forum considered that a special eWork training course would greatly facilitate an increased uptake in eWorking options. Consequently, during 2002, the Forum worked with FÁS to develop a suitable training course, on the competencies necessary to support successful eWork arrangements. The objective was to develop a nationally recognised and accredited course in eWorking which could be delivered and supported using the internet. FÁS, as the national training and employment authority, operates a wide range of training courses which facilitate the use of ICTs. FÁS also delivers IT education and training courses over the internet through the FÁS Net College (www.fas-netcollege.com).

The course was launched at the end of 2002. It is aimed at those employees who are currently eWorking, those who wish to eWork and their managers. The course covers issues such as communications, technical issues, work space, regulatory background and self management for the e-employee. A separate module, for managers only, deals with managing eWork. The course is delivered on-line at www.fas-netcollege.com. It has recognised accreditation by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

eWork Statistics

STILE Project

The lack of national statistics on eWork in Ireland makes it very difficult to monitor, in any comprehensive fashion, the uptake and incidence of eWork.

The CSO as well as Cork Teleworking Centre were the Irish partners in the STILE project, funded jointly by Eurostat and the European Commission's IST Programme. STILE aimed to provide innovative methodologies and content for the statistical monitoring of the European labour market in the eEconomy.

Following collaboration with the e-Work Action Forum and the STILE researchers, the CSO included some questions on e-working in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in Autumn 2002. These questions were adapted and simplified for use within the Irish QNHS structure, from the questions which have been asked each year in the British labour force survey since 1997.

The main reason for including e-working questions in labour force surveys is that information on e-working can then be cross-tabulated with many of the other indicators that are collected at the same time, such as the age, gender, employment status and location of e-workers. In addition, the sample used in the labour force surveys is much larger and more reliable than that used in small-scale academic or commercial surveys.

EMERGENCE Project

EMERGENCE was a research project covering the European Union, a number of the accession states, Australia and some Asian countries. The project was funded by the European Commission's Information Society Technologies Programme, and examined flows of work around the world made possible by information and communication technologies.

The main EMERGENCE research in Europe involved interviewing 7,000 employers about their use of various types of e-work. However, all the companies interviewed were quite large, employing at least 50 people. To investigate whether small companies show a different pattern, EMERGENCE also carried out a survey of small companies in Denmark. As part of the activities of the e-Work Action Forum, a parallel survey of 100 small companies was carried out in Ireland, funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

A detailed report, 'E-Work in Ireland' (IES Report 394) is available free of charge on the EMERGENCE web site .

3.1.2 Regional policy and initiatives

There are eight regional authorities, which have developed Information Society Strategies and are involved in regional communication infrastructure projects. In addition, both Shannon Development and Údarás na Gaeltachta, two regional development agencies which broadly cover the west coast, are involved in the above initiatives and are the ones who have most experience with the various forms of telework.

3.1.3 Local policies and initiatives

The main state involvement in teleworking at local level is through the County Enterprise Boards which have an association with the corresponding County Council. As the local government system in Ireland is very weak, not many projects have survived the pilot stage. Other initiatives are supported on an individual basis by the Partnership and LEADER companies.

3.2 POLITICAL PARTIES

Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats are the parties in government since 1997. As can be seen from section 3.1, government has been very supportive of teleworking and has done much to create a telework friendly environment in Ireland through the National Advisory Council on Teleworking (1998–1999) and the eWork Action Forum (1999–2002).

The Green Party promotes teleworking as part of their transport policy, under the heading of Travel Demand Reduction:

'To encourage working from home using IT. The Green Party proposes:

- > designation of staff members of government departments and semi-states to encourage teleworking
- > an information campaign, emphasising the cost and efficiency benefits of teleworking
- > a pilot scheme of grants to encourage teleworking.’

3.3 TRADE UNIONS

Under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness the Government, Employers Organisations and Trade Unions agreed to work together to identify actions that could be undertaken by them at national level, to support the developments of family friendly policies in the workplace. The focus of the activity was to support and guide the voluntary development and implementation of family friendly policies at the level of the enterprise.

A National Framework Committee was formed comprising representatives from Congress (ICTU - Irish Congress of Trade Unions), IBEC (The Irish Business and Employer’s Confederation), the Equality Authority, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Department of Finance, Department of An Taoiseach and the committee was chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

ICTU was also involved in the drafting and approval of the National Code of Practice on eWorking, as mentioned under 3.1.

The Communication Workers’ Union was Irish national coordinator for the European Telework Development Project. The project ended in June 1999.

3.4 EMPLOYERS ORGANISATIONS

IBEC - the Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation

IBEC has a positive outlook toward teleworking and their document ‘Family Friendly/ Work Life Balance outlines the business argument. They have also produced a number of guides for companies initiating teleworking.

SFA - The Small Firms Association

The Small Firms Association has produced information materials on eWorking, which it makes available to its members. It also periodically publishes articles on the subject in its monthly magazine, Running Your Own Business.

3.5 UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS

3.5.1 Telework Ireland

Telework Ireland (TWI) is the National Association for eWorking in Ireland. Since its inception in 1993, it has worked to:

- > Promote the teleworking concept
- > Facilitate the implementation of teleworking policies within organisations

- > Represent the interests of teleworkers and telework based businesses
- > Develop a range of products and services to facilitate the development of a telework friendly environment.

Telework Ireland provides a telework consultancy and mentoring service, a telework helpline, and a comprehensive website. TWI also liaises with Government and organisations with similar interests, such as the Irish Internet Association. TWI was represented by several members on the eWork Action Forum.

TWI assists eWork related EU projects where possible, for example by helping to source Teleworkers for interviews as part of the FAMILIES Project, by providing exhibition and presentation opportunities for the FAMILIES and FLEXWORK Projects at annual conferences and by providing peer reviews for materials produced by both projects.

Over the years, Telework Ireland had been approached by many community groups and organisations who felt that they could be in a position to develop a sustainable Telework based project, but who needed hands-on assistance in order to develop their idea and strategic plan. The TWI Mentor training initiative addressed this need for expert assistance and trained ten mentors to deliver hands on assistance and support. This valuable initiative was supported by Area Development Management Ltd and the Combat Poverty Agency through the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

Between 1993 and 2002, TWI held ten highly successful Annual National Conferences, which regularly attracted over 100 national and international delegates. The aim of these conferences was to promote teleworking and to showcase successful telework companies and projects. They also highlighted the range of important issues that need to be addressed to unlock the full potential of eWorking for business and regional development. PowerPoint presentations from several conferences can be downloaded from the Telework Ireland web site www.telework.ie

TWI, with the support of Enterprise Ireland, also published two manuals, which are available on CD or in paper format. They are the first Irish manuals to be published on the subject and highlight, in minute detail, the benefits of teleworking (eWorking) to the individual, the employer, the community and the economy.

- > The Employers Manual addresses the information needs of employers/managers interested in implementing teleworking.
- > The Manual for Employees and Business Start-ups deals with the needs of individual employees and those seeking to set up a telework business.

3.5.2 Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland continues to disseminate information about eWorking and to promote its benefits to business. A website and printed eWork guides were developed as part of the eWork Awareness Campaign which was undertaken on behalf of the eWork Action Forum from 2000 to 2002. The website, www.ework.ie continues to be maintained, and eWork is also being promoted as part of the eBusiness Campaign, www.openup.ie and its associated information materials.

3.5.3 National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies

Family Friendly Working and Work Life Balance refer to policies and working arrangements that facilitate men and women to achieve a better balance between work and family life. These include a variety of working arrangements, including statutory entitlements such as Carer's Leave, Maternity Leave and Force Majeure Leave, and other non-statutory forms of organising work such as flexitime, jobsharing, eWorking and term-time working. Employers can benefit from these policies too as they can help to develop a more committed and productive workforce.

The focal point for providing information on these topics is the www.familyfriendly.ie website, which is hosted by the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies.

The Committee was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and continues under our current National Agreement, Sustaining Progress. It is chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and its membership is made up of representatives from:

- > IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation)
- > Congress (Irish Congress of Trade Unions)
- > The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- > The Department of the Taoiseach
- > The Department of Finance
- > The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- > The Department of Social and Family Affairs
- > The Equality Authority



4

Focus on Telecentres

4.1 TYPES OF TELECENTRES AND THEIR FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

There are three main forms of telecentre, or telecottage, in Ireland, which can usefully be defined through their governance. There are three possible forms of governance:

- a Public governance
- b Private governance
- c Mixed: Private-public governance

4.1.1 Public Governance - Telecentres established by state agencies

These telecentres include technology, incubation and innovation centres. These centres provide office space and services to individuals and small companies and offer a focal point for knowledge based business development. They are often closely linked to third level educational establishments such as Universities and Institutes of Technology.

Shannon Development operates such centres in five locations Mid-West of Ireland under the title of 'Shannon Knowledge Network. Each location within the network is dedicated to providing the resources and environment in which ideas and knowledge-based business are created, developed and succeed.

Another example of such telecentres is Gcom Teoranta, which was established by Údarás na Gaeltachta (the state agency in charge of development of the Irish speaking, or Gaeltacht areas of Ireland) in 1986 to provide a central focus for the development of high quality computer services and to provide an improved telecommunications infrastructure for business in the Gaeltacht.

It has three telecentres, where it provides office space and office services, video-conferencing facilities, IT training and consultancy to local businesses and community groups.

This type of telecentre supports local business and local employment generation. It has a strong labour focus, but may also include an educational perspective, through provision of IT training and consultancy. In the case of Gcom Teoranta, it also supports local community groups and provides local access to IT equipment and services, and therefore supports the social cohesion in the local area.

There is a strong case to be made for the development of further telecentres, especially in rural areas and in deprived urban areas. These telecentres should provide access to ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and services, such as access to computers, the internet, and IT training, with a focus on social cohesion and the bridging

of the 'Digital Divide'. They may also be used to try and support employment generation. Such centres are not likely to be commercially viable, and should be funded on a reliable long-term basis by the state. They could be under public governance, but can also be successful under private governance or in public-private governance. If these centres are to have a long-term impact, they need to be securely funded, well resourced and professionally managed.

4.1.2 Private Governance—Telecentres established by community groups on a not for profit basis

These telecentres or telecottages are usually run as on a not for profit basis. They have a strong community development and social focus, and tend to depend on grants from state agencies for equipment and to provide some of their services, such as training courses. Dependence on grant income can make such centres quite vulnerable, as it is often the case that funding can be sourced for specific projects, but less easily for long-term operational support.

These telecentres play an important role in local development, provision of local ICT based services and training, and are often very interested in trying to create telework based employment in their local area. They therefore address the perspectives of labour, consumer, education and social cohesion in local areas.

In the experience of Telework Ireland, generating employment can be quite a difficult step, as the creation and running of a business demands quite different skills and focus from that of running a community group. It is also quite difficult to build such businesses to a sustainable level, and especially difficult to source the initial contracts leading to the first reference clients. The Telework Ireland mentoring service was set up to assist with these developments.

4.1.3 Private Governance—Telecentres run by private businesses as commercial ventures

These types of telecentres can better be defined as eWork based businesses which have a local presence through the provision of ICT access and services.

They include East Clare Telecottage, which was founded within a community development organisation in 1991, but was incorporated into private business in 1994. Where telecentres are based in rural areas, experience shows that the relatively small local market makes it difficult to sustain such a telecentre at any reasonable level of income, and clients for eWork based services need to be found further afield, at national and even international level.

4.2 SCOPE AND SCALE

The scale of privately owned telecentres is generally consistent with the definition of a micro-enterprise, which has 1-10 employees.

4.3 KINDS OF SERVICES

Dominated by the labour focus, the telecentres we are aware of are all consumer and company orientated, and by providing training and local access to ICT, they also address the educational and social perspectives.

Those telecentres that are not satellite offices of individual companies tend to provide a variety of services, such as:

- > Fax and photocopying
- > Email and internet access
- > Computer hire
- > Office services, such as typing and compiling mail shots
- > Desktop publishing, such as posters, brochures, business cards and newsletters
- > Web design
- > IT training
- > Research and survey work
- > Call centre services
- > Translations
- > Bookkeeping services

4.4 SPECIAL SERVICES FACILITATING THE COMBINATION OF WORK & PRIVATE LIFE

TWI knows of one telecentre in Northern Ireland that has a crèche facility on-site. We are not aware of any other telecentres that offers such special services, but it is safe to assume that such services could only be offered if there a valid business case could be made for them, or if funding was made available to offer them.

4.5 SUGGESTION FOR CASE-STUDIES

There are no shared telecentres in Ireland, whose main business is the renting of workspace to teleworkers individually or through their employers.

There are private telecentres, which either have a community development focus or are commercial telework based businesses that also offer local ICT access and services. A number of telecentres have been set up over the past 15 years, and the telecentres that have survived and those that are currently being established should help us analyse the components that have made them successful in an Irish context.

We have looked at a number of teleworking operations as possible case studies.

- > GComTeo was established in 1988 and is thus one of the oldest telecentres operating in Ireland. It is located in Na Forbacha which is ten miles west of Galway city. GCom is an Information Technology Services company. It was established to provide a central focus for the development of high quality computer services and to provide an improved telecommunications infrastructure for business in the Gaeltacht. The original objectives of the company were to heighten the awareness and use of Information Technology in the Gaeltacht regions of Ireland, to stimulate the

improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure in the Gaeltacht and to encourage and assist new investment in the information technology and telecommunications industry, thereby creating new employment opportunities in the Gaeltacht regions. GCom has three centres in the Gaeltacht regions of Connemara, Donegal and Kerry. From these centres, GCom provides a wide range of high-quality information technology services to business and community groups throughout Ireland. The company has also developed links with telecommunications operators to stimulate the improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure along the western seaboard. GCom provides assistance to Údarás na Gaeltachta in its effort to secure new information technology related industry for the Gaeltacht regions.

- > East Clare Telecottage was established in 1991 in the rural town of Scariff, Co. Clare to provide ICT based services to the businesses, community groups and individuals in the town and region. Beyond this local and regional role, ECT also became involved in several EU projects under the 4th and 5th EU FP as well as Leonardo da Vinci and ADAPT projects. These projects were and are related to the use of ICT to combat exclusion, delivery of distance learning, and the development and application of eWorking training materials. ECT succeeded in gaining the support of the local University of Limerick and the regional development companies of Shannon Development and Údarás na Gaeltachta and has become a significant employer and economic entity in the area. ECT has developed strong niches in translation, training development and delivery, and survey work.
- > Wicklow information Network (WIN) is a Co-operative Society of 11 Information Technology (IT) organisations involved in the training and provision of IT to rural areas of County Wicklow. The 11 IT centres are run by voluntary committees. Established with the support of the local LEADER group, Wicklow Rural Partnership, Wicklow Information Network has sought to narrow the IT skills gap experienced by late adopters of technology (unemployed, the elderly, housewives and the farming community) in rural communities by offering up to date IT training required in today's workplace. Since WIN came into operation, more than 9,500 clients have passed through WIN centres, and most of them would be regular attendees of a range of courses. Over 3,500 individuals have completed the computer qualification European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) in WIN ECDL test centres.
- > Tele Árainn is a call centre located on Árann Mor, one of the islands of Donegal. This initiative involves five different government bodies, the local community and the private sector. The venture was the brainchild of Chris McDonagh, a partner in CMD - a Sligo based company which has been providing training and business advice for many years. Chris, the managing director of Tele Arainn Teo, has extensive experience in the Telesales field. He has been involved in training teleworkers for the last ten years. He first became involved when FÁS asked him to provide telework training on the island. Working with the agencies and the people there, he quickly came to the conclusion that a small telework centre was a viable proposition - and he set about its establishment. The centre currently employs 5 people - and aims to expand to a workforce of 20 within two years.

In addition, a case study of a corporate business that implements teleworking is planned. As part of the case study, the attitude of the corporate to shared telecentres will be investigated.

Actions taken place



5.1 ORGANISATIONS ASKED TO PROMOTE THE IRISH ESURVEY

A broad range of organisations have been asked to promote the e-survey in Ireland.

These include

- > government departments and initiatives
- > regional authorities
- > development agencies
- > county enterprise boards
- > chambers of commerce
- > corporates
- > NGOs
- > telecentres
- > electronic newsletters
- > recruitment sites
- > community web portals

A large number of individuals were also contacted to notify them of the e-survey including all members of Telework Ireland. A brochure was sent by email to the Human Resources Departments of a number of major organisations with the aim of notifying their employees of the e-survey.

Microsoft	Bank of Ireland
Intel	Allied Irish Bank
Oracle	Anglo Irish Bank
Symantec	Allianz
Nortel	FBD Insurance
Motorola	Enterprise Ireland
Hewlett Packard	First National
Dell	AXA
Eircom	First Active
Fujitsu	Boston Scientific
Gateway	AVE
IBM	Belfast Telegraph
Lionbridge	Ericsson
Esat BT	

5.2 POSSIBLE PERSONS TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP(S) TO DISCUSS THE SURVEY RESULTS AND SPECIFIC TOPICS FORMULATED IN THE COUNTRY REPORTS.

Selected members of Telework Ireland with a proven interest and expertise in teleworking will be asked to contribute to the round table discussions. Some of those notified of the e-survey responded very positively and have on previous occasions shown an interest in teleworking. It is felt that they could actively participate in the focus groups.

- > Irish Emigrant, an online newspaper, at www.emigrant.ie
- > Irish Jobs, a major Irish recruitment site, at www.irishjobs.ie
- > GCom, the oldest telecentres in Ireland, at www.gcom.ie
- > Microsoft, who have a large scale telework project in Dublin, at www.microsoft.ie
- > Virtual Staff, which supply their eWorking staff to companies as needed, at www.virtualstaff.ie
- > Beo, an Internet magazine for Irish speakers in Ireland and worldwide at www.beo.ie

In addition, the following government departments, organisations and businesses will be contacted to participate in the round tables:

- > Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- > Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- > Department of Social and Family Affairs
- > National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies
- > WITI (Women in Information Technology in Ireland)
- > Network (Women's business networking organisation)
- > National Training and Development Institute
- > Enterprise Ireland
- > Shannon Development
- > Údarás na Gaeltachta
- > LEADER Groups
- > County Councils
- > County Enterprise Boards
- > Microsoft
- > Intel
- > Nortel
- > ESAT BT
- > Electric News
- > Sunday Business Post
- > FAMILIES EU Project, Work Research Centre
- > FLEXWORK EU Project, Waterford Institute of Technology

5.3 IDEAS FOR GENERAL OR SPECIAL SEMINARS

- > Factors inhibiting telework in Ireland
- > Factors inhibiting roll-out of infrastructure in Ireland
- > Strengths and weaknesses of Irish teleworking
- > Advantages and disadvantages of shared telecentres for corporates
- > Telecentres in Ireland
- > Telework for regional and rural development

6.1 PRELIMINARY GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the work of the eWork Action Forum, Telework Ireland and the other organisations listed in this report, the foundations for an eWork friendly environment in Ireland have been laid. There is excellent information on teleworking available from a variety of sources, and fiscal and regulatory barriers have been identified and addressed. The National Code of Practice on eWorking, agreed between Employers organisations and Trade Unions, is an excellent reference for all companies planning to implement teleworking policies.

However, the state has allowed its relative standing in relation to ICT infrastructure to fall seriously behind. It can be seen in other countries, as well as with some examples in Ireland, such as Microsoft, that the availability of broadband has a major influence on the implementation of teleworking. It increases both the numbers of teleworkers as well as the frequency of teleworking, because it provides a faster, more seamless connection experience to the company network and allows more information rich methods of communication, such as videoconferencing.

The state does not have a policy on telecentres, either those designed to bridge the digital divide and provide local access to ICT equipment and services, or shared telework centres in urban areas. In some countries, such as Spain, the social and development aspect of telecentres is acknowledged to such an extent that they are established and funded by government. Ireland could benefit from international experiences and a nationally coherent approach to supporting telecentres.

Consequently, the main recommendations for Ireland are:

- > The government should continue its strategic planning for the development of teleworking
- > The government should investigate international good practices in telecentres, assess their benefits and support and invest in their establishment.
- > The government should ensure that the infrastructure deterioration caused by privatisation of the incumbent telecommunications provider is counteracted as a matter of urgency
- > The government should support and speed up the rollout of broadband, especially in rural areas where market forces alone may never be enough to ensure its provision.



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