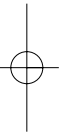
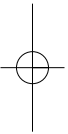


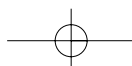
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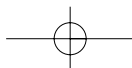
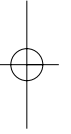
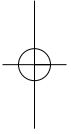
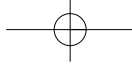
Encouraging Participation in the INTO

A Booklet for Branches on Participation Strategies



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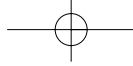
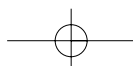
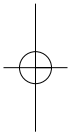
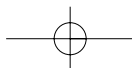
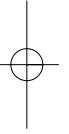
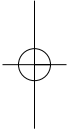
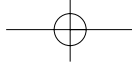


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	I
Section 1 WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?	2
Section 2 WHY IS PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT (A) FOR MEMBERS AND (B) FOR THE INTO?	3
Section 3 ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION – WHERE CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?	5
Section 4 PARTICIPATION – THE ROLE OF THE BRANCH	10
Section 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BRANCHES	13
Appendix 1 (Photocopiable resource) NEW DELEGATES TO CONGRESS – GUIDELINES	15
Appendix 2 (Photocopiable resource) TEMPLATE FOR SURVEY OF BRANCH MEMBERS	19





Introduction

The proposal to devise a strategy to enhance participation in the INTO originated in discussions at the INTO Equality Committee as far back as 1999. The initial study involved a number of stages, the first of which sought to define participation, followed by an examination of the benefits of effective organisational membership participation. Stage 3 was based on feedback from meetings where participation had been discussed with INTO branches. At Stage 4, focus groups of non-participating INTO members in a number of branches were consulted in relation to participation issues. The work and expertise of Catherine Breathnach throughout these stages of the Participation Project is acknowledged.

Subsequent to these stages, the CEC agreed on a Participation Project to run from 2002 to 2005, to review the work to date and to undertake further tasks with a view to presenting proposals on participation strategies.

A Steering Committee for the Participation Project was established and met on a number of occasions between 2001 and 2005. The Committee comprised the INTO President, with Ms Mary Culhane from the Equality Committee, Mr Ted Motherway of the Education Committee, Ms Máire Ní Chuinneagáin of the CEC, and Branch Representatives from Dublin City South, Newcastle West, Galway and Mitchelstown – Ms Peigí Ó Ruairc, Ms Lil Lenihan, Mr Michael Gallagher and Ms Kayren Hayes respectively. Mr Tom O’Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary, and Ms Deirbhile Nic Craith and Mr Noel Ward, Senior Officials, participated in meetings and in preparatory work.

The Participation Sub-Committee concluded that a booklet for use in INTO branches, which would highlight the importance of membership participation in INTO and suggest strategies to increase participation, should be drafted. This booklet is, therefore, the culmination of the work of all those who have been involved in the project since its initiation in 1999. It is recommended that this publication be read by INTO representatives in conjunction with the *INTO Branch, District and Fora Officer’s Handbook* (2006).

John Carr MA (Ed)
General Secretary
November 2006

Section 1:

What is participation?

Effective participation can be examined and defined from a number of perspectives, but in the case of this booklet it refers to engagement on the part of members, and members' recognition of their INTO membership and its value.

Such membership engagement may be active or passive at particular times. It does, however, recognise the mutual, co-operative nature of the INTO as an organisation, and the importance of participation for the functioning of such an organisation.

Participation is not just about attendance at meetings, but clearly those members who attend meetings regularly are more likely to be active participants. Effective participation provides opportunities for the personal development of members, the raising of self-esteem and for professional development. It is linked with a pride in membership of INTO and a motivation to contribute views to the Organisation. It may involve a willingness to go forward for office, to take and to relinquish offices at school, Branch, District or National level.

There is no one satisfactory definition of 'participation'. A member who reads INTO journals (such as *InTouch*, *Eolas* and *Forum* bulletin) is participating in the Organisation. So also is a member who consults the INTO website, takes part in INTO inservice courses, or uses the benefits and services associated with INTO (such as Carplan, the Salary Protection Scheme, Travel Insurance, etc.). Awareness, engagement, a sense of belonging: each of these can operate at various levels, but each is a hallmark of participation.

Section 2:

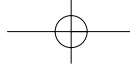
Why is participation important (a) for members and (b) for the INTO?

(A) FOR MEMBERS

The benefits to the individual member of participation include experiencing a sense of belonging and support from colleagues – particularly but not exclusively at times of crisis – and a reduction of any sense of isolation. Effective participation is linked to a raised enthusiasm among members.

Effective participation enables the individual member to have access to information, to become more informed, to be aware of rights and entitlements, to access professional and personal development opportunities, and to broaden contexts beyond the classroom or individual school. It enables the member to develop as a professional and supports opportunities for promotion within the profession and within INTO. The benefits of participation transfer to other spheres of life. Effective participation provides the member with opportunities for training and the development of expertise, to network and to become more knowledgeable and self-confident.

Effective participation will enable the member to have his or her views heard, and to have confidence that these have been heard. It will enable the member to influence policy and to have a greater say in decision making, thus empowering the member to be a force for change. The 'sense of belonging' associated with participation is of benefit to members in all schools, but perhaps particularly in smaller schools. Half of our primary schools have four teachers or less, and the structure of the school day and associated duties including supervision can give rise to a sense of isolation. Access to collegiate support and social opportunities may be especially important for teachers in smaller schools or branches of INTO.



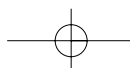
Taking Part

(B) FOR THE INTO

A mutual, co-operative organisation such as INTO is only as strong as its links. The Organisation can only maintain its standing if there is engagement on the part of the membership.

In the context of the changing role of trade unions in Irish society, it is particularly important for INTO to have the benefit of the input and views of members as to its effectiveness in the 21st century. Although a spectrum of interest groups, and even of sectional interests, must be catered for within INTO, the unifying nature of the overall Organisation is of key importance and relies on the participation of a wide range of members.

More effective membership participation would make the INTO a more interesting, responsive, democratic and attractive organisation for members. This would result in strengthening the position of those negotiating on behalf of INTO in that they would be more fully informed and better supported in their work. The variety of skills, abilities and knowledge of members available through increased participation would widen the resource base of the Organisation, and give it a greater ability to manage change. This would result in a more dynamic organisation, ensure the transfer to a new generation of leaders of such an organisation, and involve an ownership of decisions, directions and policies. Innovative thinking, fresh ideas and a willingness to accommodate a wide range of viewpoints would be further benefits to INTO.



Section 3:

Encouraging participation – where can you get involved?

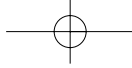
The INTO centrally – though National Committees, Head Office and the Northern Office – is very conscious of the need to increase and encourage membership participation. A very substantial amount of the work of the INTO offices and of INTO committees relates directly to linking with members and takes place in the context of service to them.

As examples, the Head Office query line currently deals with a heavy volume of daily calls: there were over 13,000 recorded queries in 2005, for example. In order to better serve members' interests, Head Office has now been arranged in Sections which specialise in particular areas of membership concern. The main Sections are:

- Conditions of Employment.
- Legal, Industrial Relations and Equality.
- Communications, Principals and Social Inclusion.
- Benefits and Services.
- Professional Development and Trade Union Training.
- Education.

The eleven funds operated by INTO, based on members' subscriptions, give a clear indication of the range of activities of INTO:

- General Fund.
- Publications Fund.
- Contingencies and Legal Fund.
- Benevolent Fund.
- Political Fund.
- Solidarity (formerly Third World Education Development) Fund.
- Capital Expenditure Fund.
- Investments Fund.
- Training Fund.
- Professional Development Fund.
- Benefits and Services Fund.

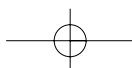


Taking Part

The committees which are part of the constitution of INTO are also indicative of areas of activity:

- Central Executive Committee.
- Benefit Funds Committee.
- Northern Committee.
- Education Committee.
- Equality Committee.
- Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee.
- District Committees.

The district structure of the INTO facilitates the election of members to the various national committees. The District Representative on the CEC, in particular, plays a major role in representing members at national level and in linking with members on all aspects of the Organisation's work. The CEC Representative has a multi-faceted and demanding role, but is a key person in facilitating and encouraging participation among members. The geographical spread of districts throughout the INTO is as indicated in the map which follows.



INTO'S SIXTEEN DISTRICTS



Taking Part

Annual Congress is the supreme governing body of INTO where several hundred delegates, mainly from branches, decide on policy and hear reports from the national structures of the Organisation. INTO Annual Congress is structured as outlined in the chart which follows.

INTO ANNUAL CONGRESS

Congress is made up of almost 900 members as shown below.

Benefit Funds Committee 5 members	Central Executive Committee 22 members	Northern Committee 2 delegates
Education Committee 16 members	INTO Branches 750 delegates (approx.)	Equality Committee 16 members
Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee 16 members	Standing Orders Committee 16 members	
Accounts Committee 2 delegates	District Committees 32 delegates	

The main organisational journal *InTouch* is published nine times yearly, and contains a wide range of sections including those on: News, Conditions of Employment, Media Report, Reviews, Tips for Teachers, Education Articles and letters. A number of the sections reflect the organisational structure of Head Office, as outlined earlier.

The Organisation's website (www.into.ie) has also become a major source of information for members, and of interaction through the contact groups. At present, the number of visitors to the website stands at 29,000 on average per month. The number of pages viewed on the website currently averages almost 115,000 per month.

One route for direct membership involvement in INTO is through submitting articles, letters or comments to the *InTouch* magazine. Another is through participation in INTO Congress and conferences. A number of mailing lists are also provided through the INTO website. Several hundred teachers avail themselves of these and of the free email service also provided.

A very wide range of special conferences is organised by INTO. Over the years 2000-2005 inclusive, the following 15 conferences – in addition to the INTO Annual Congress, and the annual Northern Conference – have been organised:

- Education Conference (Discipline; Education Technology): November 2000.
- Consultative Conference on Benchmarking: February 2001.
- Principals' Conference (INTO Structures; Staff Relations; Financial Management; Middle Management; Curriculum; Children First Guidelines): October 2001.
- Education Conference (Multi-Class; Change in Primary Education): November 2001.
- North-South Seminar on Educational Disadvantage: January 2002.
- Special Education Conference (The Role of the Special School; Autism): March 2002.
- Education Conference (The Teaching of Religion; Enhancing Achievement): November 2002.
- Principals' Conference (Special Education; Planning/Policies; Small Schools; In-School Management): October 2003.
- Education Conference (Language; Special Education in the Mainstream School): November 2003.
- Equality Conference (The Inclusive School): March 2004.
- Special Congress on INTO Rules and Structures: June 2004.
- Education Conference (Intercultural Education, School Evaluation, Mathematics), November 2004.
- Cross-Border Seminar (Immigration and Education), September 2005.
- Principals' and Deputy Principals' Conference (In-School Management, Duties and Responsibilities, the Administrative Burden), October 2005.
- Education Conference (Early Years Learning, SPHE), November 2005.

In addition to these potential channels of membership participation, INTO training courses for branch and district officers, for staff representatives, and for tutors on INTO professional development courses take place regularly and are complemented by training for media co-ordinators. Over recent years, INTO has also provided training for mediators who seek to resolve disputes at school level and for members of selection and appeal boards in relation to appointments, including post of responsibility appointments, within schools.

Section 4:

Participation – the role of the Branch

The INTO Participation Project elicited the views of a wide range of members at branch level in relation to participation. It is intended that these views will assist branches in formulating general strategies to increase the quality and quantity of membership participation.

- **Enablers** of participation identified in the research included (not in any particular order): encouragement from older/more active members, atmosphere of openness at meetings, loyalty to branch, social aspects, having a part in decision making, sharing problems and ideas, lack of formality, transparency and accountability of INTO, confidence in INTO as a body. How does your branch score on these 'enablers'?
- **Factors inhibiting** participation (in no particular order), included family commitments (particularly child care), domination of meetings by particular individuals, apathy, fear of being given a 'job' in branch, intolerance of dissent, off-putting jargon, fear of speaking in public and feeling that there is an INTO clique. Are there issues here for your branch?
- **Other conclusions** arrived at through the consultation process include a concern that the INTO is ageing in terms of active participation, and that the increasing feminisation of teaching emphasises particular issues in relation to participation. The vast majority of respondents to an INTO questionnaire as part of the process felt that they had the opportunity to contribute at their branch meetings, particularly where discussion groups were organised. The vast majority attended branch meetings in order to gain information. Smaller numbers attended in order to meet with other teachers, to influence decision making and to share their views with others.

It is, therefore, clear what the main enablers and deterrents are in relation to participation at branch level and in particular at branch meetings. Armed with this knowledge, it is possible to make a number of tentative recommendations in relation to various levels of branch activity.

(A) INDUCTION/INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS FOR NEW BRANCH MEMBERS

A number of branches hold induction meetings for new members, usually early in the school year. These provide a welcome into membership of INTO as well as an introduction to the Organisation and to local representatives.

(B) BRANCH MEETINGS

Rule changes agreed in 2004 mean that only two formal branch meetings are now required during the school year. In addition, further Rule changes provide that the agenda may be less rigid than heretofore.

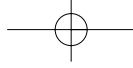
Branches should seek the attendance of all members at their meetings, and not just the attendance of staff representatives. The tradition that has grown up in a number of branches of staff representatives attending on behalf of their members at school level is not one which encourages wide participation and is not conducive to effective policy development. Branch meetings should, where possible, adopt a less formal structure, including discussion group elements, have a social aspect, a clear agenda, and deal with a range of matters including education matters and educational items which may be of particular local interest.

(C) SCHOOL/STAFF REPRESENTATIVE LEVEL

The staff representative is a key contact person in the INTO. It is s/he who has the primary responsibility for recruitment into membership of new staff members. It is important for branches to recognise and affirm the work of staff representatives by way of training, support and recognition. The rotation of staff representative positions among members of staff every three years or so would facilitate participation and place a lesser burden on those taking on the task. The INTO is at present examining how staff representatives can be further supported, including being provided with information at an early date on educational developments.

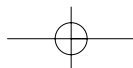
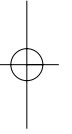
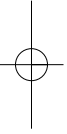
(D) SPECIAL INITIATIVES

A number of branches involved in the Participation Project piloted particular initiatives in order to seek to increase participation at branch level. These had a modest level of success. They included such measures as shortening the agenda of the



Taking Part

meetings, changing the time to afternoons, provision of a crèche for parents attending, developing a further social aspect including provision of refreshments, and the holding of a raffle for participants. A number of suggestions in this area are mentioned in Section 5.



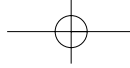
Section 5:

Recommendations for Branches

The Participation Committee endorses each of the strategies referred to in Section 4 as appropriate steps which branches might take in order to facilitate greater membership participation.

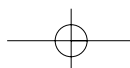
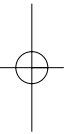
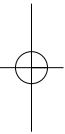
In addition, a number of further proposals are made here. It is recommended that branches should:

- Reaffirm the role of branch organiser, that an organiser's report be given to every meeting and that the organiser become actively involved in contact with staff representatives to recruit new teachers into the INTO.
- Devise a support structure for staff representatives, to include provision of training and retaining a stock of the *Staff Representative's Handbook* and disseminating these booklets to staff representatives on election. Staff representative tutors would have a central role in such a support structure.
- Branch committee members should 'mentor' new staff representatives in relation to their activities.
- Branch officers should consider an 'Annual Report' to staff representatives on activity throughout the year, listing officers, functions, calendar of activities, participation at Annual Congress, etc.
- Ensure that every branch meeting agenda includes a 'challenge' in terms of a question, 'controversial' agenda item, survey or guest speaker on the agenda.
- Have a time limit for branch meetings and adhere to this limit.
- Provide for each staff representative sufficient copies of every meeting agenda to give one to each staff member (as required by Rule 93).
- Organise a function for new members in the first term of each school year.
- The AGM, held in December or January, is the most important branch meeting of the year. This is the meeting at which branch officers and branch committee for the following year (Annual Congress to Annual Congress) is decided, at which motions for Annual Congress are proposed and at which nominations on to National Committees and for elected positions are made. Include the date of the following AGM on the agenda with the notice of the usual October meeting.



Taking Part

- Provide some recognition (eg, by way of a book token) of the work of staff representatives; this could be undertaken towards the end of the final term of the school year.
- List branch dates for the year in the first mailing to schools in September.
- Be open in relation to branch funds including delegate expenses and honoraria, if any.
- Encourage involvement of members at Branch meetings through seeking interest in Congress/Conference delegations by way of circulating a sheet of paper to allow members to self-nominate rather than relying on declarations of interest from the floor of the meeting.
- Provide a 'glossary' of terms to staff representatives/members (eg, 'Branch Committee', 'Branch Secretary', 'District', 'delegate', 'agenda').
- Make available guidelines for new delegates to Congress (such as those outlined at Appendix I) to representatives from the Branch.
- Vary times and format (to include group discussions) of branch meetings.
- Consider the location of branch meetings and vary this to suit members.
- Survey members occasionally (every three to five years) on their views of the branch and its activity, seeking suggestions to enhance participation (see template at Appendix 2).



Appendix I

NEW DELEGATES TO CONGRESS – GUIDELINES

1. What is INTO Congress?

An annual event, held each Easter, which is the “supreme governing body” (Rule 5) of the INTO – Congress is also the largest gathering of INTO members each year.

2. What is Congress for?

Congress receives reports, makes policy and provides an opportunity for the promotion of the Organisation and its issues.

3. When is Congress held?

Congress is held annually, either in the week before or (more usually) the week after Easter. It begins on the afternoon of day one and continues for two further days during working hours.

4. Who goes to Congress?

Delegates from all national committees and the 16 INTO districts attend Congress, but by far the greatest number of attendees are delegates from INTO branches. Branches are entitled to send one delegate for each 50 members or part thereof, with special provision for branches of 99 and under which may send two delegates regardless of branch size.

5. How can I attend Annual Congress?

Branches decide on their delegation to Annual Congress at their Annual General Meeting in January of each year. Many branches require that you give an indication at the previous general meeting in October of your intention to go. You should have your name put down at the appropriate time. Ask your staff representative or a branch officer about practice in your Branch.

Taking Part

6. Will my costs be covered if I go?

Yes. Branches pay expenses to cover costs of their Congress delegates.

7. What happens over the three days?

Day one includes an address by the INTO President, a report on the finances of the Organisation, agreement on the agenda for the remainder of Congress and reports from a range of national committees.

Day two normally includes an address from the Minister/s of Education and discussion of motions.

Finally, day three includes discussion of the Annual Report of the Central Executive Committee, further motions proposed by delegates and a closing session at which the new President is installed.

8. Who can speak at Congress?

Any delegate to Congress may address Congress in Irish and/or English. The best opportunity for a new delegate to speak is on one of the motions under debate. There is often a queue of speakers for and against such motions. Speakers are required to state their name and branch before speaking.

9. How much time does each speaker get?

The proposer of any motion is allowed not more than five minutes, the seconder of a motion three minutes and each succeeding speaker three minutes. A 'traffic light' system is used to indicate to speakers and to the Cathaoirleach when their time has expired.

10. What is a "right of reply"?

The proposer of a motion normally has a right to reply to points which were made by other speakers. This right may be exercised at the end of the debate, before the motion is put to a vote.

11. Must delegates who speak have the permission of their Branch?

It would be normal that a speaker would inform his/her delegation of his/her intention to speak and have regard to any views expressed. Normally, most delegations are delighted when a branch delegate participates in debate.

12. Who are those people at the top table?

The top table at Annual Congress is normally occupied by the members of the Central Executive Committee, including the President, Vice-President, General Secretary, General Treasurer, Northern Secretary and the 16 District Representatives. You should be able to spot your own District CEC representative at the top table!

13. If there is a vote on a motion, who judges if it has passed?

The Cathaoirleach of Congress (normally the President) judges, on the basis of a show of hands of delegates for and against a motion, whether the motion has passed. His/her ruling may be challenged. When votes are very close, a card voting system is utilised and tellers count the votes on the basis of delegate cards raised.

14. What does “point of order” mean?

A point of order usually relates to the conduct of a debate. A delegate making a point of order might be pointing out, for example, that speakers are exceeding the allocated time or that the wrong order of debate is being followed (for example, that alternate speakers for and against are not being called).

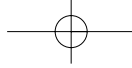
15. What are the other proposals made during a debate?

You may also hear delegates proposing that a question “be now put” or proposing that Congress proceed “to the next business”. “Now put” is usually proposed when a delegate feels that there has been sufficient debate and that Congress is in a position to make up its mind (and go to a vote on the motion before it). The Cathaoirleach of Congress has discretion whether or not to accept such a proposal but if it is accepted and agreed by the delegates, the proposer of the motion may use their right to reply to the debate and the matter is then put to Congress.

When “next business” is proposed and seconded, the Cathaoirleach of Congress puts that proposition immediately to a vote. This device is sometimes used when delegates feel it is better not to make a decision on the matter in hand. If the proposal is carried, Congress simply moves on to the next proposal or debate.

16. How can I take an active part in Congress?

You can attend all sessions, listen to the debates and take direct part in voting. You may wish to speak to a motion and based on consultation with your branch delegation, you should prepare yourself to do so. Also, you should talk to and engage with other delegates. You may spot old contacts from college days! You may also take part in the social programme which is advertised at Congress.



Taking Part

17. Did I hear there is a trade exhibition at Congress?

Yes, the trade exhibition is usually well worth a visit. Educational publishers and exhibitors, and allied businesses, have stands at Annual Congress and a good deal of useful information and update is available there.

18. Is there a crèche?

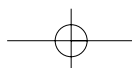
Yes, a crèche is provided to facilitate delegates. It is necessary to give due notice to Head Office if you wish to have a child placed in the crèche. Forms for this purpose will be sent to your branch secretary well in advance of Congress.

19. Is there a social side to Congress?

Yes. This normally includes a Congress dance and a table quiz, while various fringe meetings and other events may also be organised from year to year.

20. What other INTO events can I participate in?

The annual INTO Education Conference normally takes place in the first term of each school year. This is an event which you should consider asking your branch to nominate you to. Every two to three years, there are conferences specially devoted to principal/deputy principal teachers' issues, equality and special education. Regular training programmes are also held for INTO staff representatives and branch officers and you should consider these roles. In addition, there are opportunities for communication with other members and for putting your views through the mailing lists on the INTO web site.



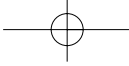
Appendix 2

TEMPLATE FOR SURVEY OF BRANCH MEMBERS

a) You are a member of _____ branch of INTO. Please rate these areas of branch activity in terms of their effectiveness, in your view:

	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Not Good	Poor	No View
Communication with branch members						
Conduct of branch meetings						
Opportunities to participate						
Venues of meetings						
Timing of meetings						
Support for staff representatives						
Accessibility of branch officers						

b) Please list here suggestions for improvement in any of the above areas:



Taking Part

c) What aspects of branch activity are:

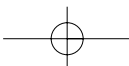
1. Conducted effectively and are of relevance to you?

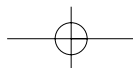
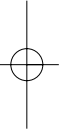
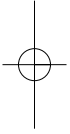
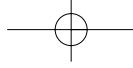
2. Are not conducted effectively or need to be improved?

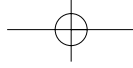
d) Please list any suggestions to enhance the participation of members in INTO, including in our local branch.

Thank you for your help.

Please return to _____ before _____ (date)







Taking Part

