

National Women's Strategy 2007 - 2016

April 2007

Prepared by

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
under the direction of an Inter-Departmental Committee

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ISBN 0-7557-7535-X

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH:
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DUBLIN
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE

To be purchased directly from the
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALE OFFICE,
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PRN A7/0476

Price €10

Foreword



There are now over two million women and girls in Ireland. Our challenge as a Government is to enable each and every one to live a fulfilling life, whatever her chosen path.

We acknowledge that, while we have made considerable progress in relation to gender equality in Ireland over the past thirty years, there is no room for complacency. Ireland, in common with the rest of Europe, needs to continue to make advances in the cause of gender equality. The European Commission published its “Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men” in 2006 and is again reminding us during this the European Year of Equal Opportunities that there is scope to foster the advancement of women at all levels of decision making within our society.

In Ireland, we have seen very significant growth in the participation by women in the labour force. This has undoubtedly contributed to the growth in our economy and to the improvement of living standards to everyone's benefit. While we have a strong body of legislation in place to support equality there is still a need to ensure that all of our citizens feel a sense of true equality.

This National Women's Strategy addresses all the key areas of concern for women in Ireland today. It aims to support them at work, be it in the economy or at home as carers; to ensure their well-being and to encourage them to make a contribution as active citizens and decision-makers.

This Strategy honours a commitment made to the social partners and to the United Nations. The social partners have actively pressed for the development of this Strategy and are committed to its implementation. The United Nations through its Commission on the Status of Women and its 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women actively promotes the development of the role of women in our global society. This National Women's Strategy links closely with the twelve “*areas of concern*” in relation to the role of women in the world today which were identified at the UN World Summit for Women in Beijing in 1995.

We believe that initiatives included within the National Women's Strategy will benefit very many women and will enable us to achieve the vision of

“an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.”

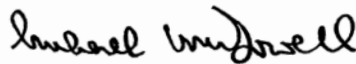
We are proud of the fact that Ireland is regularly commended by other countries on the progress we have made in relation to gender equality. However, welcome as this international recognition is, we believe there is evidence of the need for further developmental work. We would like to see women more actively involved as decision-makers. We would like to foster change to afford women a better work/life balance. We believe that implementation of this comprehensive National Women's Strategy will enable Ireland to become the shining light for gender equality over the next ten years.

We commend the Inter-Departmental Committee under the leadership of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform which oversaw the preparation of the National Women's Strategy and the Consultative Committee of Social Partners, all of whom made a significant input to completion of this Strategy.

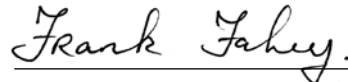
The completion of a Strategy such as this is only a half way-stage. To complete the process, the Government is fully committed to the achievement of all the 200 plus actions which are included within the Strategy. This necessitates an “all of Government” response and we know that our Ministerial colleagues and the teams in their Departments and Agencies will work proactively to ensure that the National Women's Strategy achieves all of the aspirations which were identified during the consultation period.



Bertie Ahern, T.D.,
Taoiseach



Michael McDowell T.D.,
Tánaiste



Frank Fahey, T.D.,
Minister of State with
Responsibility for Equality

National Women's Strategy

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The National Women's Strategy is the Government's statement of priorities in relation to the advancement of women in Irish society for the period 2007 to 2016. It acknowledges that Ireland has progressed, both economically and socially, with some of the highest growth rates in the expanded European Union, with a largely very well educated and very active labour force, offering excellent prospects for its young people.

Many women in Ireland have chosen to remain in or to return to the labour market and, in that context, enjoy the protections afforded by legislation on employment and equality. Others have chosen to take time out of the labour market and to spend time raising a family but wish to return to the labour market when their children have grown. Legislation alone cannot assure true gender equality and, in Ireland, as in all Western societies, the achievement of true gender equality requires systematic positive action.

This National Women's Strategy is intended to have a resonance with all women in Ireland and to address their concerns across the broad spectrum of human life. Its vision is

An Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.

In fostering the achievement of this vision, the National Women's Strategy aims to be comprehensive and contains twenty Key Objectives and over two hundred planned actions. These objectives and actions have been clustered together under the three key themes of

- Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women;
- Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and
- Engaging as equal and active citizens.

These themes are not wholly discrete. Taken together, they are a commitment on the part of the Government to address all aspects of national policy which impact upon women and to contribute to the achievement of true gender equality to the betterment of all members of our society.

Influences on the National Women's Strategy

The Government has developed a strong body of legislation to prevent discrimination on nine grounds including gender; and to support equality and the role of women, including their role as mothers/carers, in many settings including the workplace. The European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe are also actively engaged in fostering gender equality and promoting the role of women from an economic perspective, a social inclusion perspective, an anti-discrimination perspective and a human rights perspective.

In Ireland, the social partners are united with the Government in working for the advancement of the role of women. This has been reflected by the inclusion of a focus on gender equality issues in successive social partnership agreements, including *Towards 2016*, the current agreement. This social partnership approach has led to the advancement of a number of key initiatives such as the significant development of childcare with State and EU support and the inclusion of gender equality initiatives in the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan and its successor. Funding will be available under the 2007 - 2013 National Development Plan to implement elements of this Strategy.

Theme 1: Equalising Socio-Economic Opportunity For Women

In *Towards 2016*, as in earlier policy documents, the Government and the social partners acknowledge that employment is a major factor for helping people to move out of poverty and that it also influences quality of life and social wellbeing. A review of economic growth in Ireland over the past decade or so will show that much of that growth has been achieved through the significant increase in women's labour market participation. Over 60 per cent of women aged between 15 and 64 years are now in employment, ahead of the EU average. Nevertheless there is evidence to suggest that women at all levels of income face challenges in the workplace, including a gender pay gap and lack of opportunities for advancement.

Actions are included to improve the socio-economic status of women who are currently disadvantaged or at risk of becoming disadvantaged, including lone parents; women from marginalised groupings and older women who may have no or inadequate pension cover. Education and training are central to the advancement of women as they enter or advance through the labour market and life in general. The availability of quality and affordable childcare and other caring supports has long been cited as a key element to support working mothers and those mothers who wish to undertake re-training to enable them to re-enter the labour market.

This Theme includes six Key Objectives, each of which has a number of identified actions to be undertaken proactively by one or more Government Departments or Agencies, on occasion with the assistance of the social partners and other external bodies.

THEME 1: EQUALISING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 1-A To increase the participation of women in the labour force	1. Mainstream and actively promote the FÁS "Expanding the Workforce" Process
	2. Strengthen other initiatives which offer supports to enable women to return to the labour market
	3. Undertake survey with a view to developing Action Plan to encourage lone parents to avail of training and re-enter the labour market
Objective 1-B To decrease the gender pay gap	4. Implement recommendations in PPF Partnership Report on Male/Female Wage Differentials
	5. Continue work of National Framework Committee on Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise to address the gender pay gap
	6. Introduce statutory employment records which may facilitate research
	7. Ensure effective monitoring and enforcement of the National Minimum Wage
	8. Continue to review the National Minimum Wage as appropriate in conjunction with Social Partners
	9. Undertake research into international good practice in relation to equality proofing at the level of the enterprise
	10. Extend the programme of Equality Audits to consider and report on the gender pay gap
	11. Consider the establishment of a voluntary "quality mark" to show commitment on the part of the employer to equality issues, including gender equality

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 2 To promote the advancement of women in the labour force	12. Expand the range of apprenticeships and, where appropriate, transformation of traineeships into apprenticeships
	13. Develop guidance materials for the preparation of comprehensive gender equality policies in the workplace
	14. Develop initiatives to open debate on, and engage with, planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality
	15. Introduce new projects with business networks and trade unions to develop supports for their members on workplace equality
	16. Introduce cross-functional training programmes for female management trainees to avoid the “glass walls” phenomenon
	17. Continue to foster the “Leadership Initiative” developed under the Equality for Women Measure of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan
	18. Develop positive action measures to support in-house training for the advancement of female workers
	19. Consider the need for publicity campaigns to encourage women to avail of training opportunities at the level of the enterprise
Objective 3 To support more women as entrepreneurs	20. Ensure that training and development programmes meet the particular needs of, and are accessed by female entrepreneurs
	21. Promote entrepreneurship amongst women, through initiatives such as “Start your own Business” courses, award schemes, promotion of appropriate role models, etc.
	22. Ensure that girls are actively participating in schools’ entrepreneurship programmes
	23. Further develop the support networks in place for female entrepreneurs
	24. Foster the availability of childcare to support persons who might be working atypical hours as start up entrepreneurs
Objective 4 To seek to ensure that girls and women achieve their full potential in the education system	25. Complete the Report of the Science, Education and Technology Committee and present it to the Minister for Education and Science in 2007
	26. Continue to support Teenage Parenting Projects through School Completion Programme
	27. Complete development of guidelines on gender mainstreaming for second level schools
	28. Include gender mainstreaming in subject evaluations and in individual Whole School Evaluations
	29. Provide training on gender mainstreaming to all new and serving school inspectors
	30. Continue to provide supports through further and adult education programmes for “hard-to-reach” groups of adults, including those who left school without qualifications and who need second-chance educational opportunities
	31. Foster increase in FETAC accreditation for women in further education
	32. Deliver “Women into Educational Management” courses as required nationally.
	33. Provide funding for research projects on gender issues within education
	Objective 5–A To ensure that childcare services are optimised to meet the needs of parents and children alike
35. Develop and implement the National Training Strategy for childcare	
36. Implement and achieve the targets set for childcare places under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) and any successor programme(s)	
37. Implement the EOCP, NCIP and any successor programme(s) in a way which focuses on poverty and disadvantage	
38. Implement and achieve the targets set under the NCIP and “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS)	
39. Monitor whether the implementation of the NCIP is impacting positively on working mothers in terms of their continued participation in the labour force	
40. Monitor increasing female labour market participation	

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 5-B To ensure that the care infrastructure supports women's socio-economic engagement	41. Ensure that payments and supports to carers are efficient and effective, recognising their needs and adequately addressing poverty and social exclusion and are adaptable to the needs of carers in a changing environment (i.e. care sharing arrangements) 42. Continue to review the scope for further developments of the Carer's Allowance/Benefit subject to available resources 43. Develop a structured consultation process to inform future policy on care supports 44. Develop training initiatives for carers as priorities permit 45. Inter-Departmental Working Group will continue to examine the strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with long term care provision, with appropriate consultation 46. Devise a National Carers' Strategy in consultation with social partners and all relevant Departments/Agencies
Objective 6-A To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty	47. Ensure that future NAPinclusion continues to address the specific circumstances of vulnerable women and that appropriate policy responses are developed to meet their needs 48. Review treatment of unemployed persons available for part-time work only in the social welfare system 49. Social welfare provision for widows to be kept under review and further improvements to be considered, as appropriate in a budgetary context 50. Increase the Qualified Adult payment to the level of the Old Age (Non-contributory) Pension in accordance with the terms of <i>Towards 2016</i> 51. Consider proposals for the abolition of qualified adult allowances in social assistance and implementation of decisions arising from Government Discussion Paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents' 52. Review increase for Qualified Adult payment for pensioners within the social welfare system so that women can easily access independent payments
Objective 6-B To reduce the numbers of female lone parents who experience poverty	53. Progress further work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes including a review of child income supports which avoid employment disincentives. This work will be informed by the NESC study on second tier child income support 54. Bring forward proposals aimed at supporting lone parents, and other parents on low income, into employment, with a view to ending welfare dependency and achieving a higher standard of living for themselves and their children 55. Value of child income support measures for those on social welfare to be maintained as 33 to 35 per cent of the minimum adult Social Welfare payment rate
Objective 6-C To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty by increasing pension cover	56. In accordance with <i>Towards 2016</i> and having regard to available resources, build on the commitment of €200 per week which was achieved in 2007 57. Support initiatives to increase participation of women in the workforce 58. Improve information and awareness among families working together to ensure that they are appropriately insured for social welfare purposes through the preparation of information leaflets and subsequent publicity campaigns 59. Ensure qualifying conditions for contributory pensions are appropriate and strike a reasonable balance between the level of contributions made and benefits paid 60. Review the issues and costs associated with a switch to a system of credited contributions and review the backdating of the Homemakers Scheme 61. Bring forward and implement Budget proposals in relation to pension rates and conditions 62. Promote extensive, secure and adequate supplementary pension provision, particularly for women, in consultation with the Pensions Board 63. Increase the number of women, particularly marginalised women, with adequate supplementary pension coverage in line with Government targets 64. Develop women-focused initiatives by the Pensions Board as part of the National Pensions Awareness Campaign

Theme 2: Ensuring the Wellbeing of Women

A sense of personal wellbeing is usually achieved through a combination of good physical and mental health; access to health and social services, where required; a sense of fulfilment, through employment, family and relationships and usually enhanced by a good work-life balance; wellbeing for some is also underpinned by a sense of security and protection. In order to reflect the importance of the social environment, the Government has adopted the WHO definition of health, which relies on the social model:

Health is a state of complete, physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Within the National Women's Strategy, wellbeing includes the sense of fulfilment associated with a good work/life balance (although it would be equally valid to consider work/life balance under the socio-economic theme); the range of health care supports including good physical and mental health and positive and healthy lifestyles. Wellbeing can be affected negatively by domestic violence, by bullying and harassment and by unacceptable exploitation such as trafficking of women for sexual exploitation which has become prevalent throughout the world and which may well increase in Ireland within the time-span of this Strategy.

This theme contains seven objectives and another comprehensive list of actions, the implementation of which the Government commits to over the coming ten years.

THEME 2: ENSURING THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 7 To enhance the work/life balance for women	65. Continue to support work of National Framework Committee on Work/Life Balance
	66. Encourage employers to adopt a wide range of options to enhance the work/life balance of their staff
	67. Review the DSFA Unemployment Benefit and Assistance Schemes with particular reference to the treatment of part-time and atypical workers
	68. Continue to keep under review the treatment of part-time and other atypical workers in the Social Welfare system
Objective 8–A To improve the health status of women in Ireland through gender focused policies	69. Incorporate a gender dimension into health policy planning at the earliest possible stage of development, e.g. the Cardiovascular Strategy
	70. Ensure that the ongoing redevelopment of the health services structures includes representation of women at all decision-making levels
	71. Update women's health structures in light of recent health reform in collaboration with the Health Service Executive and the Women's Health Council target
	72. Put in place health policies and services that allow women full access (e.g. transport, childcare/eldercare, privacy)
	73. Put in place health policies and services to support carers (respite, counselling, information, financial security)

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 8-B To improve the physical health status of women in Ireland	74. Extend Breast Check screening programme nationally
	75. Extend the Cervical screening programme nationally
	76. Treat women with breast cancer at specialist breast centres
	77. The Women's Health Council and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland to conduct a study on older women and cancer in Ireland
	78. Put measures in place to increase awareness about the incidence of cardiovascular disease among women, for both women themselves and for their health care providers
	79. Make women and their health care providers aware of the different manifestations of cardiovascular disease among women
	80. Introduce appropriate gender sensitive diagnostic measures of cardiovascular disease
	81. Use proven methods of treatment for cardiovascular disease to their full extent among women where appropriate
Objective 8-C To improve the reproductive and sexual health status of women in Ireland	82. Increase access to cardiac rehabilitation programmes among women
	83. Ensure that all women have access to information on fertility, contraception and sexual health matters
	84. Develop framework to ensure geographical equity of access to contraceptive services for women
	85. Offer screening programmes for sexually transmitted infections regularly
	86. Provide increased information on sexual and reproductive wellbeing through the SPHE programme in schools
	87. Ensure that ante-natal care, maternity services and post-natal care are woman-centred
Objective 8-D To improve the mental health status of women in Ireland	88. Ensure that information and counselling services are available in cases of crisis pregnancy
	89. Ensure that information is available to all women on health, wellbeing and other relevant advice in relation to menopause
	90. Expand information on mental health in the SPHE programme in schools
	91. Institute a regular community survey to monitor progress on mental health development
	92. Provide counselling services through primary care referrals
Objective 8-E To promote healthy lifestyles for the women in Ireland	93. Consider the introduction of awareness campaigns relating to mental health among women in the peri-natal period
	94. Emphasise the importance of exercise in life-skills programmes
	95. Tailor and promote physical recreation initiatives specifically for women as a healthy lifestyle option, especially for teenage girls
	96. Promote positive messages about eating more fruit/vegetables/fish
	97. Encourage greater participation of women in sports activities at local level and in mass participation events such as mini-marathons through facilitation of year-round training groups
	98. Encourage women in the older age groups to engage in low impact exercise programmes including walking, yoga and pilates to ensure sustained fitness into old age and to diminish the risk of osteoporosis
	99. Increase access to healthier food choices, targeting in particular less well-off women and women in the workplace
	100. Introduce media campaigns to reduce smoking and drinking specifically targeting young women
	101. Continue smoking cessation programmes

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 9 To increase the number of women participating in sport and physical activity in Ireland	102. Undertake research on mass participation events such as Women's Mini-Marathon
	103. Implement recommendations based on findings of this research
	104. Encourage more women to take up volunteer positions in National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in sport
	105. Hold two "Women in Sport" networking/information sharing sessions per year
	106. Develop a resource for use in NGBs to encourage women to take up senior positions
	107. Develop "Women in Sport" coaching projects to advanced coaching levels
	108. Provide targeted funding to NGBs for special initiatives to attract/retain women's involvement in sport
	109. Inform women about their possible participation in mass participation events
	110. Inform women about local sports structures and opportunities to participate in their areas
	111. Increase capacity of organisations to deliver programmes to women and girls
	112. Develop awareness of the "Women in Sport" brand associated with projects under the initiative
113. Promote participation of "Women in Sport" by highlighting opportunities and good practice on Irish Sports Council website and in mass media.	
Objective 10 To ensure the health and safety of pregnant and breast feeding women at work	114. Where risks to pregnant and breast feeding women occur, ensure that all employers include an assessment of these risks as an element of the Safety Statement
	115. Continue to create awareness of potential hazards to pregnant and breast feeding mothers within the work place
Objective 11 To protect women from bullying and harassment in the workplace	116. Preparation of a revised Code of Practice for employers and employees in the prevention and resolution of bullying at work
	117. Media campaigns to promote awareness of bullying
	118. Further consideration of bullying and harassment under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
	119. Identify and gather better statistics and indicators in relation to the incidence of bullying

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 12 To combat violence against women through improved services for victims together with effective prevention and prosecution	120. Establish an Executive Office under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide a well co-ordinated “whole of Government” response to violence against women and domestic violence
	121. Augment the research team in the National Crime Council to enable it to provide dedicated research to support the Government response to violence against women
	122. Ensure that the voluntary and statutory frontline services address the needs of victims of domestic violence and dependent family members
	123. Ensure that essential supports are available to all recent victims of sexual violence on a 24-hour basis
	124. Personnel of all health services to be trained to fully understand the impact of sexual, emotional and physical abuse
	125. Provide emergency accommodation for women forced to leave their homes because of domestic violence
	126. Implement the recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSCVaW) sub-group on treatment services for victims of rape and sexual assault
	127. Promote effective criminal justice responses, including any necessary legislative responses
	128. Implement the findings of the 2005 review of Garda policy on domestic violence
	129. Provide funding for the development, operation and ongoing monitoring of effective intervention programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence
	130. Develop and expand Sex Offender Treatment Programmes
	131. Develop appropriate media and other strategies which ensure that victims of violence against women (VaW) are aware of the services available in their area
	132. Provide funding to the NSCVaW and to local and regional groups to undertake awareness raising initiatives
133. Develop targeted campaigns to raise awareness of VaW amongst a wide audience, including the general public, service providers and all agencies within the criminal justice system	
Objective 13 To address the issue of trafficking of women and children	134. Continue to take a proactive approach to the prevention and detection of human trafficking and prosecution of offenders
	135. Deprive perpetrators of trafficking of the proceeds of their criminal activities
	136. Foster collaboration between Garda Síochána and NGOs in relation to “intelligence” on trafficking
	137. Bring forward legislation to comply with EU Framework decision on combating trafficking of human beings
	138. Put in place appropriate support mechanisms for victims of trafficking to enable them to re-establish their lives
	139. Undertake media campaigns to promote awareness of trafficking of human beings and its linkages with the “sex industry”

Theme 3: Engaging as Equal and Active Citizens

While the number of women in paid employment has more than doubled since the early 1990s and women have contributed significantly to the economic growth which has in turn enhanced the wellbeing of the majority of our citizens, the number of women who are actively engaged as decision-makers, political players and as other persons of influence within society has not kept pace.

This may be attributable to the nature of women’s role in life where very many continue to be the principal care giver and household worker within the family unit. Taken in tandem with their working life, many therefore have few opportunities and little time to engage prominently in external activity.

Theme Three deals with the political and decision-making spheres and refers to all activities where power is enacted, including decision-making procedures within all types of organisations and institutions, policy-making procedures, and decision-making within political life. Ireland has a comparatively small number of female elected politicians in both central and local government; few women have risen to the top of the Civil Service although two thirds of all general grade civil servants are women; and less than a handful of women head up the country's major private sector companies.

Ireland's overseas development aid programme will continue to place a strong emphasis on the role of women in overseas development and has long pursued a programme to foster and enhance the role of women in the developing world.

This National Women's Strategy will foster and support initiatives which will help to encourage more women to engage as equal and active citizens by supporting developmental initiatives; setting targets for women's involvement, where appropriate; by encouraging women to put themselves forward as candidates for more active engagement as decision-makers in civil society; and by encouraging the establishment of networks to enable women to promote and advance themselves as men have had the opportunity to do for many years.

Theme Three includes four key objectives to support the engagement of women as active and equal citizens:

THEME 3: ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 14 To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland	140. Political parties should develop action plans to increase number of female candidates in General Elections
	141. Political parties should publish gender disaggregated statistics on participation and representation
	142. Government/Ministers will appoint members to State Boards in line with the gender targets set by Government
	143. Other nominating bodies will nominate male and female representatives to State Boards to enable Government/Ministers to make selection to ensure gender balance on Boards
	144. Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to State Boards
	145. Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of State Boards
	146. Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to the boards of private sector companies
	147. Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of private sector boards
	148. Review Civil Service Gender Equality Policy
	149. Develop new Civil Service Gender Equality Strategy based on Review
	150. Develop Gender Equality Strategy for the Public Service modelled on Civil Service Strategy through establishment of working group
	151. Continue to monitor target of 33.3 per cent for female Assistant Principal Officers within Civil Service
152. Set target of 27 per cent for female Principal Officers within Civil Service by Government decision and incorporate target in Departmental Strategy Statements and Annual Reports to reflect these commitments	

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 15 To increase the number of women involved in the arts in Ireland	153. Offer leadership in the area of governance, through the publication of policy and resource documents
	154. Establish a forum for women working in the arts which will explore common issues facing them and develop a working agenda to address these issues
	155. Publish guidelines on equality specific to the arts
	156. Offer leadership in the area of equality, through the publication of policy and resource documents.
	157. Provide advice and leadership in the area of equality and the arts
	158. Arts Council will undertake comprehensive survey including people's experiences of the arts in 2006 and 2007
	159. Arts Council survey will include measurement of women's active participation in the arts
	160. Collect data regarding the number of women currently studying to become arts practitioners or facilitators
	161. Provide advice to women who participate, or would like to participate, in the arts.
	162. Examine the current physical infrastructure for the arts and ascertain the level of usage by women
Objective 16 To use media proactively to support gender equality and the advancement of women	163. Develop voluntary regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women in the media
	164. Establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct concerning women in the media
	165. Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the impact of gender stereotyping on the role of women within society
	166. Promote women's participation in the media at all levels
	167. Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the contribution they can make to the achievement of true gender equality through their portrayal of women
	168. Make support available for the development of awareness raising on the issue of gender stereotyping and the positive portrayal of women
	169. Increase the number of media programmes made for and by women
Objective 17-A To foster the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals through Irish Aid	170. Mainstream gender considerations in all development co-operation activities
	171. Undertake specific actions to improve the position and status of women
	172. Increase funding to women's organisations to ensure that women's needs and interests remain on the development and human rights agenda
	173. Promote economic empowerment of women, create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, ensure greater access to quality education for both boys and girls and support community-based health programmes that enable women's access to reproductive and other health services
	174. Work against gender based violence with national and international partners (See Objective 17 - C)
	175. Support legislative changes that increase women's right to property and other resources
	176. Encourage investment in infrastructure that reduces women's unpaid work burden and thereby enables greater access for women to economic opportunity and decision-making
	177. Continue investment in primary education with emphasis on girls' education and eliminate gender disparity in primary education
	178. Ensure that HIV remains on the agenda through development of new gender specific HIV/AIDS policy and strategy based on 2005 evaluation
	179. Ensure that gender specific HIV/AIDS programming is resourced and improve gender specific HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services
	180. Advocate for further investment in microbicides internationally and maintain or increase current annual investment in the development of microbicides at €3 million

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 17-B To use multi-lateral aid and development policy to promote the role of women and gender equality in developing countries	181. Promote gender equality proposals in European Union external relations fora
	182. Ensure that input into trade agreements takes into consideration the differential impact of trade policy on women and men
	183. Promote the provision of untied aid by other Member States
	184. Promote actions in multi-lateral development aid which foster the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those which impact upon women
	185. Strengthen analytical capacity at Partner Government level to mainstream gender effectively across government policy and programmes
Objective 17-C To enhance the capacity of Irish Aid and Development Partners to respond effectively to Gender Based Violence in conflict, post-conflict and developing environments	186. Support policies and operational programmes of EU, UN and Council of Europe on Gender Based Violence
	187. Support the ongoing activity of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence
	188. Continue to advocate internationally for greater attention and resources to be devoted to the prevention of gender-based violence
	189. Pursue the inclusion of gender-related measures in the mandates of peacekeeping operations; provision of resources for gender advisers / units in peacekeeping operations; and awareness and enforcement of codes of conduct for peacekeepers
	190. Work to ensure that women are involved at every stage of peace negotiations in the planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels
	191. Press for an increased number of women sent by troop-contributing countries to UN peace missions, and for women to hold 50% of the UNSG Special Representative and Special Envoy positions
	192. Pursue the inclusion of gender-based violence in the statutes of any future ad hoc international tribunals established by the Security Council
Objective 17-D To ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all parts of the United Nations System	193. Support the exclusion of impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, including gender-based crimes, from post-conflict amnesty provisions
	194. Support for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the United Nations

Implementing the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016

The achievement of the aims of the National Women's Strategy requires a renewed political, financial and administrative commitment to underpin existing initiatives and to support the new proposed initiatives, which will help to enhance the diverse roles of women within our country. It requires an increased awareness of gender mainstreaming within public policy formation. It also requires a change in societal attitude among both men and women so that women can achieve their full potential within a refocused Irish society that embraces the fundamental principle of equality between women and men.

This National Women's Strategy has been prepared under the guidance of a Committee representative of all Government Departments and has been approved by Government. The social partners have been consulted and are supportive of the aims and aspirations of the Strategy, acknowledging that its implementation will benefit all members of Irish society, both male and female.

The Strategy builds upon and complements work which has already begun in relation to the mainstreaming of gender as an issue in all policy-making. Gender mainstreaming does not only consider the role of women but should clearly consider the impact of all policy from the perspective of both the male and the female population of Ireland.

The implementation plan envisages a funding stream for innovative positive actions to complement actions already undertaken or planned by individual Departments. In the first instance, this funding is being provided in the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013. The work will also be supported by a small team of technical gender experts in a dedicated Gender Equality Unit within the Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The implementation plan contains three key objectives, again with a range of actions:

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY 2007 – 2016

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 18 To implement gender mainstreaming as the principal instrument for the achievement of gender equality in Ireland	195. Re-establish NDP Gender Equality Unit as Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit by end 2007
	196. Establish formal Gender Mainstreaming Supports in Government Departments by end 2008
	197. Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit to provide training and support to other Departments
	198. Departmental Strategy Statements to include linkages with National Women's Strategy as a cross-Departmental Initiative
	199. Prepare and circulate detailed guidance to all Government Departments in relation to the provision in the Cabinet Procedures that Memoranda for Government require an assessment of gender impacts
	200. Training on gender mainstreaming to be included as an intrinsic part of training programmes
	201. Consider evidence for the introduction of gender budgeting with a view to its introduction if the case in its favour proves positive
Objective 19 To provide financial support to implement the National Women's Strategy	202. Build upon the initiatives promoting gender equality and the advancement of women which were funded under the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006
	203. Create a new fund which will be available to undertake positive actions aimed at fostering better gender equality and the achievement of the objectives of this Strategy
	204. Undertake awareness raising programmes to foster understanding of gender equality
Objective 20 To ensure that the National Women's Strategy is fully implemented	205. Prepare reports on progress on implementation of National Women's Strategy
	206. Continue to convene Inter-Departmental Committee and establish wide reaching Co-ordinating Committee to review implementation of the Strategy and discuss issues of interest to women in Ireland
	207. Publish periodic reports on implementation of Strategy on Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform website and otherwise
	208. Social Partnership agreements to include a commitment to implement the Strategy and to include monitoring of implementation of Strategy as part of monitoring of agreement
	209. Departmental Data Strategies to reflect the need to gather gender disaggregated data generally, and in particular, to ensure that the data needed to support the implementation of this Strategy is available
	210. Undertake Interim Review of Strategy every three years
	211. Organise seminars to review implementation of Strategy involving interested parties, including NGOs
	212. Monitor progress on addressing inequalities and advise on how to address any barriers encountered

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISION OF THE
NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY
2007-2016

*An Ireland where all women
enjoy equality with men
and can achieve their full potential,
while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life*

VISION

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

The National Women's Strategy is the Government's statement of priorities in relation to the advancement of women in Irish society for the period 2007 to 2016. Since the publication of the reports of the two Commissions on the Status of Women, in 1972 and 1993, Ireland has progressed, both economically and socially, with some of the highest growth rates in the expanded European Union.

On the socio-economic front, Ireland has a largely very well educated and very active labour force and offers excellent prospects for most of its young people. Many women have chosen to remain in or to return to the labour market when they start a family and, in that context, enjoy the protections afforded by legislation on employment and equality. However, legislation alone cannot assure true gender equality and there are still strong cultural pressures in all Western societies which make the achievement of true gender equality an ongoing challenge.

A recent pilot Time Use Survey in Ireland¹ shows that the traditional pattern of female involvement in caring and in household work continues to prevail. Many women find that the pressures of modern life have impacted negatively on the quality of their lives and on their feeling of wellbeing and fulfilment, particularly where they strive to combine work and family responsibilities.

While a small number of Irish women have risen to play prominent roles on the international stage, the involvement of women in decision-making, at both enterprise and political levels on the home stage, is still comparatively low.

In common with all advanced societies, some sections of the population do not yet enjoy the benefits of the new prosperity. Many of those who continue to experience disadvantage and lack of equality of opportunity are women. The further improvement of the socio-economic status of marginalised and disadvantaged women would enhance the quality of their lives and the wellbeing of their families.

An overview of the key issues raised by the first and by the second Commissions on the Status of Women shows that while there have been significant improvements across the key areas, there are still concerns that women have yet to achieve real equality and true fulfilment in contemporary Irish society.

Rationale and Context for the National Women's Strategy

This National Women's Strategy, covering a ten year period, aims to provide a framework within which the outstanding gaps in the position of women in Irish society will be addressed. It has been developed in consultation with senior officials representing all Government Departments and its objectives will be achieved by the implementation of the

¹ Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and NDP Gender Equality Unit, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DJELR): Time Use in Ireland 2005 : Pages 10 and 11

Strategy's recommendations and actions by Government Departments, their Agencies, the social partners and external partners.

Building upon articles 40 and 45 of the Irish Constitution, this National Women's Strategy is guided towards the vision of

*An Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and
can achieve their full potential,
while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.*

The Strategy is rooted in the real experiences and aspirations of women in Ireland. It has been informed by the consultation process undertaken prior to the formulation of the National Plan for Women in 2002². It acknowledges both the considerable progress that has been made over the last thirty or so years in transforming the position of women in Ireland, and the structural inequalities that women face in many aspects of social, cultural, political and economic life and the need to address these inequalities as a matter of priority.

This National Women's Strategy is intended to have a resonance with all women in Ireland and to address their concerns. It aims to be comprehensive rather than exhaustive, strategic rather than detailed, concise rather than extensive. In many cases, the Strategy identifies the issue to be addressed and in general terms, how this is to be done. The detailed actions to deliver on the commitments are the responsibility of the individual Government Departments and/or Agencies.

The National Women's Strategy 2007 - 2016 is structured on a framework of three key themes. These themes are not wholly discrete and many of the issues included under one theme may relate also to either or both of the other themes. The framework also tries to show clear linkages with international work on the issue of the role of women in society, including the outcomes of the United Nations Summit on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995; Ireland's commitments under the UN Covenant on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; the recommendations to Member States contained in the European Commission's Roadmap on Equality between Women and Men published in Spring 2006; and the conclusions of the fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Council of Europe on Gender Equality which took place in June 2006.

Organisation of Strategy

The Strategy provides a readily accessible resource for anyone wishing to find out what the Government intends to do to advance the position of women in Irish society over the coming decade under each of the three themes. However, it is always important to set the context and therefore the Strategy also offers an overview of the progress which has been achieved since the publication of the first Commission on the Status of Women in 1972.

In relation to each of the key themes and issues, the Strategy spells out objectives, actions, targets and indicators and it is intended that progress towards the achievement of these targets will be reviewed regularly.

² Genesis Europe (on behalf of DJELR): Aspirations of Women collected in the course of the Consultation Process on the National Plan for Women 2002 : Towards a National Women's Strategy

Very many Civil Service Departments and other State Agencies have responsibility for the implementation of aspects of this National Women's Strategy. The final chapter discusses the steps which will be required to ensure that the National Women's Strategy is fully implemented and that the forthcoming ten years will lead to even greater prosperity and fulfilment for women in Ireland with a particular emphasis on those who are marginalised and are experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

The Strategy itself has been drafted by the Gender Equality Division in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, under the direction of the Inter-Departmental Committee, and supported by a Consultative Group including the Social Partners and the National Women's Council of Ireland. The Equality Authority was consulted on an on-going basis as the Strategy was being drafted. Details of the membership of the Inter-Departmental Committee and the Consultative Group are given in Appendices 2 and 3.

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGY

CHAPTER TWO

Influences on the Gender Equality Agenda in Ireland

The first Commission appointed to look at the Status of Women in Ireland reported in 1972 and the main thrust of its Report³ dealt with equal pay for women and the situation of women in employment; as well as with aspects of politics and public life, land, taxation and social welfare as they impacted on women.

Twenty years later, the second Commission was established to review the implementation of the first Commission's recommendations and to consider and make recommendations on the means, administrative and legislative, by which women would be able to participate on equal terms and conditions with men in economic, social, political and cultural life and, to this end, to consider the efficacy and feasibility of positive action measures. It was asked to pay special attention to the needs of women in the home.

The Report of the Second Commission⁴ was addressed to the wider Irish society as well as to Government; to the political parties, the churches, the media, the social partners, sporting and other organisations, all of whom needed to understand, react and readjust to the needs of women and without which a real and abiding change in Irish society would not take place. A most important factor in achieving this was to have a gender balance in all areas of decision-making.

Integral to the Report of the Second Commission was a concern that women should be facilitated to develop economic independence as, without such independence, it was considered that there was no real choice open to women. The Commission sought to look ahead to an Irish society in the 21st Century based on the principles of equal opportunity, mutual support and the free and equal partnership of women and men.

The Second Commission found the issue of women in the home to be complex. It hoped to raise the status of women in the home and recognised that such women needed services to support their life choice. Women who wished to work full-time or part-time outside the home had to feel free to make that choice. The Commission noted that all the burden of home duties should not fall automatically on women. It was suggested that the coming generation of women and men should realise that they both had choices regarding the combination of work and family responsibilities. The Commission recommended that a harmonious balance between work and family life was a goal which Government should set itself to achieve by negotiation with the social partners.

The Commission wanted to place gender equality as a core value of Irish society. It sought the permeation of society by women's values to complement men's values and the evolution of the societal norm to a composite, taking account of the entire population, both women and men. It also envisaged an increased sharing of power between men and women.

³ Commission on the Status of Women, 1972: Report to the Minister for Finance

⁴ Report to Government: Second Commission on Status of Women: 1993

It is interesting to note the comment in the Second Commission Report, some twenty one years after the first Report, that there were certain constants between the two reports: recommendations to try to lessen the disparity between men's and women's earnings and a reflection on the ongoing low, albeit increasing, participation by women in public life. In considering the context of the present Strategy, the achievements of women over the past fourteen years will be acknowledged but some issues such as the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels and the sharing of caring responsibilities are issues which still require positive actions.

The table below presents some headline statistics in relation to women in Ireland over the past 25 years. The number of women in Ireland has increased by some 634,000. The actual number of marriages taking place each year has increased in the last decade, having fallen quite significantly in the 1970s and 1980s but the rate has fallen significantly while the age at marriage has also increased by some five years to 30.

The birth rate is currently 14.8 births per 1,000 with 31 per cent of births recorded as extra marital births. The fertility rate has dropped to 1.98 in 2003, the most recent year for which figures are available, while the actual numbers of marriages and births have stabilised, although the rates have of course fallen. Extra-marital births have increased twelve-fold since 1971 while the fertility rate has dropped some 40 per cent.

TABLE 1: KEY INDICATORS ON WOMEN 1971 – 2006

	1971	1991	2005/6
Number of women in population	1,482,488	1,772,301	2,116,716*
Number of marriages	20,788	16,859	20,723
Rate per 1,000	7.1	4.8	5.0
Average age of woman on marriage	25.1	25.8	30.4**
Number of births	64,382	52,690	61,042
Birth rate per 1,000	21.9	15	14.8
Extra marital births	1,709	8,766	19,528
Extra marital births as % of total births	2.7	16.6	31.0
Total fertility rate	3.5	2.1	1.98**
Percentage of women aged over 15 in the labour force ***	28.0	32.9	52.5*
Percentage of married women in the labour force ***	8.0	26.9	52.4*
Source : Central Statistics Office			
Note : * Preliminary Census Figure for 2006, vital statistics 2005, labour force 2006			
Note : ** 2003			
Note : *** The 2006 data may not strictly compare with earlier years due to changes in the collection methodology			

A Legislative and Policy Approach to Address Gender in Contemporary Ireland

Ireland's approach to gender equality has three elements: firstly, the Constitution, backed up with detailed legislative provisions, which creates the fundamental entitlement to equality; secondly, the introduction of the concept of gender mainstreaming in public policy making (albeit in a limited way) which requires the consideration of the impact of a

policy proposal on each sex at the development, implementation and evaluation stages; and thirdly, positive action measures to address gender inequality, especially tackling specific issues and imbalances that need a targeted policy intervention.

In looking at the influences upon Ireland's policy to achieve gender equality it is important to be aware of the significant influence of external policy instruments, particularly membership of the European Union. Indeed the Report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women noted that

The effect of membership of the European Community and of the judgements of the European Court of Justice enforcing the Treaty of Rome... ensured that the provisions of the treaty and the directives [were] observed in all Member States. This... started the inexorable progress towards real equality in Ireland.⁵

The Irish Constitution on the Role of Women and Gender Equality

The main Constitutional⁶ reference to equality appears in Article 40.1 which states that:

All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law.

This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have due regard to differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.

The position of women in Irish society is addressed in Article 41.2:

1° In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2° The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that Mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

This phrasing has been reviewed by the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution as part of its Tenth Progress Report on the Family, published in January 2006. An earlier Constitution Review Group⁷ in 1996 had recommended reformulation in a gender neutral form which would recognise the contribution of each or either spouse within the home and suggested a revised wording as follows:

The State recognises that home and family life gives to society a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall endeavour to support persons caring for others within the home.

Prior to publication of its Tenth Report, the Oireachtas Committee heard considerable evidence in relation to, inter alia, the role of the family and to the role of women. Commenting on the existing provisions of the 1937 Constitution and the debate which has since taken place, the Committee noted that

⁵ *ibid*: page 26

⁶ Bunreacht na hÉireann

⁷ Report of the Constitution Review Group: July 1996

Article 41.2.1 reinforces the position of the traditional family, incorporated in the Constitution in Article 41.1 by asserting the particular value of the contribution of the woman in the home. Article 41.2.2 adds further support by committing the State to an effort to ensure that mothers will not be forced by economic need to seek paid employment outside the home that forced them to neglect their duties in the home. Articles 41.2.1 and 41.2.2 have been attacked by supporters of the equality model of the family as being outdated, stereotypical, biologically deterministic; and even insulting to women. The import of the attack is that the Articles should be deleted or at least amended so that they are gender neutral.⁸

The Oireachtas Committee considered a large body of opinion from supporters of both the traditional and the equality models of the family and concluded that

A great number of people strongly support the retention of Article 41.2.1 and Article 41.2.2. The courts are disposed to interpret Article 41.2.1 as applying to either fathers or mothers caring in the home. The need to change the Article to make it gender neutral is therefore not a legal necessity. There is general support for the recognition on the value of the work done by those who care for others in the home, and therefore for whatever practical support for them that the Houses of the Oireachtas, relying upon Article 41.1.2 can provide.

Many people - they include supporters from both sides - believe that the language in which the Articles are expressed is outdated and even sexist. They feel that the articles should be rendered in a gender neutral form. In addition the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which Ireland has ratified, regards the employment of sexist language as a practical obstacle to women's drive for equality with men. They regard the language of the Articles as sexist and require change in them. Change therefore in the Articles is at least desirable.⁹

In its deliberations, the Oireachtas Committee was mindful of the work of the Constitution Review Group, completed in 1996 which had attempted to make the two articles gender neutral through the proposed introduction of a single Article to replace the existing text which provided, inter alia, that

41.2 ...The State shall endeavour to support persons caring for others within the home.¹⁰

Having considered that this wording was ambiguous in that it could be argued that childminders and au pairs might come within the provision, the Oireachtas Committee recommended an amendment of Article 41.2.1 and Article 41.2.2 which it regards as rendering the Articles gender neutral. The recommended wording is as follows:

41.2.1 The State recognises that by reason of family life within the home, a parent gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

⁸ All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution : Tenth Progress Report : January 2006 : P. 106

⁹ op. cit. : P. 120

¹⁰ Constitution Review Group : 1996 : cited in All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution : op. cit. : P. 126

41.2.2 *The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that both parents shall not be obliged by economic necessity to work outside the home to the neglect of their parental duties.*¹¹

The recommendations of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee are contained in a report on a much wider brief in relation to the family and are under consideration by the relevant Departments at time of writing of this Strategy. Any amendment to the Irish Constitution would require legislative proposals and must be submitted by referendum to the decision of the people.

Article 41.2 is clearly outdated as it stands and the opportunity should be taken to seek its amendment in the context of any general proposals to amend aspects of the Constitution.

Legislative Provisions in relation to Gender Equality

Membership of the European Union has played an influential role on gender equality policy and legislation across Member States. Article 141 (ex Article 119) of the Treaty of Rome first established the principle of equal pay between men and women. Under Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty, as amended,¹² equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of Community Law. The Amsterdam Treaty¹³, in particular, marked a significant advance in this regard, with the inclusion in Article 2 of the promotion of equality between women and men as one of the tasks of the Community. Article 3.2 was added to the original Rome Treaty, stating that

... In all activities referred to in Article 3, the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between women and men.

The Amsterdam Treaty also extended Community competence to cover discrimination on the ground, inter alia, of sex and in areas other than employment and occupation. A range of Directives implementing the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women were adopted by the Council of the European Union and were transposed into Irish law.

National and international policy have led to the completion of many pieces of Irish legislation, some specific to the position of women in Ireland, some more general and applying to all citizens but of particular relevance to the role of women in Irish society. Among the more relevant enactments are:

- the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004, and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, which outlaw discrimination in employment and in the supply of goods and services, on nine grounds, three¹⁴ of which have a particular relevance for women because direct discrimination on these three grounds is frequently a form of indirect discrimination against women. The other six grounds¹⁵ also protect women because women form at least half of those concerned, and they help combat multiple discrimination against women;

¹¹ All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution : op. cit. : P. 127

¹² Treaty of Rome : European Economic Community :1958

¹³ Treaty of Amsterdam : European Union : 1998

¹⁴ gender, marital status, family status

¹⁵ race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, membership of the Traveller community

- the Maternity Protection Acts 1994 and 2004, which provide for maternity leave and other facilities;
- the Adoptive Leave Act 1995;
- the Parental Leave Acts 1998 and 2006;
- the Carer's Leave Act 2001;
- the Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act 2001;
- the Protection of Employees (Fixed-term Work) Act 2003; and
- the National Minimum Wage Act 2000.

This body of legislation, much of it in the area of employment rights, has facilitated the significant increase in female labour market participation over recent years. It is kept under review and is open to further amendment as necessary.

In addition to this legislation relating specifically to women and/or to employment, a number of other pieces of legislation have had an impact on the position of women in Irish society. These include

- the Succession Act 1965 which revised the arrangements for inheritance;
- the Health (Family Planning) Act 1979 which legalised the sale of artificial contraceptives; and
- the Domestic Violence Acts, 1996 and 2002 which made new arrangements to protect the victims of domestic violence, who are more frequently women.

European Union Policy Influences

The Lisbon and Barcelona Council meetings of the European Union in 2000 and 2001 respectively, agreed new policy guidelines and targets to increase labour market participation by women across the Union. The Lisbon Strategy¹⁶ for employment and social policy included specific targets in relation to female employment, which have been reflected in national policy across all Member States, including Ireland. The requirement on Member States to produce periodic National Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and National Reform Programmes is of particular relevance in requiring national responses to these issues to take cognisance of the goal of gender equality in the fields of employment and social inclusion.

The Barcelona Strategy¹⁷ made further advances in the effort to improve labour market participation by women. The availability of childcare was specifically targeted and ten year goals on the provision of childcare places for children of pre-school age were included in a comprehensive document relating in the main to a strategy to further increase employment across the Union.

The Directorate General on Employment within the European Commission has actively pursued a policy to address gender inequality through a series of action plans and the availability of funding for positive actions from the European Social Fund. The Commission and the European Council have worked together to focus on the topic of gender equality under successive Presidencies through High Level Group meetings, Ministerial meetings and

¹⁶ European Council: Agreed Conclusions : Spring 2000

¹⁷ European Council: Agreed Conclusions : Spring 2002

the co-sponsorship of Presidency conferences on topics of relevance to the achievement of true gender equality.

The establishment of a European Gender Institute was promoted during the Irish Presidency of the European Union in 2004 and it is expected that the new Institute will open in 2007 in Lithuania.

The Commission also convenes a regular meeting of its Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, bringing together Experts from the Member States and the Social Partners on a bi-annual basis and making recommendations to the Commission and the wider institutions on topics of particular relevance to the goal of gender equality and equality of opportunity.

EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men

In Spring 2006, the European Commission published its EU Roadmap for Gender Equality 2006- 2010. The Roadmap¹⁸ outlines six priority areas for gender equality for 2006 – 2010 and identifies actions which require the partnership of Member States and other key actors. The priority areas are:

- Equal economic independence for men and women;
- Reconciliation of private and professional life;
- Equal representation in decision-making;
- Eradication of all forms of gender based violence;
- Elimination of gender stereotypes;
- Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

The Road Map combines the launch of new actions and reinforcement of existing successful actions. It reaffirms the dual approach of gender equality based on gender mainstreaming (the promotion of gender equality in all policy areas and activities) and specific measures. It was endorsed by the Spring 2006 European Council of Prime Ministers in the context of a European Pact on Gender Equality which will place a new onus on Member States to address proactively the aspirations contained in the Roadmap and to work in partnership with the Commission to achieve true gender equality.

European Union Policy in relation to Justice and Home Affairs which Impacts upon Women

In addition to the work which closely links gender issues with employment and social affairs within the European Union, the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the Commission has developed a programme of work in relation to violence against women, and to migrants and trafficking all of which are of relevance to the aims of this Strategy. This EU work creates awareness, provides for an exchange of information and good practice and can provide financial support to groups who are addressing those issues.

Implications of the European Constitution

The draft European Constitution was signed by Heads of State in 2004. The draft Constitution draws together all the EU treaties into a single new text and incorporates the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, agreed in Nice in 2000, designed to amalgamate all the personal, civil, political, economic and social rights into a single text.

¹⁸ European Commission : A Road Map for Equality between Women and Men 2006 – 2010 : March 2006

If the Constitution is ratified, the Charter would have binding legal force on the institutions of the Union and on the Member States when they implement the Union's legislation. The draft Constitution was ratified by some Member States of the European Union but, crucially it was not accepted by others. In the circumstances, no referendum on the issue was held in Ireland.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights¹⁹ includes a section on equality, which adopts the principle that everyone is equal before the law. The Charter also prohibits discrimination and respects cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. The draft European Constitution also includes specific provisions in relation to gender equality, with a particular emphasis on equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work²⁰ and to equal pay.²¹

External Policy Influences beyond the European Union – the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was established in 1950 to re-establish human rights in Europe in the post World War II scenario. The Council has actively promoted the human rights agenda across a wide field of topics over the past 50 years, including a very active Programme in relation to gender equality as a human right.

The Council of Europe concluded a European Social Charter in 1961 and has subsequently made many Recommendations to its Member States in relation to gender issues such as non-discrimination on grounds of gender; elimination of sexism from language; the reconciliation of work and family life; gender mainstreaming; violence against women; trafficking in human beings; sexual exploitation; and the participation of women in political life and in decision-making. These guidelines frequently offer examples of good practice in member countries and are useful tools to inform policy makers.

In June 2006, the sixth Council of Europe Ministerial Meeting on Equality between Women and Men adopted a resolution and action plan which invites Governments to take a range of actions under the theme "Achieving Gender Equality: a Challenge for Human Rights and a Prerequisite for Economic Development."

External Policy Influences beyond the European Union – the United Nations

The United Nations has provided a valuable context within which to improve the position of women in Ireland and in the world. To date, the UN Commission on Status of Women (CSW) has sponsored four world conferences on women, including the 1995 conference in Beijing. The Platform for Action (PfA)²², agreed at Beijing, addresses a wide range of issues on a global scale. Subsequent meetings of the CSW have adopted agreed conclusions on many of the areas of action.

While it is not binding on State Parties, the Platform for Action has a persuasive force. It is based upon the following twelve critical areas of concern upon which State Parties are recommended to base their policies:

¹⁹ European Union: Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: OJ: 364/1: 18/12/2000

²⁰ European Constitution: Article III-210

²¹ op. cit. Article III-214

²² United Nations: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: September 1995

- *The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women*
- *Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training*
- *Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services*
- *Violence against women*
- *The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation*
- *Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources*
- *Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels*
- *Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women*
- *Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women*
- *Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media*
- *Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment*
- *Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.*

These critical areas of concern were drawn up to address the needs of women throughout the world and it may be that some are of less significance in advanced democratic states. However it is essential that there be an awareness of them, even where they are not currently reflective of the Irish situation, and it may be that they can be advanced as international goals for example, in the formulation of foreign and development policies.

In 2000, five years after the Beijing Declaration, governments made a commitment to implement the Platform for Action and this led Ireland to draw up and publish a National Plan for Women which was submitted to the United Nations in 2003²³.

Complementing the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN agreed a Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to which Ireland acceded (with a small number of reservations)²⁴ in 1985. State Parties are required to report periodically to the UN CEDAW Committee on the issue of discrimination against women and their progress to overcome discrimination is reviewed by a committee of international experts in public session.

The most recent examination of Ireland's progress²⁵ in overcoming discrimination against women took place in July 2005. The examining Committee noted many positive outcomes in relation to the advancement of women including

- A significant body of legislative change
- The establishment of the Irish Human Rights Commission, with gender identified by the Commission as a key area of work

²³ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform : Action Plan for Women : 2003

²⁴ Ireland's reservations largely relate to aspects of the Convention which it considers less favourable to women than the current Irish legislative provision.

²⁵ Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth Report under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, May 2003

- The increase in the employment rate for women
- Gender mainstreaming within Ireland's development aid programme.

The CEDAW Committee raised a number of areas of concern and asked that Ireland focus on them for priority in its implementation activities. Among the recommendations it made, the CEDAW Committee issued advice that

- Ireland should take additional measures to eliminate traditional stereotypical attitudes through sensitisation of all educational actors and sustained awareness-raising campaigns directed at both men and women
- The wording of the Constitution should be reconsidered
- The media should project a positive image of women and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres
- The national machinery for gender equality should be fully empowered, staffed and funded to effectively pursue co-ordination and monitoring of the National Women's Strategy, while promoting gender mainstreaming into all areas and sectors of governance and maintaining women-targeted projects aiming at gender equality
- Ireland should take all necessary measures to combat violence against women and the adoption of a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls
- Ireland should take sustained measures to increase the representation of women in elected bodies
- Ireland should closely monitor the situation of poverty and social inclusion of women in the most vulnerable groups and implement training programmes to allow them to enjoy its prosperity
- Further measures should be adopted for the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities
- Ireland should continue to facilitate a national dialogue on women's right to reproductive health and should further strengthen family planning services.²⁶

Ireland will be required to report progress on these issues in future reports to CEDAW which are required on a four yearly basis. The forthcoming Irish Report will update on progress over the four years since 2003 and the Irish examination in 2005.

²⁶ UN : CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/4-5 : July 2005

CHAPTER THREE

Developing a National Strategy for Women in Ireland

Starting Point for the Strategy

Earlier chapters have outlined the legislative and policy frameworks which have emerged to address the issue of gender equality in Ireland. The implementation of the broad body of legislation has made a significant contribution to the status of women in the economy, in their family life and in society. Mechanisms have been put in place to enable women to take action where they believe they have been unfairly treated.

Government and EU supported initiatives have facilitated a range of positive actions which aim to advance the circumstances of groups of women and also to contribute to our understanding of how the remaining imbalances might be addressed.

No single Civil Service Department has responsibility for the full range of supports which are available to enhance the life chances of women. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform plays an overarching role in the field of gender equality and works with other Departments in monitoring progress to report to bodies such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The Department has also commissioned significant research over the past ten years to better inform its activities for this complex field.

The seeds for this Strategy were set in *Sustaining Progress*²⁷, the following extract from which outlined the aspirations of the social partners in relation to the somewhat broader “Equality” issue.

Equality is a key goal which must underpin activity in all policy areas in order to ensure a fair and inclusive society with equal opportunity. A comprehensive framework of equality legislation, institutions and mechanisms is now in place. This framework comprehends the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts, together with the infrastructure which gives effect to them – the Equality Authority and the ODEI – Equality Tribunal, as well as the National Disability Authority which supports mainstream policy and standards of service for people with disabilities. It is essential that this framework is kept up to date and relevant.

The key elements of the Equality Framework are:

- *The dissemination of information and increasing awareness of the protections available and the duties imposed under equality legislation;*
- *The continued development of opportunities to embed equality policy and practice as a core value in Irish society;*
- *Support for key positive action measures and their implementation and monitoring;*
- *New legislation to take account of EU developments;*

²⁷ Department of An Taoiseach : *Sustaining Progress*, Social Partnership Agreement 2003 – 2005: February 2003

- *Maintenance of a strong infrastructural framework to underpin the drive to eliminate discrimination, foster equal opportunity and support mainstreaming; and*
- *To prioritise key statistical need.*

Towards 2016 – including a new Commitment to Equality

Towards 2016, the Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 – 2015, the successor to “Sustaining Progress” was agreed by the social partners in 2006 and it restates the commitment of all parties to the achievement of equality and equal opportunities. It notes that

*The achievement of a fairer society and equality for all citizens is a key principle of the partnership approach. Policies and programmes at each stage of the lifecycle will be implemented having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The achievement of true equality necessitates a holistic approach and a society wide understanding of the complementary roles and skills of both women and men. In particular the Government is committed to promoting gender equality across all stages of the lifecycle through a range of measures including the forthcoming National Women's Strategy.*²⁸

The Consultation Process in Preparing the National Women's Strategy

The National Plan for Women 2002²⁹, prepared in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, is the starting point for the development of this Strategy. The National Plan offered a comprehensive listing of the Irish Government's commitments under the twelve Critical Areas of Concern at Beijing. The Plan was drawn up by a Steering Committee comprising Government Departments, Social Partners, the Equality Authority, the National Women's Council of Ireland and a large number of organisations representing women. The annex to the Plan included a recommendation that

*a National Women's Strategy should be developed, building on the Report to the UN on the National Plan for Women 2002...*³⁰

This commitment was subsequently adopted as an element of the social partnership process under Sustaining Progress.

To inform the National Plan for Women, a series of ten regional seminars were organised across Ireland to determine the aspirations of the women of Ireland. The outcomes of the seminars were collated as “Aspirations of Women: Towards a National Women's Strategy”³¹ and these were used to inform the National Strategy for Women 2007 – 2016. It draws together the wishes of women in Ireland in all their diversity and has been an input to the development of this National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016.

A Framework for the National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016

The Inter-Departmental Committee identified a broad range of different fields of government,

²⁸ *Towards 2016* : Department of the Taoiseach: June 2006

²⁹ op. cit.

³⁰ op. cit.

³¹ Aspirations of Women collected in the Course of the Consultation Process on the National Plan for Women: DJELR : September 2002

economic and social activity which impact upon the lives of women in Ireland today. They link together under a number of threads. No theme could be regarded as discrete, but rather is a key element of a holistic approach which links economic activity, social inclusion, wellbeing and active citizenship. Three key themes have been identified to encompass the holistic approach and these are

- Equalising socio- economic opportunity for women;
- Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and
- Engaging as equal and active citizens.

These themes and their sub-themes are mapped in figure 1 which follows and are explored in detail in the next three Parts of the Strategy.

FIGURE 1: STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY

EQUALISING SOCIO- ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN	ENSURING THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN	ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS
Women in Employment and Enterprise	Work/Life Balance	Women in Decision-Making
Attracting more Women into the Labour Market	Women's Health	Women in Politics
The Gender Pay Gap and Variations in Income	Sexual and Reproductive Health	Women on State and Private Sector Boards
The Advancement of Women in Employment	Advancing Good Mental Health	Women and the Arts
Women as Entrepreneurs	Health Promotion	Women and the Media
Women and Education	Women, Sport and Physical Activity	Gender and Ireland's Overseas Development Aid Programme
Expanding Quality and Affordable Childcare	Health and Safety for Women in Employment	Multi-lateral Partnership to Support Women
Supporting Women with Caring Responsibilities	Bullying and Sexual Harassment	Gender Violence in Conflict, Post-Conflict and Development
Women and the Risk of Poverty	Violence against Women	
Lone Parents, other Low Income Families and Poverty	Women and Trafficking	
Older Women and Pensions		

The final chapter of the Strategy looks at the arrangements which are required to ensure that it is fully implemented; that true gender equality is achieved and that all women in Ireland feel that they can achieve their full potential while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.

Addressing the Special Needs of Some Groups of Women

Within Ireland, there is a number of groups of women who might be described as having special needs, by reason, for example, of their culture, sexual orientation, geographic location, ethnicity, or a disability. It is essential that all Government policies continue to take into account the needs of members of these groups. This requirement was also endorsed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which considered Ireland's periodic report in March 2005 and encouraged Ireland

...to take measures with regard to the special needs of women belonging to minority and other vulnerable groups, in particular female Travellers, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.³²

Some of these groups have already been targeted in specific Government policy initiatives such as the Report on the Task Force on the Travelling Community; the new Disability legislation; the support services which have been put in place for asylum seekers and refugees. Policies are in preparation to address rural development. The Equality Authority, the National Economic and Social Forum and Gay and Lesbian organisations have actively promoted awareness of the needs of the gay and lesbian community.

Accordingly it is recommended that, in monitoring progress under the National Women's Strategy, special cognisance be taken of the needs of women who may have one or more special requirements.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

Lesbian and bisexual women frequently report experience of bullying, isolation, discrimination and harassment, which can contribute to poor self esteem and under achievement, both in education and in later life. This can affect their economic wellbeing. They may be afraid to disclose their sexual orientation in the workplace and may therefore feel a permanent sense of threat which impacts upon their wellbeing. Ongoing initiatives to break down the barriers and discrimination are essential to achieve true equality for this group.

In September 2006, the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform established a Working Group to prepare an "options" paper on domestic partnerships which will inform future thinking in relation to the categories of partnerships and relationships outside of marriage to which legal effect and recognition might be accorded, consistent with Constitutional provisions. The paper was published in December 2006 and its recommendations are currently under consideration.

Traveller Women

Much has been written about the needs of Traveller women in respect of whom there is a number of specific recommendations in the Task Force Report on Travellers³³. These refer to gender proofing of policies for Travellers, data on the needs of Traveller women, childcare, the issue of violence imposed by partners and the availability of appropriate training and employment opportunities. Considerable progress has been made in relation to the involvement of Traveller women in decision-making which impacts upon their lives.

Nevertheless, as a group, Travellers still experience poor standards of living, with uncertainty in relation to accommodation and education, due to their individual circumstances. Discrimination is still a major issue for members of the Traveller community and again, concerted efforts are required to overcome it and to break down the barriers which exist. Women Travellers experience discrimination both within their own Community and in the broader community which impacts upon their engagement in the labour market. They also require culturally appropriate childcare services and many of the childcare services

³² United Nations : CERD/C/IRL.CO/2 : March 2005

³³ Department of Equality and Law Reform : Task Force Report on the Travelling Community : 1995

receiving support under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 actively provide childcare services for children from Traveller families.

Traveller women experience high levels of domestic violence and are actively involved in the work of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women and on the Regional Planning Committees for services to address violence. Pavee Point and Women's Aid have developed a joint framework to support and progress the issue of violence within the Community. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, with the assistance of the National Traveller Women's Forum and the Equality Authority, is commissioning a gender-proofing exercise on Traveller-specific programmes.

Women with a Disability

The National Disability Authority (NDA) noted in 2002 that

*women with disabilities face inequalities and disadvantage based on gender, on disability and on the complex interactions between these two forms of social stratification.*³⁴

The Authority has highlighted three key issues which require special attention in any work being undertaken to support women with a disability. These are

- **Income Adequacy**

The NDA points out that women with a disability are at higher risk of poverty than other women. The additional exposure of women to the risk of poverty is discussed in the context of social inclusion under Theme 1 of the Strategy (Chapter 4). All social inclusion initiatives should therefore consider the additional risk with which women with a disability are faced. The issue of women as carers is dealt with under Theme 2 of the Strategy (Chapter 5) and again this affects families where the mother may be either the carer or the cared for person.

- **Health**

The NDA argues that women with a disability may face special barriers when they access mainstream health services, if, for example, the health professional has attitudinal problems or the professional does not understand the specific impairment being experienced by the client, then the disabled woman may experience communication difficulties.

The NDA believes such factors can discourage the woman with a disability from seeking appropriate health care.

- **Education**

The NDA recommends that all educational and training institutes should ensure that they are fully accessible by persons with a disability.

The NDA also recommends that information on courses and course materials should be available in alternate forms to meet the needs of persons with a disability.

³⁴ National Disability Authority : Submission in relation to National Action Plan for Women , 2002 : unpublished : p.10

Women in Rural Communities

Women located in rural areas may experience isolation and a lack of opportunity, at some stage if not throughout their lives. The National Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013, which is in preparation at time of going to press, is expected to provide support under a number of key objectives including a commitment to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and diversify the rural economy.³⁵

Farm ownership by women, either sole ownership or joint ownership, is still very low. Many women whose partners are farmers work on the farm but have neither independent tax nor PRSI status and therefore no right to social welfare benefits in their own right.

Based on their participation in advisory and training courses and in courses on alternative enterprises³⁶, it seems likely that women can play a key role in the diversification of the rural economy and measures specifically targeting women are to be recommended. The availability of training courses in the evening time and at weekends is very important for women in agriculture who may not be able to leave their place of work during the “normal” working day.

Women also benefit significantly from the Rural Transport Initiative. Three-quarters of all users are female with the main purposes of their trips found to be shopping (61 per cent), leisure activities (34 per cent), pension collection and other services (21 per cent) and health appointments (18 per cent). The high proportion of older women using the service is reflective, in part, of the fact that in excess of 53 per cent of the rural population aged 65 or over are female. The Rural Transport Initiative therefore has been successful in reaching women, providing them with a social outlet and access to required services. The further development of the Initiative might take into account the needs of women in remote communities who may need to take children to and from childcare en route to their employment.

Migrant Women

In the past ten years, Ireland has experienced a significant inflow of men and women from overseas. Some have come as asylum seekers and have been granted a right to remain here as refugees, others have come to take up positions in the fast growing Irish labour force. In some instances, women have come to Ireland independently, others have come as the dependent spouses in a family.

Many of these women may not yet have a full working command of the English language and this may hamper their ability to access a range of essential services such as health care and employment. It is essential that Ireland's social/caring services continue to adapt their information leaflets and other support services to serve our new multi-lingual community. Isolation can be a problem for those who may be dependent spouses and not engaged in the labour market. Community groups should be encouraged to continue to reach out specifically to migrant women to enable them to achieve the necessary coping skills including language which will enable them to integrate well in their new community.

³⁵ Government of Ireland : *Towards 2016* : p.33

³⁶ Department of Agriculture : Progress Report on Recommendations of Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture

The Equality Authority recently published the findings of research³⁷ in relation to the experiences of women migrant workers in Ireland which has resulted in a range of recommendations targeting employers, trade unions and migrant support organisations, each of which are regarded as having an important role to play in supporting women migrant workers, ensuring that they have information on the support services which are available to them, enabling them to develop their skills and to network with others in similar situations.

Ireland's comprehensive body of employment rights legislation protects employees against arbitrary behaviour by employers and applies to all workers, irrespective of nationality, employed on an employer-employee basis in Ireland. The objectives of this legislation are to, among other matters, provide for safety and health of workers and foster labour market harmony by promoting policies that minimise conflict and maximise fairness. New legislation will be published in 2007 aimed at enhancing public confidence in the system of employment rights compliance including the establishment of the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA).

Employment Permits

New economic migration and employment permits arrangements, underpinned by recent legislation³⁸, have put in place a flexible, responsive and managed economic migration policy. The four new types of employment permit include (i) Green Card Scheme, (ii) Work Permit, (iii) Intra-Company Transfer Permit and (iv) Spousal and Dependant Permits. The new arrangements also include a number of key additional protections for workers, such as granting and issuing the Green Card/Work Permit to the employee and a statement of entitlements of the migrant worker on the permit including wages and rights to change employer.

All of these new approaches will ensure enhanced employment rights compliance across the labour market. In accordance with the commitment by the parties in *Towards 2016*, a New Compliance Model is being developed which seeks to maximise the effectiveness of the substantially increased compliance effort and simplify the adjudication and redress mechanisms available in the employment rights area.

³⁷ Equality Authority: An Introduction to the Situation and Experience of Women Migrant Workers in Ireland : November 2006.

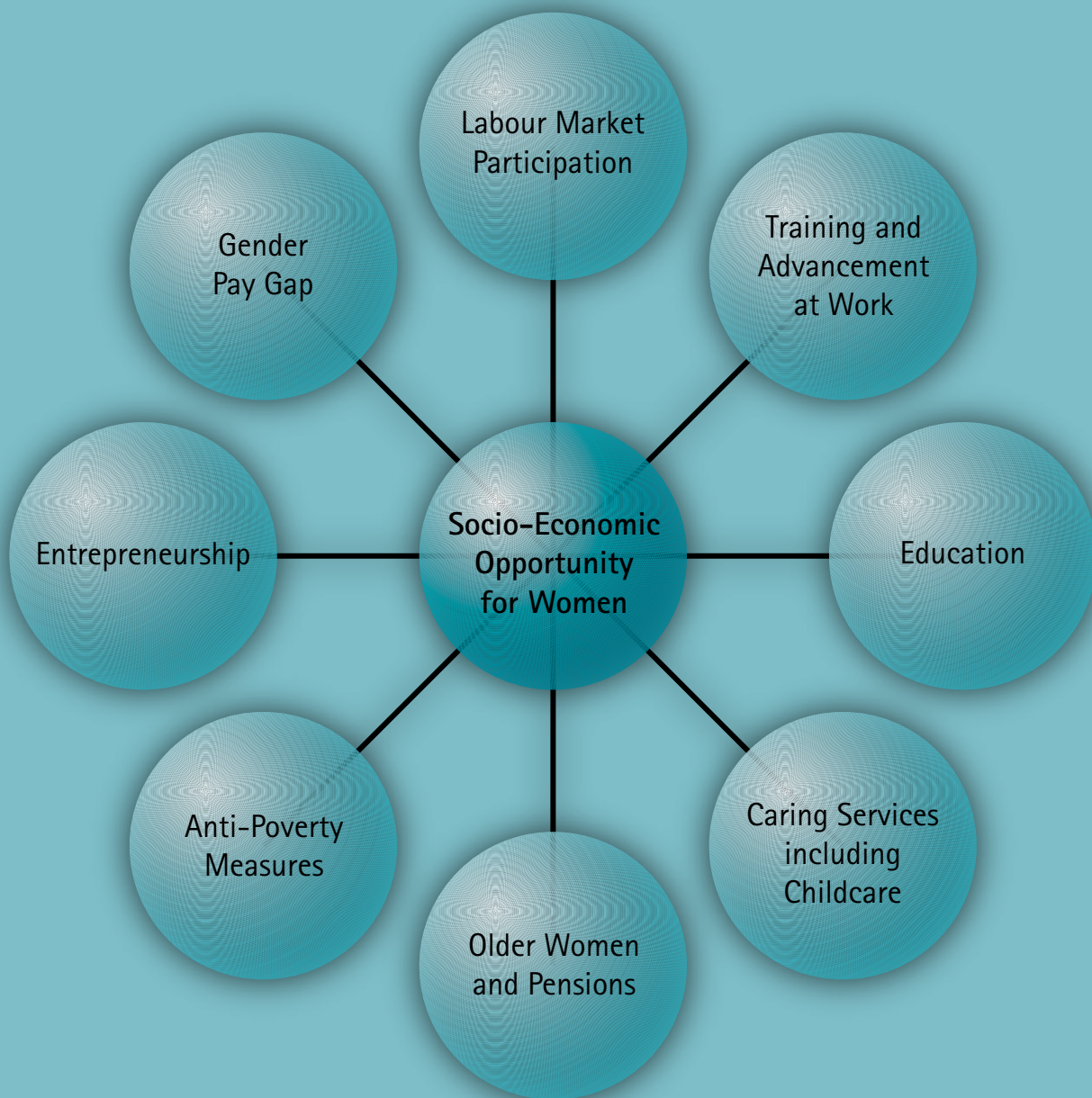
³⁸ Employment Permits Acts, 2003 and 2006

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGY

THEME 1

Equalising Socio-Economic Opportunity For Women

FIGURE 2 KEY ELEMENTS



EQUALISING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

CHAPTER FOUR

Theme 1: Equalising Socio-economic Opportunity for Women

Introduction

In *Towards 2016*, the Government and the social partners acknowledge that employment is a major factor for helping people to move out of poverty and that it also influences quality of life and social wellbeing.³⁹ However, there is also significant evidence to suggest that women at all levels of income face many challenges in the workplace and these are explored at length under this theme of the Strategy. The complex issue of the gender pay gap is reviewed and actions to help narrow it further are recommended.

The National Economic and Social Forum has commented that economic injustice refers primarily to the unequal distribution of material resources and inequality in their ownership and control. An additional aspect can be inequality in people's opportunities to improve their economic position. It is manifested in various forms of exploitation and deprivation of a material kind, notably in exclusion from employment and wealth ownership. It is also evident in inadequate welfare or income provision, or exploitative pay⁴⁰.

Within this theme of "Equalising Socio-Economic Opportunity for Women", the issue of poverty and social deprivation among women is discussed in order to identify actions which might improve the socio-economic status of those who are currently disadvantaged or at risk of becoming disadvantaged. Targets and objectives are identified for those who are at particular risk of poverty - lone parents and older women who may have no or inadequate pension cover have long been identified as being at particular risk of poverty.

Education and training are central to the advancement of women as they enter or advance through the labour market and life in general. The availability of quality and affordable childcare and other caring supports has long been cited as a key element to support working mothers and those mothers who wish to undertake re-training to enable them to re-enter the labour market.

Women in Employment and Enterprise

International thinking focuses clearly on the importance of the dual approach of achieving economic independence for women in the 21st Century and of fostering economic growth and enhanced competitiveness through the increased participation of women in the labour market.

Economic independence enables women to overcome social exclusion while growth and competitiveness enhance economic wellbeing for all and also helps to break the cycle of disadvantage.

A review of economic growth in Ireland over the past decade or so will show that much of

³⁹ *Towards 2016* : Department of the Taoiseach: June 2006 : p.51

⁴⁰ National Economic and Social Forum : A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues : 2002

that growth has been achieved through the significant increase in women's labour market participation. In parallel, economic growth has funded a range of social inclusion and other social policy measures which have aimed to enhance the lives of those who may previously have been excluded from the labour force by providing them with opportunities for second chance education and training, frequently enabling them to progress to join the work force on a part-time or full-time basis. However, there is still much work to be done, on the one hand to foster the contribution made by and advancement of women in the labour market, and, on the other hand, to address social inequalities which are still experienced by women in some parts of our society.

These aims of economic growth and social inclusion are addressed in both national and international fora and reflect the key aims of the European Union, of the most recent social partnership agreement – *Towards 2016* and of the new National Development Plan.

The Growth in Female Labour Market Participation

The headline statistics shown in Table 2 below relate to employment and show the very significant increase in the numbers of women in employment over the twelve-year period from 1994 to 2006. They also show the considerable difference in the average hourly pay rates received by male and female employees in industry. Finally, the table shows that the number of women in part-time employment has trebled over the ten years since 1995.

TABLE 2: WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	MALE	FEMALE
Employment Rate 1994	65.9%	40.1%
Employment Rate 2006 (Q4) (ILO Definition)	77.7%	59.6%
Average hourly earnings for industrial workers 2006 (Q3)	€15.84	€12.33
	WOMEN	
	1995	2006 (Q4)
Number of women in employment	454,000	879,800
Number of women in employment who work full-time	365,600	606,700
Number of women in employment who work part-time	88,400	273,100

In 1971, there were 275,600⁴¹ women in employment in Ireland, of whom 38,300 (or about 14 per cent) were married. By 1991, when the Second Commission on the Status of Women commenced its work, the number of women in employment had reached 405,000⁴², a third of whom were married. Strong economic growth in the mid to late 1990s led to a very significant increase in demand in the labour market. By 1995, the number of women in employment had increased to 482,900 with about a fifth working part-time. Over the following eleven years, the numbers have increased very significantly with almost 400,000 additional women or some 879,800 women active in the work force. This represents an increase of 83 per cent in the number of women working over the eleven years, with an increase of 67 per cent in the number of women working full-time and a trebling of the number of women working part-time.

41 From Second Commission Report on Status of Women in Ireland

42 *ibid*

As a result, the employment rate for women in Ireland aged 15 to 64 years is now at 59.6 per cent⁴³ and has surpassed the EU25 average of 57.3 per cent. Accordingly, Ireland is well placed to exceed the employment targets set in the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which aim for an EU wide female employment target rate of 60 per cent in 2010. For women in the 25-34 age group in Ireland, the employment rate is now 75.7 per cent.

The unemployment rate for women has fallen from 10.7 per cent in 1997 to 3.8 per cent in Quarter 4, 2006. Of those who are registered as unemployed, 22,400 are reported to be seeking full-time employment while 12,100 are seeking part-time work.

This positive trend in female labour market participation has been underpinned by a range of developments, many of which were fostered through the partnership process. This includes improved access to childcare, more flexible working arrangements and increased parental leave.

Despite the considerable progress that has been made in increasing female labour market participation and the significant contribution made by women to growth in the Irish economy, there are still inequalities and anomalies in relation to the position of women in employment. The employment rate for women is still far lower than for men and the employment rates for lone parents, the majority of whom are women, are also low.

It is estimated that there is a gender pay gap of some 11 per cent⁴⁴ between women and men working in Ireland at present. The numbers of women who advance to the top of organisations continues to be very low, in both the public and private sectors. The percentage of self-employed women in Ireland is less than in the EU as a whole, the US and Japan.

The reasons for this situation are diverse. It is reported that women, who take time out of the labour force for caring, face considerable barriers when they seek to return to employment. Women who remain in the work force find that access to affordable childcare and to other caring services to support family commitments can be a challenge.

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance has commented that

Women who take career breaks to care for children often experience significant barriers to re-entering the workforce, representing a labour market constraint that needs to be addressed. Highly skilled women face particular difficulties in re-entering the workforce at an appropriate level. This results not only in a reduced return on the investment for the individual, the State and the employer in education and training but it also acts as a competitive drag on our economy, and contributes to the significant gender pay gap. There is a strong case for Government and individual employers to support women to successfully re-enter the workplace.⁴⁵

These issues represent some of the key challenges which will be addressed under this Strategy in order to enable women to advance their careers and to meet both their career aspirations and their aspirations for family life.

⁴³ Central Statistics Office : Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 4, 2006

⁴⁴ A number of different definitions and indicators of the gender pay gap exist

⁴⁵ National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) : Forum on the Workplace for the Future : 2005 : p.86

Attracting More Women into the Labour Market

The very significant increase in the numbers of women active in the labour market has already been noted. With the sustained growth in our economy, there are opportunities for more women to enter the labour market. Employment rates are already high (at between 75 per cent and 79 per cent) for women in the age groups from 20 to 34 years. They decline to between 67 per cent and 64 per cent for women in the age groups 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 years but fall back further to 48 per cent and 30 per cent for women in the age groups 55 to 59 and 60 to 64.⁴⁶ Although increased participation by women is desirable in the context of economic growth and the need for additional labour, the overriding issue is that of “choice” i.e. giving women the freedom to choose which route they wish to take in relation to labour market participation.

Older women, who have been out of the workforce for a long time, may not wish to return, though the trends show that this is changing. Nonetheless, labour force participation among women falls very sharply for the age cohorts over 55 years. This may reflect the fact that many from these cohorts are likely to have left work on marriage some thirty years ago and, with their families grown, many may not face economic pressure to return to work. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the relative increase in the employment rate for women in the older age groups has been higher in the past five years for those in the 55 – 59 age group and in the 60 – 64 age group than the overall average for all age groups.⁴⁷

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance has called for enhanced measures to actively support women returning to the workplace and recommends that networking, coaching and mentoring schemes specifically targeting women employees should receive state support.⁴⁸

“Expanding the Workforce” is the main measure being used by FÁS in relation to older women. The process aims to provide a gateway for women returners into the labour market. It focuses on the needs of the individual and aims to tailor interventions to deliver the supports in the manner, place and time frame to suit the client group. It also aims to influence and support employers to examine and improve work practices making the work place more welcoming to women returners. All provision is locally based and adapted to each woman’s particular needs.

Women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are now less likely to face barriers before they can enter or re-enter the labour market and become more financially independent. The increasing availability of community based childcare, particularly in areas of disadvantage and at comparatively reduced cost, helps to ensure that women from these areas can avail of developmental supports, which would prepare them for work, either for the first time or for a return to the labour market. Each woman seeking a return to work will have a personal set of developmental needs and can be helped through the availability of a range of education and training supports. These include services to encourage the development of social skills and self development training, through programmes to complete education, through skills training and possibly through a period of sheltered employment to prepare for engagement in the open labour market.

⁴⁶ CSO: QNHS : Quarter 4, 2006

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ NCPP : op cit. : p.90

Towards 2016 contains specific measures to help persons such as lone parents and persons with disabilities to move towards employment by extending the National Employment Action Plan to these groups. This Plan aims to work in a supportive and positive manner, working in an inclusive way with the customer. In addition, it is expected that the Government's Discussion Paper on Lone Parents will lead to the implementation of a range of supports such as access to childcare and to flexible training and education programmes and positive opportunities for lone parents. Vocational Education Committees already play a significant role in this field.

Many thousands of women have already participated successfully in such developmental processes and this has enabled them to enter the labour force. However, the recommendation of the OECD that more lone parents be encouraged to enter or re-enter the labour market⁴⁹ may generate the need for additional training programmes which will enable lone parents to acquire new work skills or update their existing skills to take account of change during their absence from the labour market. This results in a need for ongoing supports such as the Back to Work Initiative and the FÁS Community Employment (CE) Schemes, together with other educational and training supports to increase female participation in the labour market.

While not specifically targeting women, there are a number of responses which address the needs of special groups who may have particular needs to enable them to join or rejoin the labour market. REHAB provides specialised training to support those who may have a disability. New initiatives are encouraging Travellers to participate in the labour market. For particularly disadvantaged women, loss of earnings/income as they undergo retraining may be a consideration. Refugees may require re-skilling and career reorientation courses and English language training to enable them to adapt fully to and become economically active in their new living situation while some migrant workers may need further language development to enable them to advance their careers in their new country of employment.

Objective 1 – A: To increase the participation of women in the labour force

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Female Employment Rate	Mainstream and actively promote the FÁS "Expanding the Workforce" Process	Further increase in labour market participation among women from groups such as older age group and lone parents	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS
	Strengthen other initiatives which offer supports to enable women to return to the labour market	Further increase in labour market participation among older women, lone parents and others less actively engaged at present	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS/ VECs
	Undertake survey with a view to developing Action Plan to encourage lone parents to avail of training and re-enter the labour market	Action Plan developed in 2007	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS

⁴⁹ OECD : *Babies and Bosses : Reconciling Work and Family Life* : Vol 2 : Austria, Ireland and Japan

The Gender Pay Gap and Variations in Income between Men and Women

The measurement of the gender pay gap is the subject of ongoing discussion among academics, statisticians and policy makers as a result of which a range of different indicators exist. Eurostat⁵⁰ measures the gender pay gap annually as part of its review of social indicators and the latest data for 2004 show a gender pay gap in unadjusted form of 11 per cent for Ireland⁵¹ and 9 per cent in 2005, although Eurostat which gathers these data points out that, as new data series, they are subject to quality review. They must therefore be treated with caution. This compares with a gender pay gap of 22 per cent in Ireland only five years earlier. However as the Central Statistics Office points out in “Women and Men in Ireland 2006”, persons working fifteen hours or fewer are excluded from this Eurostat indicator and that these persons are more likely to be female and persons on lower incomes.

It is likely that the introduction of the National Minimum Wage has impacted very positively on women. Prior to its introduction, women were traditionally more likely to have received very low wages if they were working in the sectors which were predominantly female. While the narrowing of the gender pay gap cannot be attributed solely to the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, the narrowing is noteworthy.

Other positive influences on the gender pay gap are likely to include an improvement in maternity leave provision and a much-increased provision of childcare. However, women still earn less than men on average and there are significant variations in the pay of male and female employees in many economic sectors. It is widely considered that the single biggest factor behind this gender pay gap is the time which women take out of the labour force for child bearing and caring but there is a number of other factors. These include occupational segregation, educational and training differences, promotion policies within firms, availability of childcare, availability of maternity and parental leave and of family-friendly work practices. Addressing this gap requires a multi-faceted approach across a number of areas covered by this Strategy.

The CSO also point out that this gender pay gap figure of 11 per cent is not comparable with other data on pay comparisons which are presented in “Women and Men in Ireland”⁵². Based on material derived from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Revenue Commissioners, CSO show that while 280,000 men (or 23 per cent of men) had “income liable for social insurance” which exceeded €40,000, only 100,000 women (or less than 11 per cent of women) fell into the same category. CSO also shows that the difference in the average annual income liable for social insurance received by men and by women varies by about 17 per cent in favour of men for workers in the younger age groups and by as much as 45 per cent for workers in the age groups over 45 years. Such comparisons based on annual income do not take cognisance of the shorter hours worked by women and therefore must be treated with caution.

Gender segregation, both horizontal and vertical, continues to mark the labour market in Ireland, as in other countries, with women predominating in caring roles that are often less well paid. Even where women break out of these stereotypical roles, they often

⁵⁰ Eurostat is the Statistical Office of the European Union

⁵¹ CSO : Women and Men in Ireland 2006 : December 2006

⁵² op. cit.

find themselves concentrated at the lower levels in organisations, unable to break into the management ranks (the glass ceiling) or into central functions which offer career development leading to executive management (glass walls).

The table below is based on the CSO publication of its 2003 National Employment Survey, published in May 2006. It enables a review of the gender segregation of the key occupational groups and a review of the differences in the average hourly earnings of men and women in each group. These data have the advantage of reflecting average or mean hourly earnings and therefore are neutral to the length of the working week. They suggest that in 2003 there was a mean variation of 15.8 per cent between the average hourly earnings of men and of women. Such comparisons must still be treated with caution as they do not reflect length of service, educational attainment, difference in roles within the sector. Nevertheless they offer a broad indicator of “average” data.

TABLE 3: MEN AND WOMEN BY OCCUPATION AND MEAN HOURLY EARNINGS 2003

BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	Men		Women		Gender Variation in Average Hourly Earnings %
	Percent in group	Mean hourly earnings (€)	Percent in group	Mean hourly earnings (€)	
Managers and Administrators	12.0	28.83	10.0	22.58	21.7
Professional	11.4	27.04	12.6	25.57	5.4
Associate professional and technical	7.5	21.36	12.8	16.40	23.2
Clerical and secretarial	6.5	15.75	23.4	13.84	14.4
Craft and related	21.9	14.91	1.7	10.04	32.7
Personal and protective service	9.2	12.89	14.4	10.63	17.5
Sales	6.3	12.95	13.1	9.68	25.2
Plant and machine operatives	15.3	13.45	5.0	10.16	24.4
Other	10.0	12.52	8.1	10.42	16.8
Total	100	17.74	100	14.93	15.8
	n=759,800		n=680,700		

Source: Derived from CSO.⁵³

This is a periodic sample survey and it shows that women's employment roles differ quite significantly from their male counterparts, with significant percentages of women engaged in some of the occupational groups which attract lower rates of pay. Some 13 per cent of women are engaged in sales compared to only 6 per cent of men and the women earned an average of only €9.68 per hour in that sector, some 25 per cent per hour less than their male colleagues. Craft and related work showed the most significant gender pay gap (almost 33 per cent) and the greatest divergence as an occupation with nearly 22 per cent of male workers and less than 2 per cent of women engaged in this occupational group.

Because of the importance of remuneration in ensuring the economic independence of women, it is useful to look at a further exploration of pay differentials. The next analysis looks at the differences by area of economic activity and again is drawn from material published in the CSO Survey on National Employment.

⁵³ Derived from CSO: Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2005: p.367

TABLE 4: MEN AND WOMEN BY AREA OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND MEAN HOURLY EARNINGS 2003

AREA OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	Men		Women		Gender Variation in Average Hourly Earnings %
	Percent in group	Mean hourly earnings (€)	Percent in group	Mean hourly earnings (€)	
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying	24.5	16.45	12.2	13.38	18.7
Electricity, gas and water supply	1.4	23.70	0.3	18.07	23.8
Construction	17.0	16.29	1.1	13.93	14.5
Wholesale and retail trade	12.7	14.17	16.9	10.72	24.4
Hotels and restaurants	5.3	10.95	8.7	9.88	9.8
Transport, storage and communications	8.6	17.56	3.7	14.52	17.3
Financial intermediation	3.7	30.63	6.1	20.32	33.7
Business services	8.3	19.08	9.1	14.88	22.0
Public administration and defence	6.7	17.24	6.0	14.79	14.2
Education	4.4	34.00	11.5	24.37	28.3
Health	3.9	19.20	19.3	15.13	21.2
Other services	3.5	17.06	5.1	13.21	22.6
Total	100	17.74	100	14.93	15.8
	n=759,800		n=680,700		

Source: Derived from CSO.54

Table 4 shows that the variation in mean hourly earnings varies significantly between the various economic sectors. Indeed, this table presents evidence that some sectors are still showing a very significant earnings gap between men and women. The financial intermediation sector shows the highest gap in average hourly earnings received by men and by women. This is an economic sector with 41,700 female employees and only 28,400 male employees and the average hourly pay received by female employees averages only two-thirds of that received by the male employees. Such variations cannot of course be simply explained and may not adequately reflect the very high salaries which are received by small numbers within a sector, which can skew the data considerably.

Another significant divergence occurs in the traditionally female sectors of health and education. Despite the fact that women outnumber men in the education sector by nearly three to one, the average hourly earnings of men is 28 per cent higher than that received by women in this sector. This probably reflects the significant numbers of men in senior positions in primary and secondary education and in professorships and senior administrative roles at third level institutions and universities. It is probable that a similar analogy can be drawn for the health services where the variation in average hourly earnings is 21 per cent and where women outnumber men by four to one. All three examples pose the challenge to find reasons, either structural or personal or both, why women do not advance in greater numbers to the highest levels.

This is in contrast to the position on educational attainment of women. Women in employment have been shown to have higher educational qualifications than their male

54 Derived from CSO: Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2005: p.367

counterparts. There are therefore other factors which clearly impact on the ability of women to translate educational qualifications into greater participation in higher paid employment.

Recent research commissioned by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform⁵⁵ suggests that subject choice at third-level, and before, determines the areas in which women work. The study also found that women were more likely than men to opt for careers in the public sector and caring professions. The research focused on the experience of graduates who had completed third level education three years previously and found that the gender pay gap had clearly emerged during this three-year period.

While many of the issues which contribute to the gender pay gap appear to be difficult to address in the short term, further actions which may also help to narrow the gender pay gap include positive action measures to ensure that female secondary school students have the opportunity to consider the full range of career options including apprenticeships, Post Leaving Certificate Courses and third level education options which have not in the past been favoured by female students. The achievement of this goal may also necessitate an awareness raising programme for male employers and employees in traditionally male sectors, who may still unknowingly have prejudice against women entering non-traditional career paths.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is actively engaged in attracting more women into science, engineering and technology by proactively working with under-graduates and post graduate students to foster their advancement in the sector. As SFI points out

*The under-representation of women in science, engineering and technology threatens, above all, our global competitiveness. Thus the issue is not simply a matter of equality, ensuring that all careers are open to men and women alike, but also one of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of outstanding researchers in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) to support a knowledge-based economy. Women represent the greatest untapped source of potential talent. Based on CAO statistics only 16.4% of students who accepted places on four-year engineering degree courses in 2002-2005 were female. Therefore there is a clear need to increase the participation of women in engineering in Ireland and the most direct way to build the talent pool in Ireland is through an enhanced focus on undergraduate engineers. There is no “quick fix” but rather a coherent and co-ordinated set of investments is required which addresses every stage of the career pipeline. SFI has a critical role to play in the recruitment and retention of women in SET research careers in Ireland.*⁵⁶

Women in Science and Technology (WITS) was set up by IBEC in 1990 as a voluntary organisation which has done significant work to promote the take-up of science subjects among girls and to profile women scientists. Among its very useful initiatives were the establishment of a “Talent Bank” of over 150 experienced women in science and technology who might be considered as participants in State Boards; and the creation of a “Role Model” project, which includes a careers guidance CD giving profiles of successful women scientists, and accompanying seminar packs for use in secondary schools.

⁵⁵ D/JELR and ESRI : Degrees of Equality : Gender Pay Differentials among Recent Graduates : Nov 2005

⁵⁶ Science Foundation Ireland website December 2006

It may also be that the gender pay gap is partly influenced by the numbers of women who engage in part-time employment, which is often less well paid than full-time employment. Over 30 per cent of all women in employment are currently in part-time jobs. However, the vast majority of those working part-time do so voluntarily and few part-timers are recorded as having a preference to work longer hours⁵⁷. The choice of part-time, rather than full-time work, can enable women to stay in the workforce when balancing caring responsibilities, and this has a better long term benefit to career progression than the option of withdrawing from the workforce for a period of time.

Because of their caring duties, some women can find it difficult to access part-time work. For example, in order to be eligible for carer's allowance or benefit, the number of hours a carer can be employed outside his/her home is limited to 15 per week. However, the Department of Social and Family Affairs is committed to continuing to review the scope for the development of these payments for carers.

As mentioned previously, the study on gender pay gaps among recent graduates⁵⁸ also highlighted gender differences in relation to the payment of bonuses, which are much more common in the private sector than in the public sector. It found that 42 per cent of male graduates received bonuses in the previous year compared with 32 per cent of the female graduates and, in addition, that the value of the bonuses received by the men was 25 per cent higher than those received by the women. The researchers estimated that adding bonuses to wages increases the annual gap in earnings between men and women by 1 per cent.

Previous research in relation to the gender pay gap found that employees in firms with a trade union presence and with fixed pay scales were less likely to experience a gender pay gap⁵⁹. The recent research in relation to the payment of bonuses and the individualized negotiation of pay⁶⁰ suggest that this was an area where male employees had quickly established an advantage over female employees.

The EU Advisory Committee on Gender Equality is currently undertaking research into the causes of the gender pay gap. The effects of the most recent increase in the national minimum wage on the gender pay gap should also be monitored. Accordingly, while there is not adequate research at present into the causes of the gender pay gap to enable the Strategy to set a specific target, such as a drop of a percentage point per year, the setting of such a target might be considered at the first interim review of the Strategy in three years time.

In the legislative area, improved provisions in relation to maternity leave, parental leave, adoptive leave, the national minimum wage, and part-time employment have made it easier for women to combine employment and family life. Work supported by the National Framework Committee on Work/Life Balance, in addition to the introduction of family-friendly arrangements at the level of the enterprise, has played and continues to play its part. These are discussed further in the next chapter.

57 CSO ; Quarterly National Household Survey : Q4, 2006 shows only 2,200 part-time women workers regard themselves as under-employed

58 D/JELR and ESRI : ibid

59 D/JELR : Report of Consultative Group on Male/Female Wage Differentials : November 2003

60 D/JELR and ESRI : ibid

International good practice shows that many major global employers are now actively addressing equality issues with very positive outcomes for both employer and employee. These initiatives, which may include the implementation of regular equality audits, have led to open and transparent remuneration schemes; open and transparent performance evaluations and an advancement of women within the organisation. The Equality Authority⁶¹ found that the introduction of clear equality policies within organisations positively affects workers' perceptions of fairness and openness in relation to recruitment, pay and conditions and career development prospects within their organisation. Accordingly, further research on international good practice in relation to equality policies would facilitate the development of models which would enable Irish employers and Irish employers' organisations to work to promote greater gender equality at the level of the enterprise.

France has recently introduced a voluntary "quality mark" for enterprises which have successfully undertaken an equality audit. The replication of such a voluntary system in Ireland merits consideration as it would focus the thinking of managements in relation to a range of equality issues, would create an awareness among staff and would help to brand successful employers as "employers of choice" at a time when economic growth has led to competition among employers to attract and retain high calibre staff.

Objective 1 – B: To decrease the gender pay gap

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Gender Pay Gap	Implement recommendations in PPF Partnership Report on Male/Female Wage Differentials	On-going	Relevant Government Departments/ Agencies
	Continue work of National Framework Committee on Equal Opportunities at the level of the Enterprise to address gender pay gap	On-going	Equality Authority/ National Framework Committee
	Introduce statutory employment records which may facilitate research	Legislation to be introduced in 2007	Revenue Commissioners/ Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ Social Partners
	Ensure effective monitoring and enforcement of the National Minimum Wage	On-going	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS
	Continue to review the National Minimum Wage as appropriate in conjunction with Social Partners	On-going	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
	Undertake research into international good practice in relation to equality proofing at the level of the enterprise	End 2008	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Social Partners
	Extend the programme of Equality Audits to consider and report on the gender pay gap	Ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform /Equality Authority/ public and private enterprises
	Consider the establishment of a voluntary "quality mark" to show commitment on the part of the employer to equality issues, including gender equality	Decision in 2008	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform /Equality Authority/ public and private enterprises

61 Equality Authority: Equality at Work

The Advancement of Women in Employment

There is evidence to suggest that women continue to experience difficulty in achieving progression in the workplace. Strong employment equality legislation has a key contribution to make in tackling these difficulties. The work of the National Framework Committee for Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise is an important contributor to the support of planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) published an extensive study of the glass ceiling in 2001 and commented that women were limited in the scope of their advancement to the top of organisations because they were streamed early in their careers into specific management streams such as human resources and administration. The ILO document considers that this situation is often compounded by women being cut off from both the formal and informal networks that are necessary for advancement within organisations.

An IBEC Survey⁶² Report produced in 2002 discussed the issues associated with the 'glass ceiling', and made practical recommendations about how it might be addressed. These included:

- Establishment by companies of objective recruitment and selection criteria
- Setting targets and timeframes for the recruitment of women
- Ensuring executive development programmes include women equally
- Focusing on diversity management within organisational development
- Targeting specific education and training at potential women leaders.

IBEC reports that some organisations have done very well at achieving a diverse workforce and have put such schemes in place.

Apart from increasing the numbers in employment, increasing the quality of the labour force is crucial if the Irish economy is to achieve its full potential. In general, the emphasis of past labour market policy has been towards engagement with those outside the labour force, with less attention being given to the development of those actually in employment. In the light of future demographics and the decline in the role of the traditional sectors, greater emphasis is now being put on increasing (i) the skill levels of low-skilled employees; and (ii) in-company training⁶³. Investment in training by employers and the development of programmes to facilitate both the unemployed and employees adapt their skills through further training and re-skilling is critical to future employment growth.

Inadequate training has been identified as another factor which impacts upon the advancement of women. The Forum on the Workplace for the Future, commenting specifically on the Irish situation found evidence, from its survey of 8,000 employees in both the public and private sectors, that

*Women receive less training than men, have less discretion over their work, receive less information in the workplace and have high levels of work stress.*⁶⁴

⁶² IBEC : Women in Management in Irish Business : 2002

⁶³ See for example : NCPP : Forum on the Workplace for the Future : 2005 : chapter 4

⁶⁴ NCPP : op. cit. : p.61

FÁS, the national training and employment authority, has prepared a positive action programme to increase the range of job opportunities open to women. Specifically, it is extending the range of apprenticeships and traineeships across occupations which should encourage greater uptake by women. Increased funding has been made available through the Competency Development Programme, which provides support for the training of employed persons. The uptake by women of training for traditional apprenticeships or in-company training has been disappointing. This mirrors the finding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) study on the gender pay gap among young graduates which found that (i) while 50.5 per cent of recent male graduates working in the public sector received employer sponsored training in the previous two years, only 44.2 per cent of their public sector female counterparts received such training; and, (ii) turning to the private sector, while 56.4 per cent of recent male graduates working in the private sector received employer sponsored training in the previous two years, only 48.8 per cent of their female private sector counterparts received such training. The report comments that

These differences are important because work-related training can influence subsequent earnings as well as job security and career prospects.⁶⁵

Commenting on the need to broaden the availability of training across the entire workforce, the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) notes that

The challenge of developing and maintaining a highly skilled workforce must be tackled on a number of levels. At individual level, engaging in career planning ...will become increasingly important. At organisational level, employers must encourage learning that will add value to the workplace and facilitate employees to achieve their potential. At national level, the ...development of closer ties between the workplace and the education sector and support for individuals and organisations wishing to develop their skills must become priorities.⁶⁶

The employer plays the major role in the training of those in employment. However, in order to maximise investment in human capital, the public sector has a role in encouraging and providing guidance for the development of training and in fostering its provision in cases where the need is not being adequately addressed. Increased investment in training, particularly in-company training, for low skilled/older workers is a strong focus of current Government labour policy and substantial funding has been made available for this purpose. This funding is being channelled through programmes such as the “Competency Development Programme” mentioned previously, and “Skillnets”. It is important that the outcomes of such initiatives are monitored to ensure that women are afforded the opportunity to avail of training opportunities to the same extent as their male counterparts. It may be that proactive encouragement of female participation will be needed to ensure positive outcomes.

The ILO argues strongly on the need for a social partnership approach to addressing the issues associated with the “glass ceiling”. It is in the interests of both employer and employee to optimise the contribution which can be made by women in the labour market. This

⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶ NCP : *op. cit.* : p.82

includes their advancement to levels commensurate with their educational attainment. The provision of State support to address employment training deficits for women is endorsed by both the ILO and the NCPP.

The “Leadership Initiative”, spearheaded by IBEC with funding support from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform under the Equality for Women Measure of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan, is an example of a successful leadership and management initiative targeted at the advancement of women in the workplace and as decision makers. It targets high-potential women in middle management positions and offers benefits to both participants and to their sponsoring organisations. The core objective is to foster the quality of leadership across Irish life, with a particular focus on gender. Its interventions are designed to:

- Address low participation of women in leadership positions across a range of sectors including business, arts, the voluntary sector, public sector, trade unions;
- and
- Draw on international best practice and apply it in an Irish context.

State support to address training for women is to be included among the positive action measures for the achievement of true gender equality in the context of the 2007 – 2013 National Development Plan. This might be achieved through actions such as publicity campaigns to encourage women to avail of training opportunities, incentives to employers to encourage them to provide focused training for female employees (if necessary) and incentives to women themselves to avail of training. It may also necessitate interventions which raise awareness among employers, board members and senior executives to ensure that they are fully cognisant of the concepts of both glass ceilings and glass walls and that neither exists within their organisations.

Objective 2: To promote the advancement of women in the labour force

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Degree of labour market segregation	Expand the range of apprenticeships and, where appropriate, transformation of traineeships into apprenticeships	Increase number of apprenticeships from 26 to 31 trades	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS/ Social Partners
Equality policies and action plans in the workplace	Develop guidance materials for the preparation of comprehensive gender equality policies in the workplace	On-going	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ National Framework Committee on Equal Opportunities
	Develop initiatives to open debate on, and engage with, planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality		
	Introduce new projects with business networks and trade unions to develop supports for their members on workplace equality		

Increased workplace training for women	Introduce cross-functional training programmes for female management trainees to avoid the “glass walls” phenomenon	ASAP	Employers
	Continue to foster the “Leadership Initiative” developed under the Equality for Women Measure of the 2000-2006 National Development Plan	Ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ IBEC/ ICTU/ Leadership Initiative partners
	Develop positive action measures to support in-house training for the advancement of female workers	2007/2008 and ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform /FÁS/Employers/Social Partners/Employees
	Consider the need for publicity campaigns to encourage women to avail of training opportunities at the level of the enterprise	2007/2008 and ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform /FÁS /IBEC /Employers / Trade Unions and Employee associations

Women as Entrepreneurs

The development of a strong, indigenous entrepreneurial culture is important to sustain growth in the Irish economy. This has been recognised by the Report of the Enterprise Strategy Group⁶⁷ whose recommendations on the measures and policies required to maintain competitiveness through enterprise and innovation are currently being implemented. Small businesses (with fewer than 50 employees) account for 97 per cent of all businesses operating in Ireland today. The Small Business Forum Report also contained a number of recommendations designed to assist the development of the indigenous enterprise.

The entrepreneurial environment in Ireland has improved dramatically in recent years and is enhanced by a number of nationally and locally delivered supports for micro-enterprise. The numbers of new business start-ups in Ireland compare favourably with the EU15 average and Ireland also ranks highly in relation to the proportion of the workforce that is self-employed.

However, in common with most countries, the Irish economy remains highly imbalanced in favour of men who established enterprises with the 2005 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)⁶⁸ indicating that men own three times more established businesses than do women. The position for early stage entrepreneurship is somewhat better with a ratio of 2.6:1. The GEM study also identifies a number of factors which are believed to have an influence on persons considering entrepreneurial activity. As shown in Table 5 below, women tend to have a lower perception of opportunities within their environment, less belief in their own skills to be able to start a new enterprise successfully, less likely to know a recent entrepreneur and a have a greater fear of failure.

⁶⁷ Ahead of the Curve, Ireland's Place in the Global Economy :July 2004

⁶⁸ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor : GEM 2005 Irish Report : June 2006

TABLE 5: PERCEPTIONS OF POTENTIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN IRELAND 2005

FACTOR FOR CONSIDERATION	Men	Women
Perception of opportunities	58%	44%
Belief in own skills	59%	39%
Know a recent entrepreneur	52%	33%
Fear of failure would prevent involvement in entrepreneurial activity	34%	42%

Against this background, the Small Business Forum⁶⁹ recommended that policy in this area should focus, inter alia, on the latent entrepreneurial potential among women.

The County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) have the primary responsibility for the promotion of entrepreneurship and development of micro-enterprise at local levels. While most CEB interventions are targeted on a gender-neutral basis, the CEBs have recognised the need to complement their mainstream activities with specific strategies aimed at addressing the particular issues facing women entrepreneurs. CEB programmes in this area have been designed to provide potential women entrepreneurs with support systems that will enhance their self-confidence and actively encourage their participation in greater numbers in new business generation and investment. The CEB “Women in Business” initiative, which has proved very popular across the country, is specifically focused on this objective. An important aspect of the programme is the promotion by the CEBs of successful woman entrepreneurs as role models and the use of mentoring and networking opportunities, which meet the confidence-building needs of newly emerging female entrepreneurs. The CEB networks bring together successful women and those who aspire to emulate them for the exchange of experience and information. These networks provide an ongoing programme of activities including a focus on business related topics and on high profile guest speakers.

Alongside the “Women in Business” Initiative, the CEBs have also been very successful in attracting the active participation of women in their range of training programmes such as “Start your own Business” courses and management development programmes. Women comprise 60 per cent of participants on these programmes, although they comprise only about 30 per cent of business owners.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 includes provision for the maintenance and development of all the County Enterprise Board initiatives, including those fostering entrepreneurship among women.

Steps will be taken in the context of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 to modernise the teaching of technology subjects in senior cycle secondary schools and this may attract more girls to undertake further studies in fields which would lead to careers in industry and ultimately to entrepreneurship in industry.

The Rural Development Plan 2007-2016⁷⁰ is expected to recommend economic diversification as a measure to sustain and foster economic development in rural areas. A number of sectors such as agri-food and tourism can play an important role in such diversification and often attract business start ups by women.

69 FORFÁS : Report of the Small Business Forum : 2006 : p.XVII

70 Department of Agriculture and Food : forthcoming

Central to the attraction of women into entrepreneurship is their engagement in the first instance and this interest can be captured at an early stage through the entrepreneurship activities, such as the student enterprise awards, delivered during the secondary education cycle by the CEBs and others. It can be built upon through campus activity at third level and subsequently through targeted actions on the part of the various agencies supporting industry and entrepreneurship.

Objective 3: To support more women as entrepreneurs

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Support entrepreneurship among women	Ensure that training and development programmes meet the particular needs of and are accessed by female entrepreneurs	Increased numbers of women entrepreneurs	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ County Enterprise Boards/ FÁS and other training programme deliverers
	Promote entrepreneurship amongst women, through initiatives such as “Start your own Business” courses, award schemes, promotion of appropriate role models, etc.		Enterprise Ireland/ County Enterprise Boards/ representative organisations/ etc.
	Ensure that girls are actively participating in schools’ entrepreneurship programmes		Department of Education and Science/ County Enterprise Boards/ Schools
	Further develop the support networks in place for female entrepreneurs		County Enterprise Boards/ representative organisations
Increased availability of work/life balance options to support entrepreneurship	Foster the availability of childcare to support persons who might be working atypical hours as start up entrepreneurs	Increased availability of childcare outside “normal” working day	Office of the Minister for Children

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Educational achievement is a field in which women in Ireland out-perform their male counterparts, the converse of other fields. Table 6 below shows two key measures: the percentage of girls and boys in a number of key age groups, who are still in education; and the highest level of educational achievement of men and women who are in the labour force. Each tells a success story in relation to the education of women in Ireland. However, it also masks the reasons for under-performance of women in other fields of life and their lack of advancement to the highest levels in employment and in decision-making.

TABLE 6: EDUCATION FOR WOMEN – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

Percentage of population of specific age, in full-time education 2004/2005 ⁷¹		
	MALE %	FEMALE %
o Aged 16	91.8	100
o Aged 19	44.6	61.3
o Aged 23	12.9	12.9
Persons in employment by sex and by highest educational attainment 2005 ⁷²		
	MALE %	FEMALE %
o Primary or lower	12.5	6.9
o Secondary	48.3	42.8
o Post Leaving Cert	11.2	12.0
o Third level NFQ levels 6-7	9.5	14.8
o Third level NFQ levels 8-10	18.6	23.6

The Department of Education and Science began to implement specific measures to redress disadvantages experienced by girls and women in the education system in the 1980s. An ESRI Report “Schooling and Sex Roles”,⁷³ published in 1983, highlighted the need to address gender stereotyping in relation both to subject provision and subject choice in Irish second-level schools. Measures implemented in response to this report received a further impetus following the adoption by the EU of a resolution on Equal Opportunities for Boys and Girls in Education in 1985. Other developments of note during this period included the expansion of provision in the further and adult education sector, with particular reference to the development of community education in the form of community-based women’s groups addressing the needs of marginalised women in disadvantaged communities.

Gender Mainstreaming in Education

Under the Equal Opportunities Promotion and Monitoring Measure of the National Development Plan 2000–2006, a dedicated Gender Equality Unit was established in the Department of Education and Science in 2001, with co-funding from the European Social Fund. The remit of the Unit is to promote, co-ordinate and monitor the process of gender mainstreaming throughout the education system. This requires the integration of a gender equality perspective into all stages of the development and implementation of educational policies, plans, curricula and programmes. This approach has been developed in tandem with targeted actions to address a number of specific concerns. A number of research projects have also been funded through the Gender Equality Unit to establish a research base and inform the Department’s future policy in this area.

Primary and Second-Level Education

The latest national assessment of reading standards in Irish primary schools, conducted in 2004⁷⁴, found that girls had significantly higher average reading scores than boys. This was in line with the findings of the previous national assessment, which was conducted in 1998.

⁷¹ Department of Education and Science

⁷² CSO: Quarterly National Household Survey

⁷³ Schooling and Sex Roles: Sex Differences in subject Provision and Student Choice in Irish Post-Primary Schools, - Damian Hannan et al, The Economic and Social Research Institute, Paper No. 113, May 1983

⁷⁴ Succeeding in Reading? Reading standards in Irish primary schools – Educational Research Centre, published by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, 2005

At second-level, significant gender differences, in favour of girls, are evident, in both school retention rates and examination performance. The most recent published report, by the Department of Education on Science, on second-level school retention in Ireland⁷⁵, found a gap of almost 12 per cent, in favour of females, in the retention rate⁷⁶ to Leaving Certificate level. This pattern of higher drop-out among boys is mirrored in many OECD countries, with eight countries, including Ireland, having female completion rates which exceed those of males by more than 10 percentage points.

When Leaving Certificate results are converted into Central Application Office (CAO) points⁷⁷, based on the performance of all students in the 2005 Leaving Certificate, one third of females scored in excess of 400 points compared to less than one quarter of males. While these data demonstrate considerably higher educational outcomes for females relative to males in overall terms, the following issues require continuing attention:

- **Subject Choice at second-level**

Appropriate subject choice at second-level has a very important bearing both on the extent to which students achieve their full educational potential and on subsequent career options. The ESRI study of 1983⁷⁸ identified, for the first time, significant differences in the educational experiences of boys and girls at second-level. The study, which examined the Leaving Certificate statistics of 1980, found major differences in the take-up of particular subjects by boys and girls at senior cycle, with boys being over-represented in maths/science and technical subjects and girls being over-represented in modern languages and in Art, Music and Home Economics. The study linked sex differentiation in girls' subjects, third-level study and career choices to their early learning or socialisation experiences and to the cultural assumptions underlying the provision and allocation of subjects and general teaching programmes provided by the main educational institutions.

Arising from these findings, a Committee was established to steer the implementation of a range of measures, including professional development programmes and the production of guidelines challenging traditional stereotyped cultural assumptions in relation to sex roles. The study of physics and/or chemistry by girls was actively encouraged through an initiative, the *Physics and Chemistry Intervention Projects*⁷⁹, which commenced in 1985.

Table 7 below summarises the change in relative take-up of the subjects concerned by girls and boys between the 1980 and 2006 Leaving Certificate examinations:

⁷⁵ Retention Rates of Pupils in Second-Level Schools – 1996 Cohort, Department of Education and Science, September 2005

⁷⁶ Retention rates represent the numbers who continue in education

⁷⁷ Examination candidates receive CAO points on the basis of performance in their top 6 subjects. Entry to most third-level courses is based on the CAO points obtained.

⁷⁸ ESRI: ib id.

⁷⁹ The Physics and Chemistry Intervention Projects were initiated in 1985. Direct intervention in schools was completed in 1994 but ongoing support for schools was continued for a number of years thereafter and included the publication of comprehensive handbooks for teachers of Physics and Chemistry in 2000.

TABLE 7: SUBJECT CHOICES BY BOYS AND GIRLS IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE 1980 AND 2006

Leaving Certificate Subject	Girls		Boys	
	1980 - %	2006 - %	1980 - %	2006 - %
Physics	15	26	85	74
Chemistry	35	45	65	55
Applied Maths	5	24	95	76
Engineering	0	5	100	95
Construction Studies	0	7	100	93
Technical Drawing	1	8	99	92
French	70	59	30	41
German	80	56	20	44
Art	70	64	30	36
Music	85	72	15	28
Home Economics – General	100	90	0	10

In evaluating the work of individual schools, Department of Education and Science inspectors will continue to highlight gender imbalances in subject uptake at individual school level and advise on ways of addressing such imbalances. New guidelines to be developed on gender mainstreaming for second-level schools will also assist in this regard.

Under Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, schools must ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices. To help schools in complying with this obligation, the Inspectorate, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, developed guidelines⁸⁰ for second-level schools which emphasise the need for schools to provide opportunities for all students to explore their interests and to consider their subject choices and how they link to further education, training and career options.

Schools are also advised to encourage students to explore a wide range of educational and career choices, including non-traditional careers.

Also relevant to this issue was the establishment in 2003 by the Minister for Education and Science of a Committee with the remit of examining relevant research and reports (national and international) on the issue of women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET). The Committee was also requested to make recommendations on strategies and initiatives which might be undertaken to increase the uptake by girls of the Physical Sciences (i.e. Physics and Chemistry) in the Leaving Certificate and to increase the number of females choosing SET courses at third-level. The Committee submitted an Interim Report to the Minister in April, 2005 and will submit its Final Report in 2007.

- **Early School Leaving by Young Mothers**
Young mothers, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, have been identified as being at particular risk of dropping out of school early. In response to this, the

⁸⁰ Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance – Inspectorate, Department of Education and Science 2005.

Department of Education and Science, through its School Completion Programme⁸¹ supports the educational element of a number of Teenage Parenting Projects, the implementation of which is being delivered by the Health Service Executive with some support from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. The young parents participating in the Teenage Parenting Projects are provided with practical supports to facilitate their continued participation in education and training. The focus of the support service is on the individual's needs, encompassing health, education, training and welfare, family relationships, housing and parenting.

- **Young Carers**

Special help, advice and support are essential for young carers who are often caring for a parent in order to support the household and to ensure that young carers remain at school. *Towards 2016* includes a commitment to a study of the extent to which children undertake inappropriate care roles in order to establish the extent and degree to which this issue arises and the levels of impact it has on the lives of children concerned.

- **Gender Mainstreaming in Education**

The Education Act, 1998 requires schools to promote equality of opportunity for male and female students and staff of the school. Current Department of Education and Science policies in relation to curricula, evaluation and supports for students include a gender perspective i.e. gender mainstreaming.

In order to assist primary schools to implement gender mainstreaming, a new set of resource materials, *Equal Measures*, was issued to schools in September, 2006. *Equal Measures* provides guidelines for boards of management, teachers and parents to assist them in formulating a gender equality policy and in promoting gender equality at primary level. A similar resource is currently being developed for second-level schools.

The Department of Education and Science Inspectorate has a statutory quality assurance obligation in relation to educational provision under the Education Act 1998. In fulfilling this obligation, members of the Inspectorate carry out evaluations of the quality of the educational provision in both primary and second-level schools. In order to assist inspectors in the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in schools, criteria and indicators have been developed to be used as part of the inspection process⁸². A module on gender mainstreaming is included in the induction programme for newly appointed Inspectors and the issue is also addressed in the context of the continuing professional development programme for serving Inspectors.

Third-level Education

Overall participation in publicly-aided third-level courses increased from 41,000 full-time students in 1980-81 to 134,000 in 2003-04. The increase in female participation rates was particularly significant during this period. Males outnumbered females between 1980 and 1994-95. However, over subsequent years, the participation rate of females rose at a faster

⁸¹ The School Completion Programme provides a range of interventions in areas of disadvantage that support the retention of young people in education. The Programme has been in operation since 2002.

⁸² Whole School Evaluation (WSE) in primary and second-level schools and subject inspections in second-level schools.

pace than that of males and the gender gap in favour of females widened significantly. By 2003, the gender ratio for full-time students in publicly-aided third-level institutions was 54 per cent female: 46 per cent male.

The available data in relation to completion of third-level courses also point to a significant gender gap in this area, with females significantly more likely to complete their courses than males.

An analysis of data for 2003 indicates that females constituted 52 per cent of all third-level graduates in the Physical Sciences in that year. However, males accounted for 85 per cent of graduates in Engineering, 82 per cent of graduates in the Architecture and Building field, 65 per cent of graduates in Mathematics and Statistics and 62 per cent of graduates in Computing.

In relation to post-graduate qualifications, the position improved significantly for females in the ten year period from 1993–2003. In 1993, females accounted for 46 per cent of those with such qualifications. By 2003, this had increased to 63 per cent. Of particular note is the percentage of female post-graduates in Engineering (37 per cent compared to 15 per cent of graduates).

Further and Adult Education

The further and adult education sectors have an important role to play in meeting the educational needs of young early school leavers, young people with a Leaving Certificate who wish to continue with their studies and choose Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses and vulnerable groups, including adults who left school without qualifications and need second-chance educational opportunities. In addition to full-time courses, the sector also offers a broad range of part-time courses through community education, adult literacy and the Back to Education Initiative. Over 70 per cent of the current participants in further and adult education programmes are female and a priority for the sector is to increase the level of participation by males.

AONTAS, the National Association of Adult Education, actively promotes the involvement of women in community education. AONTAS currently has fifty women's community education member groups and networks, with several thousand women in any given year participating in education and training opportunities provided by them. The women's community-based groups and networks provide an important women-friendly access point for women who wish to gain qualifications, skills and confidence which will enable them to participate more fully in the labour market and in community life. To assist women's groups, AONTAS has sponsored an action research project which has developed a Quality Assurance Framework and this is being mainstreamed in 2007 across all the women's groups.

Under the Women's Education Initiative, which was launched in 1998, the Department, with the support of the European Social Fund, provided funding to thirteen projects working with educationally disadvantaged women during 1998 and 1999. The scheme was extended under the National Development Plan 2000–2006 to cater for disadvantaged women and disadvantaged men, through women's groups, men's groups and mixed groups. €4.4m was allocated for this purpose over the period of the 2000–2006 Plan. The Women's Education Initiative was renamed the Education Equality Initiative (EEI). The aim of the EEI is to

generate policy and practice lessons in relation to addressing educational disadvantage through the provision of funding to a number of pilot projects. The EEI forms part of the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013.

The availability of FETAC qualifications at Levels 1 to 6 will enable adults to gain access, transfer and progress within education by being accredited for their efforts. Guidance support will assist potential and current students in making informed decisions. Support with childcare will allow parents to participate in adult and further education.

Women in Educational Management

Following research commissioned by the Department of Education and Science in the mid-1990s which highlighted the under-representation of women in educational management positions, courses were developed specifically for female teachers, with the aim of encouraging more of them to consider applying for management positions in schools. These *Women into Educational Management* courses are rated by participants on completion and follow up contact indicates that they have proved successful and supportive to female teachers who are considering, or have decided to, apply for management positions in schools. The Department has continued to fund these courses annually in response to demand.

Recent research funded by the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science investigated some of the underlying reasons for the continued under-representation of women in management positions in education. The study⁸³ looked at past participants in NUI Maynooth's "Leadership in Education" programmes. It found, inter alia, that while some male respondents in leadership positions talked about their concern about the inappropriate impact of work on their family lives, only female respondents talked about making cut-backs in their work to facilitate their families. Similar responses were made in relation to reasons for avoiding promotion. This mirrors the experience in other employment sectors where women still find that the caring responsibilities which continue to fall on their shoulders impact on their career progression.

Conclusion

The overall position in relation to women and girls in education in Ireland is that, on the whole, the story is one of high participation and considerable success. There are however a number of areas of continuing concern, primarily the numbers of girls taking Science and Technology subjects in schools, Engineering and Technology courses at third-level, the position of women in management in education and the need to continue to provide targeted supports for young mothers. These are the key issues addressed in the education objective of this Strategy.

⁸³ Lodge and Malone : Gender Equality in Seeking and Accessing Promotional Posts in Irish Education : 2006

Objective 4: To seek to ensure that girls and women achieve their full potential in the education system

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Completion of the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) Committee's Final Report	Complete the Report of the Science, Education and Technology Committee and present it to the Minister for Education and Science in 2007	2nd Quarter, 2007	SET Committee/ Department of Education and Science
Targeted educational supports for young mothers	Continue to support Teenage Parenting Projects through School Completion Programme	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science/ Crisis Pregnancy Agency/ Health Service Executive
Guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming for second-level schools	Complete development of guidelines on gender mainstreaming for second level schools	4 th Quarter 2007	Department of Education and Science
Indicators developed to evaluate gender mainstreaming in primary and second-level schools	Include gender mainstreaming in subject evaluations and in individual Whole School Evaluations	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science
Training for Department of Education and Science inspectors on gender mainstreaming	Provide training on gender mainstreaming to all new and serving school inspectors	Ongoing and as required	Department of Education and Science
Targeted supports for "hard-to-reach" groups of adults, including women	Continue to provide supports through further and adult education programmes for "hard-to-reach" groups of adults, including those who left school without qualifications and who need second-chance educational opportunities	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science
Increase in percentage of Women gaining FETAC accreditation	Foster increase in FETAC accreditation for women in further education	Ongoing	FETAC, training providers and Department of Education and Science
"Women into Educational Management" Courses	Deliver "Women into Educational Management" Courses as required nationally	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science
Development of research base	Provide funding for research projects on gender issues within education	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science

CARING WORK AND SERVICES

In contemporary society, caring may connote care for children, the elderly or other dependents. In many instances this is unpaid and therefore frequently under-valued work. The ESRI study commissioned by the NDP Equality Unit and published in 2005 underlines the significant role still played by women in the provision of unremunerated caring for both the nuclear and the extended family in Ireland.⁸⁴ During the weekday, women were found on average to spend 2 hours 31 minutes in caring activities compared with 34 minutes spent by men. At weekends, women were found on average to spend 2 hours 24 minutes on caring activities while men's time use diaries revealed that they spent 53 minutes in caring roles. This time commitment included time spent interacting with children in the family.

⁸⁴ ESRI : op. cit. : Ps. 10/11

This evidence parallels international experience which shows that even where there have been concerted efforts to engage men to a greater extent in family caring, the uptake has been relatively poor. Some Scandinavian countries now require men to take periods of the parental leave being made available to families. In Irish society it is most frequently the mother who avails of parental leave, of term time leave and of job/work sharing arrangements to meet family responsibilities. Men who avail of these schemes are often regarded as being uncommitted to their career.

Accordingly, the availability of childcare and supports with other caring needs are central supports to women who most frequently have to meet the challenge of linking family responsibilities, sometimes including extended family, with work commitments.

EXPANDING QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

Childcare is considered by many to be the single biggest challenge facing working parents today. Lack of good childcare facilities is frequently cited as a cause for low levels of labour market participation by women and for the gender pay gap. The very significant increase in female labour market participation has increased the long-standing demand for quality, affordable childcare in Ireland, including school age childcare.

Mention was made in Chapter Two of the emphasis being placed by the EU on the need for childcare as a labour market support and the targets established at the Barcelona Summit in 2002, which required Member States to make childcare available by 2010 to 90 per cent of children aged between 3 and the mandatory school age and 33 per cent of children aged under 3 years.

Given the relatively recent growth in the numbers of working mothers in Ireland, the supply of childcare places had struggled to catch up with demand. The first steps to address this deficit were taken in the late 1990s when a National Childcare Strategy⁸⁵ was prepared. While the Childcare Strategy had a focus on the childcare needs of working parents, it also included a holistic look at the development of a quality childcare service.

The implementation of the National Childcare Strategy was facilitated through the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000–2006 (EOCP) as an element of the National Development Plan 2000–2006. The initial level of funding which comprised a mix of EU and Exchequer funding, aimed, inter alia, to increase the supply of centre-based childcare places and to assist with the staffing costs of community based childcare services which made childcare available at reduced rates to disadvantaged parents who were in employment, education or training.

Such has been the increase in the numbers of women in employment and the associated demand for childcare places that the initial funding package proved inadequate and was increased. This also included an increase in the provision of EU support for the Programme. By the end of 2006, the EOCP had provided for the creation of 31,750 new childcare places and a further 6,250 places are expected to be in place by the Programme's end in 2007.

A commitment to the continued implementation of the National Childcare Strategy was demonstrated by the announcement in December 2005 of a new Exchequer funded

⁸⁵ D/JELR : National Childcare Strategy 1999

investment programme, the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP). The NCIP was launched in January 2006 with a funding allocation of €575 million and a target of 50,000 new childcare places. As was the case with the EOCP, the NCIP is part of the new National Development Plan 2007-2013.

A number of major reports on childcare were produced in 2005, including the Report of the Working Group on School Age Childcare⁸⁶; and reports by the National Economic and Social Forum⁸⁷; by the National Women's Council of Ireland⁸⁸; and the ICTU/IBEC Sub-Committee on Childcare⁸⁹. While not all of the recommendations made in these reports have been adopted, the NCIP was launched in December 2005 in the broader context of a new National Childcare Strategy 2006 – 2010. Along with the establishment of a new Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children, the OMC has been given responsibility for all children's services (other than health and school age education services) including the childcare programmes. These developments are reflected in the new partnership agreement *Towards 2016* which includes a specific section dealing with priority actions for children over the longer 10 year framework of the agreement.

A number of other childcare related measures to assist parents were introduced under the National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010. These include increasing paid maternity leave from 18 weeks to 26, and unpaid maternity leave from 8 weeks to 16, the introduction of an Early Childcare Supplement of €250 per quarter, for all parents of children aged under 6 years and a Childminders' Tax Relief for income from childminding which is conditional on the notification of the service.

Apart from the need to increase the supply side of childcare, the cost of childcare has been a concern for many parents. Quality childcare requires appropriate carer to child ratios to ensure both safety and quality⁹⁰, making delivery of childcare labour intensive. The numbers of hours of childcare required by the working mother can be lengthy, particularly for mothers who work full-time and may also have a lengthy commute period. As a result, the cost of delivering childcare is quite high. This has created difficulties for parents, particularly for those who are less advantaged and for those who have more than one child requiring childcare.

Under the EOCP, staffing grants were available to community/not-for-profit childcare groups with a focus on disadvantage to enable them to provide childcare at economic rates. Similar grant funding is expected to be introduced under the NCIP when the EOCP funding comes to an end in 2007. In addition to this support for disadvantaged groups and the measures referred to above such as the Early Childcare Supplement, the Government has invested heavily in Child Benefit payments to all parents of children aged under 18 years and still in education. The monthly child benefit payment per first and second child has increased from about €34 per child per month in 1995 to €150 in 2006, while the allowance for additional children has increased from some €40 per child per month in 1995 to €185 in 2006. A further increase in Child Benefit was announced in Budget 2007.

86 D/JELR : School Age Childcare in Ireland: June 2005

87 NESF ; report no 31 : early Childhood Education and Care : September 2005

88 National Women's Council of Ireland: An Accessible Model of Childcare in Ireland: September 2005

89 IBEC/ICTU: Quality Childcare from a Social Partnership Perspective: November 2005

90 Current ratios are 1:3 for babies and rise through different levels to 1:10 for children in the pre-school setting

In relation to childcare, the following challenges to be addressed during 2007-2010, the lifetime of the NCIP, are identified:

- Improving quality in the sector, both in centre-based childcare and among home-based Childminders;
- Implementing measures to match the supply of childcare places with parents' needs so that affordable and appropriate childcare services are available;
- Facilitating disadvantaged parents to access childcare that is affordable to them;
- Filling outstanding gaps in childcare provision, both for pre-school and school age children and for children whose parents work atypical hours; and
- Targeting actions to prevent the cost and or availability of childcare acting as obstacles to women's participation in the labour market.

Objective 5 – A: To ensure that childcare services are optimised to meet the needs of parents and children alike

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Quality services	Work towards a quality standard for childcare services, taking account of developments across the spectrum of early childhood development and care	Incremental progression 2006-2016	Office of the Minister for Children /Health Service Executive/ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education /National Council for Curriculum and Assessment/ other key stakeholders
Qualified staff	Develop and implement the National Training Strategy for childcare	Initial phase to be completed 2010	Office of the Minister for Children / Department of Education and Science/ FÁS /other key stakeholders
Availability of services	Implement and achieve the targets set for childcare places under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) and any successor programme(s)	Achieve EOCP targets by end 2007 Achieve NCIP targets by end 2010	Office of the Minister for Children / Pobal/ City and County Childcare Committees/ other key stakeholders
Access to childcare services for disadvantaged parents and their children	Implement the EOCP, NCIP and any successor programme(s) in a way which focuses on poverty and disadvantage	EOCP - end 2007 NCIP - end 2010	Office of the Minister for Children / Pobal/ City and County Childcare Committees/ other key stakeholders
Availability of childcare places for children aged 3/4 years with a focus on education	Implement and achieve the targets set under the NCIP and Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)	End 2010 and on-going	Office of the Minister for Children / Pobal/ City and County Childcare Committees/ other key stakeholders
High level of female participation in the labour force	Monitor whether the implementation of the NCIP is increasing female labour force participation	End 2010 (Barcelona target)	Office of the Minister for Children
	Monitor female labour market participation	Ongoing	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

OTHER CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

As Ireland's birth rate falls and people live longer, eldercare is joining childcare as a concern for Irish society. Extended life expectancy leads to increasing numbers of older people providing care with "young pensioners", in their sixties caring for older pensioners in their eighties and nineties. It is women who disproportionately take up this responsibility reflecting their traditional caring roles, their longevity and the relatively poor public services provided by the State. Caring work done by women is largely unremunerated and is considered to be undervalued.

TABLE 8: WOMEN AND MEN AS CARERS—SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	MEN	FEMALE
Number of unpaid carers 2002	57,480	91,274
Of which		
Persons who gave 1 – 14 hours of unpaid care per week	34,975	49,887
Persons who gave 15 – 28 hours of unpaid care per week	5,862	9,547
Persons who gave 28 – 42 hours of unpaid care per week	3,142	4,815
Persons who gave more than 43 hours of unpaid care per week	13,501	27,025
Number of carers who received D/SFA carers allowance/benefit 2005	4,879	20,958

Source: CSO and Department of Social and Family Affairs

Caring responsibilities are not confined to caring for the young and the elderly. Many families are called upon to provide care services for dependent adults on either a full- or part-time basis. This may affect women of all ages as they care for their dependent children who may have reached adulthood. In addition, younger people may find themselves having to leave the workforce or to limit their working lives in order to care for ill parents or other family members. This can also have a negative impact on their education, socialisation and recreational opportunities. A study carried out by Barnardos and The Children's Research Centre found that there are approximately 3,000 young carers in Ireland⁹¹.

In recognition of the value of the work that carers do, there have been significant improvements in the supports available to carers. Since its introduction, the Carers Allowance has continually been developed and more people can now qualify for the payment because the means test has been eased significantly, most notably with the introduction of the "disregard" of spouse's earnings.

The introduction of Carer's Benefit and Carer's Leave represented further important improvements in the supports available. The length of time for which people can claim Carer's Benefit or avail of Carer's Leave has been extended, enabling people to take a longer break from their employment to carry out their caring role. The Respite Care Grant has also been expanded and is now available to all carers who are providing full-time care and attention to people who need such care, regardless of their source of income or their means. In addition, the grant is now paid in respect of each person receiving care.

The full-time care and attention requirement has also been relaxed in order to introduce greater flexibility into all of these schemes while still safeguarding the needs of care recipients. The rates of payment of Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit and the level

⁹¹ Barnardo's and The Children's Research Centre. 2004. "Caring Before Their Time? Research and Policy Perspectives on Young Carers".

of the Respite Care Grant have been increased significantly in recent Budgets. A new arrangement will be introduced in 2007 whereby people in receipt of certain social welfare payments (other than carer's allowance or benefit), who are also providing full time care and attention to a person, will be able to retain their main welfare payment and receive another payment depending on their means, the maximum of which will be the equivalent of a half rate carer's allowance.

The availability of different forms of respite care, home help, nursing home places, are issues that have been identified by the social partners as requiring further development. This ongoing commitment to carers is further reflected in *Towards 2016* which includes several priority actions in this area, including the development of a National Carers' Strategy by the end of 2007.

Objective 5 - B: To ensure that the care infrastructure supports women's socio-economic engagement

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Efficient and effective payments and supports to carers in place	Ensure that payments and supports to carers are efficient and effective, recognising their needs and adequately addressing poverty and social exclusion and are adaptable to the needs of carers in a changing environment (i.e. care sharing arrangements)	In accordance with commitments in <i>Towards 2016</i>	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Continue to review the scope for further developments of the Carer's Allowance/Benefit subject to available resources	In accordance with commitments in <i>Towards 2016</i>	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Develop a structured consultation process to inform future policy in relation to payments and supports to carers	Annual meeting of carer representative groups and relevant Departments and Agencies beginning in 2006.	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Develop training initiatives for carers as priorities permit	Training initiatives to be developed 2006- 2009	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ FÁS
New strategy to address long-term care for older people developed	Inter-Departmental Working Group will continue to examine strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with long term care provision, with appropriate consultation	In accordance with <i>Towards 2016</i> , continue to develop an infrastructure of long term care services for older people	Department of Health and Children/ Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Finance/ Department of An Taoiseach
A National Carer's Strategy that focuses on supporting informal and family carers in the community to be developed	Devise a National Carers' Strategy in consultation with social partners and all relevant Departments/ Agencies	In accordance with <i>Towards 2016</i> , the National Carer's Strategy is to be completed by end 2007	Department of Health and Children/ Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Finance/ Department of An Taoiseach and other Departments/ Agencies as appropriate

WOMEN AND POVERTY

Poverty and social exclusion can affect all age groups. It is multi-faceted and combating it requires a multi-policy response. This complexity is reflected in the definition of poverty and social exclusion which the Government first adopted in 1997:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

This definition continues to be valid and forms the basis for the Government's strategic response to tackling poverty and social exclusion as set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion 2007-2016).

Table 9 below identifies a number of statistics which show comparisons between men and women in relation to their social situation in Ireland.

TABLE 9: SOCIAL SITUATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN IRELAND – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	MALE	FEMALE
Percentage of persons in consistent poverty (EU SILC 2005) ⁹²	6.4%	7.5%
Percentage of persons at risk of poverty (EU SILC 2005) ⁹³	18.4%	18.5%
Number of persons receiving one parent family allowance (2005)	1,804	78,299
Number of persons receiving carer's allowance (2005)	4,604	18,246

Source: CSO and Department of Social and Family Affairs

The table shows that the numbers of female recipients of the One-Parent Family Payment and the Carers Allowance far exceeds the numbers of men, underpinning the caring role played by many women in our society. There are some other one parent families and carers who are not in receipt of either of the payments mentioned in the table, the majority of whom would also be women. In many cases, regardless of whether or not people are in receipt of a payment, these roles will be combined with employment and other responsibilities.

Ireland's economic prosperity has improved dramatically over the last decade or more. This is especially obvious in the reduction in unemployment levels which has improved the economic position of most people in Ireland. However, despite the increases in employment participation in recent years and the record levels of spending on social welfare, vulnerable groups continue to exist.

⁹² The 'consistent poverty' measure, used in Ireland to ascertain those who are most deprived and vulnerable, is calculated by identifying from among those in the 'at risk of poverty' category persons who are also deprived of basic goods and services regarded as essential living in Ireland today.

⁹³ Persons are regarded as being 'at risk of poverty', if their income falls below 60 per cent of median income for the population as a whole. Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal parts, half of people having incomes above the median, half having incomes below the median.

Women carry the major caring burden which may shorten, interrupt, delay or terminate their access to paid employment. In addition to the costs associated with employment forgone there can be other direct costs associated with caring such as increased heating costs which may also impact disproportionately on women. Even for women in the labour force, many experience low paid and often insecure employment, frequently without the benefit of pension cover. Data on the incidence of the national minimum wage show that the majority of those whose wages are pegged at this level are women. It therefore appears clear that, despite the obvious economic improvements of recent years, the position of women requires further attention.

Addressing the issue of poverty, experienced by women, requires a multi-faceted approach involving a number of Government Departments. Policies in this regard are included in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion), the production of which is co-ordinated by the Office for Social Inclusion, based in the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The new NAPinclusion was published in February 2007 and covers the period 2007-2016. The cross-cutting nature of poverty is also reflected in the requirement for all Government Departments to conduct a Poverty Impact Assessment for all policy proposals. It is not the intention that the National Women's Strategy will provide an alternative to that important document, but that it would identify linkages between social inclusion and a broad range of policy issues.

The acknowledged route out of poverty and dependence for women of working age and the improvement of the life chances of their dependants is through access to an independent income, work, training and education. As was mentioned previously, special initiatives are required to enhance the labour market opportunities of disengaged women. Actions identified in this Strategy in the areas of employment; education and training; and childcare are likely to have significant impact on the economic position of women and will offer women options to enable them to prepare for and enter or re-enter the labour market.

Personal Payments

With regard to income support, consideration will be given to implementing the proposals contained in the Government Discussion Paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents' regarding the abolition of the concept of 'qualified adult' in social assistance. This would ensure consistency in treatment and equity across the social welfare system and recognise the changing role of women in society and the labour market. Under the proposals, where a household means test is met all individuals would receive a payment in their own right.

Access to social insurance coverage for women, on which they can accrue entitlement for a state pension, has been of particular concern to women working in family businesses, including farming. Family members working together are generally not insurable under social welfare provisions, as spouses of an employed or self-employed contributor are specifically excepted from liability for social insurance contributions. While this exclusion is not specifically targeted at women, wives are most affected by virtue of a tradition of the husband being the principal in the family business. The legislation however, also provides that spouses who are partners in a family business, or who work together in a legally incorporated company, can be insurable.

Thus, where formal employment or partnership relationships are intended between spouses or assisting relatives, the legislation provides the scope necessary to allow parties to enter

into arrangements that will enable them to gain access to social insurance coverage.

This issue has been examined on a number of occasions, most recently in the context of the social partnership working group which identified measures to develop a Fully Inclusive Social Insurance Model. The group looked at the particular issue of farming families and noted the significance of the partnership option to enable farming spouses to build a social insurance record in their own right. They recommended that more information on the tax and social welfare implications of working in a partnership, or as limited companies should be available to self-employed families through a joint publication between the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social and Family Affairs on the issue.

Objective 6 - A: To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
% of women in consistent poverty	Ensure that future NAPinclusion continue to address the specific circumstances of vulnerable women and that appropriate policy responses are developed to meet their needs	Targets as included in the NAPinclusion	Office for Social Inclusion/ relevant Government Departments
	Review treatment of unemployed persons available for part-time work only in the social welfare system	Implement recommendations of review in accordance with <i>Towards 2016</i> and implement Government decisions arising from its Discussion Paper on 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents'.	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
	Social welfare provision for widows to be kept under review and further improvements to be considered, as appropriate in a budgetary context	Annual Budget	Department of Social and Family Affairs
% of women receiving a social welfare payment in their own right	Increase the Qualified Adult payment to the level of the Old Age (Non-contributory) Pension in accordance with the terms of <i>Towards 2016</i>	Consider increases in the context of the Annual Budget	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Consider proposals for the abolition of qualified adult allowances in social assistance and implementation of decisions arising from Government Discussion Paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents'	Ongoing	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Review Increase for Qualified Adult payment for pensioners within the social welfare system so that women can easily access independent payments	Implement proposals announced in Budget 2007 to provide for an entitlement for Qualified Adults to receive that payment directly	Department of Social and Family Affairs

Lone Parents, Other Low Income Families and Poverty

According to Census 2002⁹⁴, there were 154,000 lone parent families in Ireland, comprising one in six of all families, with 85 per cent of these headed by females. In 2005, Department of Social and Family Affairs⁹⁵ statistics show there were over 80,000 unmarried, separated and prisoner's spouse recipients of the One Parent Family payment (some 98 per cent of whom were female), at a cost of €770 million, including the Child Dependant Allowance, while about 13,000 also benefit from Rent Supplement Allowances/Rent Assistance estimated at €110 million per annum. Child Benefit is a universal payment.

Lone parents in receipt of the One Parent Family payment may engage in outside employment within limits and current estimates suggest that about 60 per cent (48,000) of the mothers who receive this payment are also economically active. A number of schemes aim to attract persons back into the labour market and should therefore be of interest to lone mothers:

- Community Employment Scheme, designed to help persons who are long term unemployed and other disadvantaged persons to return to work.
- The Jobs Initiative provides full-time employment in the social economy for those over 35 years who fulfil certain criteria.
- The Social Economy Programme supports the development of social economy enterprises and provides sustainable jobs for the long-term unemployed and again has about 400 lone parents among its participants.

In total, some 6,500 recipients of the One Parent Family Payment are engaged in community employment, jobs initiative and social economy programmes.

Lone parents may avail of additional supports such as the Back to Work Allowances and Back to Education Initiative while there are special supports available for teen parents.

All disadvantaged parents may avail of childcare services provided at preferential rates by community groups with support under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme while certain training and educational bodies make special childcare supports available to course participants.

A Government discussion paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents' launched in March 2006 analysed the risk of poverty and obstacles to employment faced by lone parents and other families on low income. Following the consultation process on the Government's Discussion Paper, proposals will be considered by Government in 2007 aimed at reforming the income supports for lone parents and other low income families and supporting them into education, training and employment. The proposals will address supports such as access to childcare, flexible training and education programmes, and positive opportunities for customers. Priority consideration will be given to extending the National Employment Action Plan process to include lone parents and parents on low income.

⁹⁴ Central Statistics Office : Census of Ireland 2002

⁹⁵ Department of Social and Family Affairs : Statistical Report 2005

Objective 6 – B: To reduce the numbers of female lone parents who experience poverty

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
% of lone parents and other families on low income in consistent poverty	Progress further work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes including a review of child income supports which avoid employment disincentives. This work will be informed by the NESC study on second tier child income support	Review completed end 2007 Proposals implemented as appropriate	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Bring forward proposals aimed at supporting lone parents, and other parents on low income, into employment, with a view to ending welfare dependency and achieving a higher standard of living for themselves and their children	Implement Government decisions arising from Government discussion paper 'Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents'	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Education and Science/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ Office of the Minister for Children
	Value of child income support measures for those on social welfare maintained as 33 to 35 per cent of the minimum adult Social Welfare payment rate	Targets as included in the NAPinclusion	Department of Social and Family Affairs

Older Women and Pensions

Results from the EU-SILC survey shows that the risk of poverty increases very significantly for women of retirement age and above. Latest statistics from EU-SILC 2005 showed that the “at risk of poverty” rate for women aged 65 and over was higher (19.9 per cent) than for women of working age (17.8 per cent). Historically many women in Ireland finished work upon marriage and therefore had no independent entitlement to a state pension or any personal occupational pension in their own right when they reached “retirement” age.

This issue was considered in the National Pensions Review which was published by the Pensions Board in January 2006⁹⁶. The Board noted that women are more likely than men to have inadequate or no pension provision, partly because women comprise a greater proportion of lower paid and part-time members of the workforce. The National Pensions Review Report recently endorsed the national targets set previously for pensions coverage by the National Pensions Policy Initiative in 1998. Noting the recommendation in the National Pensions Policy Initiative (NPPI) Report to increase social welfare pensions to 34 per cent of average industrial earnings over a 5-10 year period, the Government committed to reaching a target social welfare pension level of €200 by 2007 and this was achieved in Budget 2007.

To achieve a pension income of 50 per cent of existing salary, it is estimated by the Pensions Board that 70 per cent of persons in employment who are 30 years of age and over will need to supplement the social welfare benefits they will receive in retirement. Figures published by the CSO in January 2006 show that pension coverage for females (in

96 Irish Pensions Board : derived from National Pensions Coverage Initiative

employment aged between 20 and 69) in 2005 was 47.5 per cent, while overall pension coverage was 51.5 per cent. Some of these targets are reiterated in the NESCS⁹⁷ Strategy Report for 2006.

TABLE 10: PENSION COVERAGE IN IRELAND⁹⁸

	NPPI target* %	Personal Pension Coverage (%)			Increase in cover since Q1/2004 (%)	Variance from NPPI target (%)
		1995 %	Q1/2004 %	Q1/ 2005 %		
All in employment	60	46	52.4	51.5	-0.9%	-8.5
All in employment 30-65	70	54	59.4	58.6	-0.8%	-11.4
Women	61	40	46.8	47.5	+0.7%	-12.5
Men	59	49	56.3	54.2	-2.1%	-5.8

Note: The National Pensions Policy Initiative viewed these as medium term targets. However the new pensions vehicles intended to support the drive for increased cover (Personal Retirement Savings Accounts) were not in place until 2003.

The latest official CSO figures for the first quarter of 2005 indicate that there has been an increase in the number of women who have made pension provision compared to the same period in 2004. While this is encouraging, the overall figure for female pension coverage falls 12.5 per cent short of the NPPI targets and is more than twice the shortfall found in male pension provision. However, recent research, conducted by the Pensions Board, indicates that 35 per cent of women with a pension said that they intend to increase their pensions contribution in the next two years and that 40 per cent of women without a pension currently said that they plan to start a pension in the next three years.

The National Pensions Review reviewed progress towards the various targets suggested in the NPPI and considered the appropriate direction for future pensions policy in Ireland. As already indicated, the Board endorsed the original NPPI targets on pensions coverage and adequacy. It also said that, if there was to be a continuation of the existing voluntary system of supplementary pensions provision, there should be improved incentives to encourage participation and it recommended specific measures that could be taken in order to improve both coverage and adequacy.

The Irish Pensions Board has undertaken further work, at the request of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, on a mandatory system of supplementary pensions that might be suitable for Irish conditions. The Board put forward, at the request of the Minister, a model which could be considered, if it were decided by Government that a mandatory system was required. The system suggested by the Board, and published in August 2006, includes mandatory contributions within a defined salary range and an enhanced social security pension. This was specifically designed to capture that section of the workforce for whom supplementary pensions cover is currently inadequate or non-existent as well as to improve the position of today's and tomorrow's pensioners who are relying wholly or mainly on state pensions. Women feature disproportionately in both these categories and would therefore be the main beneficiaries.

The Government is committed to developing a Government Green Paper on pensions in the context of the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, with the aim of consulting

97 NESCS Strategy 2006 : People, Productivity and Purpose

98 Source : Derived from Irish Pensions Board material

all interests and developing a framework for future policy in this area within one year of the agreement being ratified. The report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Review and its further report on mandatory pensions, Special Savings for Retirement, will be important inputs to the preparation of the Green Paper and subsequent debate on future policy in this area.

Any improvement in pension cover requires a long term strategy to ensure that those currently in the labour force understand the need to, and actually, contribute to a pension plan, while the welfare needs of those currently experiencing or at risk of hardship fall to be addressed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The Pensions Board are of the view that further awareness initiatives will be needed to specifically increase pension awareness among women. Women are a particular target of the National Pensions Awareness Campaign and in this context the Pensions Board is continuing to run publicity initiatives aimed specifically at women.

Objective 6 – C: To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty by increasing pension cover

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
% of women of retirement age who qualify for a social insurance pension	In accordance with <i>Towards 2016</i> and having regard to available resources, build on the commitment of €200 per week which was achieved in 2007	2007 Budget and annual Budgets thereafter	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Support initiatives to increase participation of women in the workforce	Ongoing	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
	Improve information and awareness among families working together to ensure that they are appropriately insured for social welfare purposes through the preparation of information leaflets and subsequent publicity campaigns	Mid 2007 and ongoing thereafter	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Office of the Revenue Commissioners
	Ensure qualifying conditions for contributory pensions are appropriate and strike a reasonable balance between the level of contributions made and benefits paid	Issues on Social Welfare pensions to be reviewed in context of the Government Green Paper on pensions in accordance with commitments in <i>Towards 2016</i>	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Review the issues and costs associated with a switch to a system of credited contributions and review the backdating of the Homemakers Scheme	As above	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Bring forward and implement Budget proposals in relation to pension rates and conditions	Annual Budget	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Department of Finance

% of those women in employment, over 30 years of age, with supplementary pensions coverage	Promote extensive, secure and adequate supplementary pension provision, particularly for women, in consultation with the Pensions Board	Actions in this area will flow from the framework decided on following the publication of the Green Paper on pensions	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Pensions Board
	Increase the number of women, particularly marginalised women, with adequate supplementary pension coverage in line with Government targets	As above	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Pensions Board
	Develop women-focused initiatives by the Pensions Board as part of the National Pensions Awareness Campaign	Ongoing	Department of Social and Family Affairs/ Pensions Board

FIGURE 3: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES UNDER THE FIRST THEME

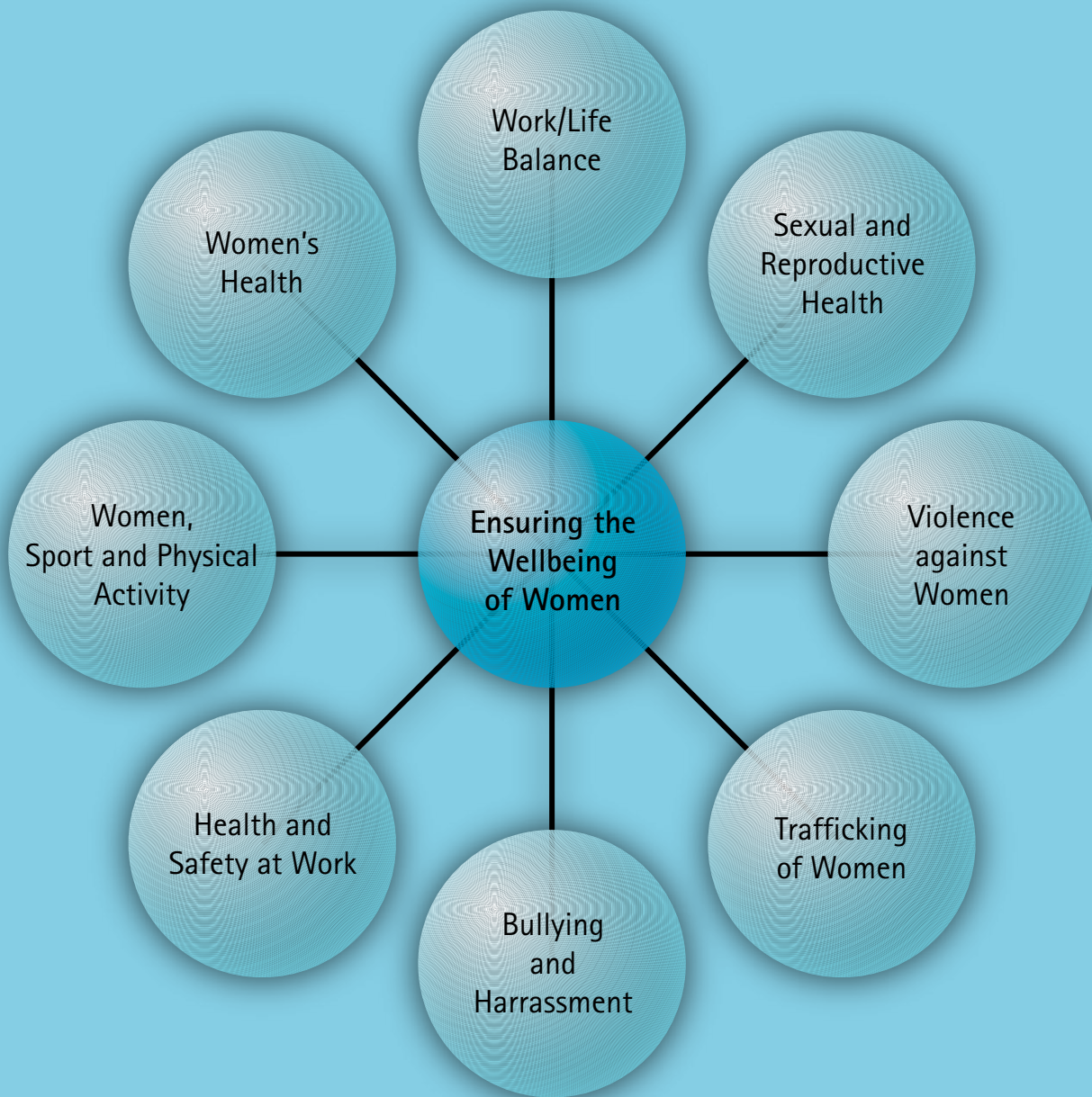
EQUALISING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN	
1-A	To increase the participation of women in the labour force
1-B	To decrease the gender pay gap
2.	To promote the advancement of women in the labour market
3.	To support more women as entrepreneurs
4.	To seek to ensure that women and girls achieve their full potential in the education system
5-A	To ensure that childcare services are optimised to meet the needs of parents and children alike
5-B	To ensure that the care infrastructure supports women's socio-economic engagement
6-A	To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty
6-B	To reduce the numbers of female lone parent who experience poverty
6-C	To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty by increasing pension cover

EQUALISING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

THEME 2

Ensuring the Wellbeing of Women

FIGURE 4 KEY ELEMENTS



ENSURING THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN

CHAPTER FIVE

Theme Two: Ensuring The Wellbeing Of Women

A sense of personal wellbeing is normally achieved through a combination of good physical and mental health; access to health and social services, where required; a sense of fulfilment, through employment, family and relationships and usually enhanced by a good work-life balance; wellbeing for most people is also underpinned by a sense of security and protection. In order to reflect the importance of the social environment, the Government has adopted the WHO definition of health, which relies on the social model:

*Health is a state of complete, physical, mental and social wellbeing.*⁹⁹

Table 11 below shows that women continue to experience a longer life expectancy and to have a slightly lower risk of certain headline diseases than their male counterparts in Ireland. However they experience fewer “Healthy Life Years”, are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions and are more likely to die from cancers than their EU counterparts. They are very much more likely than men to experience domestic violence. In relation to time usage, they spend more time at weekends on caring¹⁰⁰ and domestic work and therefore have less leisure time than their male counterparts – a situation which still prevails in most of Europe even though both parents are in paid employment in ever increasing numbers of families.

TABLE 11 WOMEN'S WELLBEING – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	MEN	FEMALE
Life Expectancy at age 0 (2001 – 2003)	75.1 yrs	80.3 yrs
Life Expectancy at age 65 (2001 – 2003)	15.4 yrs	18.7 yrs
Death rate from cancer 2005 (per 100,000 population)	192	177
Death rate from diseases of circulatory system 2004 (per 100,000 population)	247	236
Average time spent per weekend day on care (h:mm) ¹⁰¹	0:53	2:24
Average time spent per weekend day on household work (h:mm)	1:31	2:36
Average time spent per weekend day on leisure (h:mm)	7:41	6:15
Per cent of incidents of domestic violence reported by sex 2003	7%	93%

Work/Life Balance

While Work/Life Balance is frequently considered from a socio-economic perspective, it is equally important in the achievement of wellbeing, particularly in our fast-paced societies.

99 World Health Organisation : Health 21- Health for All in the 21st Century : 1999

100 See also discussion in relation to Caring in Chapter 4 under Objective 5 - B

101 NDP Gender Equality Unit and ESRI : Time Use in Ireland : Survey Report : November 2005

The National Framework Committee for Work/Life Balance Policies was originally established under the 2000 partnership agreement “Programme for Prosperity and Fairness” and continues to work under the chairmanship of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It links relevant Government Departments, the social partners and the Equality Authority.

The Committee notes that

Work Life Balance policies assist workers in combining employment with their family life, caring responsibilities and personal life outside the workplace, while meeting the employers needs. This broad definition includes statutory entitlements like maternity, adoptive, force majeure and parental leave, the carer's leave legislation and other measures such as childcare and employee assistance schemes.¹⁰²

and that

The contribution of Work Life Balance work arrangements to equality are based on the recognition that meaningful participation in economic, social and cultural life is determined in a significant way through access to the world of work. Work Life Balance work arrangements ensure: greater potential for equality of opportunity between men and women by reducing the interruption to careers, most often women's, due to caring responsibilities; improved possibility of a more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men; accommodation in the workplace of those unable to work standard times or shifts.

However, a survey of employers (public and private sector) undertaken for the National Framework Committee found that employers envisaged that

There are important factors which inhibit the more widespread availability of flexitime and reduced hours. Many of these are sector specific and relate to current use of shift working and the nature of the manufacturing process/healthcare support, meeting customers' needs in professional, personal and financial services, the size of organisations, costs and lack of demand...

Employers see the main benefits from flexible working as employee satisfaction, recruitment, retention, improved productivity, reduced turnover and improved reputation. Few employers acknowledged that flexible working/work/life balance contributes directly to business results and competitive pressures, though all of the benefits listed would contribute indirectly.¹⁰³

In 2003, the OECD published its study on the reconciliation of work and home life in Ireland, Austria and Japan. It specifically recommended that Ireland take steps to

Encourage employers and unions to make workplaces more family-friendly, for example through the introduction of initiatives that provide work places with tailored advice

¹⁰² www.familyfriendly.ie : FAQs

¹⁰³ National Framework Committee for Family-friendly Policies : Off the Treadmill : 2003 : p.68

*on family-friendly policy practices, while ensuring long-term commitment through regular assessment or audits.*¹⁰⁴

Both IBEC and ICTU are openly supportive of arrangements which offer a good work/life balance. IBEC in particular notes that

*Work life balance policies can provide an organisation with the dual benefits of increased flexibility to meet economic demands while also increasing the satisfaction and commitment of employees by meeting their personal needs. Consequently, the popularity of work-life balance policies among Irish businesses has increased. A recent IBEC HR survey shows that over three-quarters of companies in Ireland today have some form of flexible working arrangements in place.*¹⁰⁵

*...work/life balance is not only an issue for working parents but is an issue for all workers. As the world of work changes, many men and women may wish to avail of flexible arrangements at different stages in their lives. If these can be matched to the business needs we have potential for a win-win situation.*¹⁰⁶

Employers, both public and private in other countries are beginning to take positive measures to implement family-friendly policies and to encourage moves away from the gender stereotyped role where female workers were the only applicants for such arrangements. This obviously requires a change in cultural thinking within organisations but the endorsement by the social partners of the benefits of family-friendly policies to enhanced work/life balance should begin to bear fruit in the latter years of this decade.

The survey of employers did reveal that some forms of work/life balance were available to employees in the majority of the organisations surveyed, the most common forms being education, pre-retirement and employee assistance.

The achievement of work/life balance also requires cultural change on a number of fronts. This includes change at organisational level to address the practice whereby long and frequently unremunerated, working hours over and above the standard working day have become a benchmark for commitment to the employer and a requirement for advancement on the career ladder.¹⁰⁷

A second cultural change is required within the family where greater sharing of caring responsibilities and domestic chores between partners is required, particularly in situations where both partners are contributing to the family's wellbeing through the advancement of their individual careers. The Pilot Time Use Study¹⁰⁸ undertaken by the ESRI and the NDP Gender Equality Unit bore out the continuing divide, a phenomenon which still persists also in most if not all other countries. As table 11 above illustrates, the Pilot Time Use Study found that, even at the weekend, women spend considerably more time on caring and housework than do men, while men are accordingly in a position to spend more time in leisure activities over the weekend.

¹⁰⁴ OECD : op. cit. p.12

¹⁰⁵ IBEC Conference on Work/Life Balance : 2005

¹⁰⁶ IBEC : Work/Life Balance Day 2004

¹⁰⁷ National Framework Committee for Family-friendly Policies : op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Gender Equality Unit and ESRI : Time Use in Ireland : Survey Report : November 2005

The achievement of work/life balance therefore requires a number of initiatives on the part of employers, employees and individuals.

Objective 7: To enhance the work/life balance for women

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Increased availability of work/life balance options	Continue to support work of National Framework Committee on Work/Life Balance	Ongoing	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ other stakeholders
	Encourage employers to adopt a wide range of options to enhance the work /life balance of their staff	Ongoing	National Framework Committee for Work/Life Balance Policies
	Review the DSFA Unemployment Benefit and Assistance Schemes with particular reference to the treatment of part-time and atypical workers	Social welfare and employment structures facilitate work/life balance	Department of Social and Family Affairs
	Continue to keep under review the treatment of part-time and other atypical workers in the Social Welfare system		Department of Social and Family Affairs

Women's Health

Life expectancy for women in Ireland increased significantly during the twentieth century. The average life expectancy of women at birth was 57.9 years in 1925-27; in the period 2001-2003 it is 80.3 years. The improvement in life expectancy for both women and men has been attributed to a number of factors such as enhanced public health measures and control over infectious diseases and, for women, the reduction in fertility rates, together with better ante-natal care and maternity services. Nevertheless, life expectancy rates for both women and men in Ireland are still below the EU25 average. Moreover, according to the most recent statistics available, Ireland has the second highest rate of heart disease and the third highest rate of cancer in women in the EU15. Hence, continued attention to the health of Women in Ireland is required in order to improve the current situation.

Because of their role as primary carers, women's health is also particularly linked to their social and economic circumstances. Women in Ireland are marginally more likely to be at risk of poverty than men. While caring can have an economic impact for women in terms of employment foregone or delayed it can also have a direct impact on women's health in terms of both the stress which carers can experience and the fact that their caring duties can be physically demanding. Poverty and disadvantage have been consistently found to have negative repercussions on health, including in particular the health of women and their families. Women in Ireland are not a homogeneous group and consideration also needs to be given to their different characteristics which have been found to affect health, such as socio-economic status and ethnicity.

For all the reasons outlined above, the Irish Government has recognised the need for a particular focus on women's health issues for many years. The Plan for Women's Health 1997-1999, was the first specific policy aimed at taking gender considerations into account

in health policy in Ireland. The Plan for Women's Health 1997-1999¹⁰⁹ identified four main objectives:

- To maximise the health and social gain of Irish women
- To create a woman-friendly health service
- To increase consultation and representation of women in the health services
- To enhance the contribution of the health services to promoting women's health in the developing world.

As part of the Plan for Women's Health, a statutory Women's Health Council was established in 1997 to advise the Minister for Health and Children on all aspects of women's health. The mission of the Women's Health Council is to inform and influence the development of health policy to ensure the maximum health and social gain for women in Ireland. Its membership is representative of a wide range of expertise and interest in women's health. The Council has been assigned five key functions in its legislative base:

- To advise the Minister for Health and Children on all aspects of women's health;
- To assist the development of national and regional policies and strategies designed to increase health gain and social gain for women;
- To develop expertise on women's health within the health services;
- To liaise with other relevant international bodies which have similar functions as the Council; and
- To advise other Government Ministers at their request.

The work of the Women's Health Council is guided by three principles:

- Equity based on diversity – the need to develop flexible and accessible services which respond equitably to the diverse needs and situations of women;
- Quality in the provision and delivery of health services to all women throughout their lives; and
- Relevance to women's health needs.

In line with policy development generally, at international and national level, the emphasis today is on the incorporation of a gender perspective into mainstream health policy and the implementation of positive action measures to ensure that the health of women in this country is promoted and protected.

This National Women's Strategy is being written at a time of organisational change in the health services in Ireland. The importance of gender as a health determinant is recognised by the HSE in its 2006 National Service Plan¹¹⁰ with a commitment to working in partnership with the Women's Health Council to develop gender mainstreaming in the planning and delivery of our health services. In addition, the development of a process of Health Impact Assessment in relation to public policy generally, has the capacity to have a major impact on health status, particularly where it is complemented with a gender perspective.

¹⁰⁹ Department of Health and Children

¹¹⁰ Health Service Executive : Health Service Plan 2006 : December 2005

In 2005, the Women's Health Council engaged in a trans-national case study in order to review the integration of a gender perspective into Irish health policy. The Irish element of this work focused on cardiovascular disease and the result included a number of recommendations in relation to gender mainstreaming in the health services as follows:

- It is essential that gender is recognised as a health determinant that is as significant as social origin, economic situation and ethnic origin. In order to achieve maximum efficiency, policy/strategy/programmes must be developed, implemented and evaluated in a gender sensitive manner.
- Attention must be paid to gender equity in relation to the prevention, treatment and management of cardiovascular disease (the focus of a case study). Measures must be put in place to increase awareness about the incidence of cardiovascular disease among women, for both women themselves and their physicians. Appropriate gender sensitive diagnostic measures should be introduced.
- All research should be carried out in a gender sensitive manner and results should be fully disaggregated by gender. Similar action and further studies by the Women's Health Council in other health areas have shown that similar actions are also relevant in other aspects of health and wellbeing.

Objective 8 - A: To improve the health status of women in Ireland through gender focused policies

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Recognise gender as an essential determinant of health	Incorporate a gender dimension into health policy planning at the earliest possible stage of development, e.g. the Cardiovascular Strategy	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Ensure that the ongoing redevelopment of the health services structures includes representation of women at all decision-making levels	Immediate	Department of Health and Children/Health Service Executive
	Update women's health structures in light of recent health reform in collaboration with the Health Service Executive and the Women's Health Council target	2008	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Put in place health policies and services that allow women full access (e.g. transport, childcare/ eldercare, privacy)	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive/ All relevant Departments
	Put in place health policies and services to support carers (respite, counselling, information, financial security)	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive/ All relevant Departments

The National Health Strategy 2001¹¹¹ included a section which specifically addressed issues which are of particular relevance to women's health, with parallel work targeting men's health. It outlined a number of policy initiatives in relation to women's health which had been undertaken in the latter years of the 20th century. This included the preparation by each health board of a health plan for the women of its area. A number of preventive screening programmes specifically focusing on women's health were introduced by individual health boards and by groups of health boards, although not on a national basis.

The current Health Strategy¹¹² identified five target actions which relate to women's health

- Targeting a reduction in smoking for young women in accordance with the National Health Promotion Strategy;
- Programmes of screening breast and cervical cancer to be extended nationally;
- A comprehensive strategy to address crisis pregnancy to be prepared ;
- Measures to prevent domestic violence and to support victims are to continue; and
- A plan to provide responsive, high quality maternity care would be drawn up.

In developing these target actions, the National Health Strategy noted that

Irish women have a relatively lower life expectancy, particularly in middle age, than their EU counterparts. Death rates from heart disease in Irish women were amongst the highest of any country in the EU. In 1997, the incidence of lung cancer was the sixth highest out of 23 European countries.

The prevalence of smoking amongst young women has increased in recent years and rates among young women are now similar to those amongst young men. This is of particular concern where, for example, diseases such as cardiovascular disease and lung cancer are concerned.

This National Women's Strategy addresses some of the key issues facing women in Ireland today from a health perspective. These include interventions to address certain illnesses and causes of death which have shown an increased incidence among women in Ireland; illnesses which are gender specific such as breast and cervical cancers; sexual and reproductive health; mental health; and lifestyle issues, including obesity, alcohol misuse, and smoking.

¹¹¹ Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You : Department of Health and Children

¹¹² ib. id.

Objective 8 – B: To improve the physical health status of women in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Improve cancer screening and services for women	Extend Breast Check screening programme nationally	2007	National Cancer Screening Service
	Extend the Cervical screening programme nationally	ASAP	National Cancer Screening Service
	Treat women with breast cancer at specialist breast centres	ASAP	Health Service Executive/ Health Information and Quality Authority
	The Women's Health Council and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland to conduct a study on the treatment of older women with cancer in Ireland	2007 -2009	Women's Health Council/ National Cancer Registry of Ireland
Reduction in the number of women dying from cardiovascular disease	Put measures in place to increase awareness about the incidence of cardiovascular disease among women, for both women themselves and for their health care providers	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Make women and their health care providers aware of the different manifestations of cardiovascular disease among women	2009	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive/ Women's Health Council
	Introduce appropriate gender sensitive diagnostic measures of cardiovascular disease	ASAP	Health Service Executive/ Health Information and Quality Authority
	Use proven methods of treatment for cardiovascular disease to their full extent among women where appropriate	ASAP	Health Service Executive
	Increase access to cardiac rehabilitation programmes among women	ASAP	Health Service Executive

Sexual and Reproductive Health

In December 1997, the Government established a Cabinet Committee to oversee the work of an Inter-Departmental Working Group, whose task it would be to prepare a Green Paper on Abortion. The Green Paper was published in September 1999 and referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution for consideration. The Committee embarked on a detailed process of consultation, first seeking submissions on the options discussed in the Green Paper. Over 100,000 submissions were received from individuals and organisations. Subsequently, hearings were held at which the issues were explored in detail with many of those who had made submissions. In the course of this work, the All-Party Oireachtas Committee met representatives of the medical profession and of the Churches.

Although the Committee did not reach agreement on a single course of action, the consultation process was very helpful in examining the complex legal, medical and social issues involved. The All-Party Committee published its report in November 2000. This

discussed both the Constitutional options and the general issue of unwanted or “crisis” pregnancies.

In March 2002, a Constitutional referendum – the second since 1983 - on the substantive question of abortion was held. It proposed to amend the Constitution to give constitutional protections to planned legislation, the purpose of which was to ensure that a pregnant woman suffering from a life-threatening medical condition could receive whatever treatment was necessary, even where this might put the survival of her unborn child at risk. The amendment was defeated. On the basis of the Supreme Court’s interpretation of Article 40.3.3° of the Constitution in 1992, the position remains that abortion is permissible in the State where there is a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother that can only be avoided by the termination of the pregnancy – a risk of suicide may constitute a real and substantial risk to life.

In its Report published in November 2000, the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution identified a range of issues which it considered needed to be addressed in a strategy to combat crisis pregnancy. It pointed out that different Government Departments, State bodies and voluntary organisations had responsibility for aspects of these issues. It believed that the complexity of the programmes needed and the cohesion necessary for their success required a single planning focus.

The Committee proposed the establishment of an agency which would have responsibility for drawing up a strategy to combat crisis pregnancies, to promote options (other than abortion) where a crisis pregnancy occurs and to provide for post-abortion services. It envisaged that the Agency would also have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategy. Having considered the Committee’s recommendation, in October 2001, the Government announced the establishment of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency was given the task, in consultation with a wide range of agencies, of drawing up a national strategy to address crisis pregnancy. It is working in partnership with different Departments and agencies (not just in the health sector but also, for example, in the education, welfare and employment fields) to promote and co-ordinate the attainment of its objectives by means of an operational plan.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency launched its strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancies in late 2003. The strategy highlighted the actions necessary to prevent crisis pregnancies, to support those with crisis pregnancies and to provide counselling and medical services to women after a crisis pregnancy. The Agency now funds an extensive range of programmes which focus on:

- Prevention of crisis pregnancy
- Counselling services and supports
- Communications campaigns (such as *Think Contraception* and *Positive Options*).

The Agency reports that, over the past three years, it has increased the amount of crisis pregnancy counselling available in the country by more than 50 per cent. In a single year, the Agency allocates more than €3.5 million towards supports and services within crisis pregnancy. Counselling services are made available free of charge to women experiencing

a crisis pregnancy. The Agency's Positive Options text service has responded to over 300,000 information requests for crisis pregnancy counselling services made by mobile phone since it was established in late 2002.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency has published a large body of research over the past five years. Its most recent Survey "The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships" will inform future policy directions for the Agency and the broader health and education sectors in relation to sexual health promotion and sex education.

The Department of Health and Children also recognises its key role in supporting policy development and cross-Government working to address the issue of young people's health generally and in particular regarding promoting safer sex. In this regard, the Department works closely with the Department of Education and Science and other agencies and bodies to support young people in developing the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and personal skills to enable healthy relationships and sexuality.

In the school setting, the two Departments work in partnership with the Health Service Executive to support schools in the introduction and delivery of social, personal and health education at both primary and post-primary levels. Relationships and sexuality education is an integral part of this curriculum and remains a key priority for this work with schools. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency has also developed a communications package for parents' groups on sex and relationships education for teenagers.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency also fund a number of projects delivered by other agencies, including family support workers and supported accommodation, which assist teenage parents but which also have a broader focus. In addition, the Agency funds projects which have a focus on young people including lone parents such as youth cafés and health cafés and sexual health and information programmes.

Objective 8 – C: To improve the reproductive and sexual health status of women in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Improve the reproductive and sexual wellbeing of women throughout their life course	Ensure that all women have access to information on fertility, contraception and sexual health matters	Underway and ongoing	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive/ Crisis Pregnancy Agency
	Develop framework to ensure geographical equity of access to contraceptive services for women	2007	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Offer screening programmes for sexually transmitted infections regularly	To be examined in light of the recently published Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships (Oct 2006)	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Provide increased information on sexual and reproductive wellbeing through the SPHE programme in schools	Ongoing	Department of Education and Science/ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment/ Health Service Executive/ Crisis Pregnancy Agency
	Ensure that ante-natal care, maternity services and post-natal care are woman-centred	Ongoing	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Ensure that information and counselling services are available in cases of crisis pregnancy	Underway and ongoing	Crisis Pregnancy Agency/ Health Service Executive
	Ensure that information is available to all women on health, wellbeing and other relevant advice in relation to menopause	Ongoing	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive

Achieving Good Mental Health

The National Health Strategy fosters a holistic approach to health and wellbeing and this includes mental health. It favours the preparation of a new mental health policy to update work completed in the 1980s and recognises that cognisance should be taken of new therapies as an alternative to the traditional “medical” model. It also recognises that there are still some gaps in services for specific groups, including those with eating disorders, which is most frequently a problem for women which may first manifest itself when they are young girls.

More recently, “A Vision for Change”¹¹³ recommends a comprehensive model for mental health service provision in Ireland to build and foster positive mental health across the entire community and for providing accessible community-based specialist services for people with mental illness. It calls for a special emphasis to be given to the need to involve service users and their families and carers but does take note that in many family situations today there can no longer be a presumption that the woman is working at home and is therefore to be regarded as an available carer.

¹¹³ Department of Health and Children : A Vision for Change : Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy : 2006

The Expert Group which drafted this Report adopted the WHO Ottawa Charter and identified that the core principles of mental health promotion practice must

- focus on enhancement of wellbeing rather than illness;
- identify the whole population as a target group;
- focus on improving the social, physical and economic environments that determine the mental health of populations and individuals;
- build on competencies and resources of individuals and communities; and
- involve health and social policy as well as medical services.¹¹⁴

A Vision for Change identifies peri-natal psychiatry as a field of psychiatric care which should be strengthened, noting that women are at peak risk of having mental illness in the peri-natal period, contrary to commonly held beliefs that this is a wholly healthy time in woman's life.¹¹⁵

Objective 8 - D: To improve the mental health status of women in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Improve the mental wellbeing of women	Expand information on mental health in the SPHE programme in schools	As soon as possible	Department of Education and Science/ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
	Institute a regular community survey to monitor progress on mental health development	Obtain baseline data to be monitored every 4 years	Health Information and Quality Authority/ Health Service Executive, Department of Health and Children
	Provide counselling services through primary care referrals	As soon as possible	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Consider the introduction of awareness campaigns relating to mental health among women in the peri-natal period	As appropriate	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive

Health Promotion

The first goal of the National Health Strategy is to achieve “better health for everyone” and, accordingly, the Strategy places considerable emphasis on the promotion of health and wellbeing. It notes in particular that

People's lifestyles, and the conditions in which they live and work, influence their health and longevity. Most people have a basic understanding of the positive and negative effects lifestyles can have on their health. The reality is that the achievement of health and wellbeing is not the responsibility of the individual alone. [The] objective is to provide a supportive environment to help us all to make the healthier choice the easier choice and thereby contribute individually to improving overall health status.

The National Health Promotion Strategy has previously set out targets in relation to smoking, to sensible alcohol consumption and to diet and exercise and these are still

¹¹⁴ op. cit. p.240

¹¹⁵ op. cit. p.156 to 157

worthy of endorsement. Under the terms of *Towards 2016*, a commitment has been given to develop a new National Health Promotion Strategy.

Objective 8 – E: To promote healthy life styles for the women in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Promote healthy lifestyles for women (reduce obesity, smoking, drinking rates)	Emphasise the importance of exercise in life-skills programmes	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Tailor and promote physical recreation initiatives specifically for women as a healthy lifestyle option, especially for teenage girls	ASAP	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Encourage women in the older age groups to engage in low impact exercise programmes including walking, yoga and pilates to ensure sustained fitness into old age and to diminish the risk of osteoporosis	Ongoing	Health Promotion Unit
	Promote positive messages about eating more fruit/ vegetables/ fish	Nutrition policy to be published early in 2007	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Increase access to healthier food choices, targeting in particular less well off women and women in the workplace	Being addressed by "Healthy Food for All" campaign	Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive
	Introduce media campaigns to reduce smoking and drinking specifically targeting young women	Ongoing activity of Health Promotion Unit in Health Service Executive	Department of Health and Children/ Office of Tobacco Control/ Health Service Executive
	Continue smoking cessation programmes	Ongoing	Department of Health and Children/ Office of Tobacco Control

Women, Sport and Physical Activity

Participation in physical and/or sporting activity is regarded as an important aspect of a healthy lifestyle for all. Indeed current thinking, supported by the World Health Organisation, recommends a minimum of an accumulated 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity for five or more days per week to sustain physical wellbeing while the British Heart Foundation recommends that this is supplemented twice a week by physical activity to promote strength and flexibility.

In 2004, research conducted by the ESRI¹¹⁶ for the Irish Sports Council revealed that fewer than one in five women in Ireland came close to conducting the recommended accumulated 30 minutes of daily physical activity for at least five days per week. Women's participation, particularly in structured sport tends to fall off as women get older and due to their increased family responsibilities.

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The research noted that 22 per cent of Irish people, both men and women, are completely sedentary, while 52 per cent of men and only 34 per cent of women had actively participated in sports (excluding walking) in the previous year. The research found that a high percentage of women engaged in walking regularly but the definition of walking apparently related to a single walk of two plus miles and therefore would not necessarily equate with exercise which would enhance physical wellbeing. Of those women who did participate in sport, about 21 per cent participated at least once a week, with swimming (17 per cent) and aerobics/keep fit (10 per cent) as the most popular activities. This contrasts with men where 17 per cent played golf, 13 per cent played soccer, 12 per cent swam and 8 per cent engaged in GAA football in the previous year. While the ESRI notes that recreational walking is the most popular form of leisure time physical activity among women, it questions whether women are engaging with adequate intensity of effort and regularity to promote health benefits.

As the ESRI notes in its study for the Sports Council,

the promotion of sport and physical activity is a multi-sectoral responsibility and the range of public agencies involved is such that the sports promotion bodies play only a part in the overall effort.

Accordingly there is an ongoing need for collaborative actions between the Irish Sports Council and other bodies including the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive to promote programmes which will encourage more women to engage in physical activity in order to enhance their long term physical and mental wellbeing.

The ESRI survey asked why people did not participate in sport and found that 49 per cent of women registered no interest (compared with 37 per cent of men) while only 22 per cent of women said that they were physically unable to do so (compared with 36 per cent of men). A similar percentage (23 per cent) of each gender commented that they did not have time to pursue a sport and although the data are not disaggregated by gender it is interesting to note that overall 38 per cent of those in their thirties cited time as an issue for non-participation which suggests that family commitments may influence their use of leisure time.

The “Women in Sport” programme was launched in 2005 by the Irish Sports Council to address this imbalance. In the first two years of the programme, over 60 projects have been funded through the promotion of the positive aspects of sport such as fun, sociability and health promotion. These key elements are central to the focus of the programme which funds sports activities as diverse as surfing, walking and dance.

These initiatives are showcased on a dedicated Sports Council website, www.womeninsport.ie, which also provides events information, information on fitness and links to other relevant sites. The National Governing Bodies for Sport and the Local Sports Partnerships are encouraged to use the website to promote their initiatives which are of interest to women. An e-zine has also been created and is open to sports groups who wish to contribute news. National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships have received funding support to target women at a participation level through an innovative and diverse range of activities

and settings, designed to bring girls and women into sport or to retain/re-engage their interest in active participation.

The Irish Sports Council's most recent strategy "Building Sport for Life"¹¹⁷ has prioritised participation as a key goal and focuses on the following aims to increase women's active participation in sport and physical activity:

- To increase the number of women participating in a physical activity on a regular basis;
- To inform women about the local sports structures available to them in their locality;
- To give women the opportunity to test different activities to find some that fit their lifestyle and appeal to them;
- To inspire women to become more proactive about incorporating physical activity into their lives;
- To give women an opportunity to up-skill to allow them to get involved in sport as administrators or as coaches;
- To increase the capacity of sporting organisations to deliver programmes to women and girls.

Objective 9: To increase the number of women participating in Sport and Physical Activity in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Impact of mass participation events on the physical activity behaviours of women	Undertake research on mass participation events such as Women's Mini-Marathon	For completion 2009	Irish Sports Council
	Implement recommendations based on findings of this research	2010	
Enhanced involvement of women in senior positions in coaching and administration	Encourage more women to take up volunteer positions in National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in sport	Ongoing	Irish Sports Council/ National Governing Bodies
	Hold two "Women in Sport" networking/information sharing sessions per year	Ongoing	Irish Sports Council/ National Governing Bodies
	Develop a resource for use in NGBs to encourage women to take up senior positions	2008	Irish Sports Council
	Develop "Women in Sport" coaching projects to advanced coaching levels	2008	Coaching Ireland

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Increased level of participation by women in sport and physical activity	Provide targeted funding to NGBs for special initiatives to attract/retain women's involvement in sport	Grants approved to NGBs leading to increased participation	Irish Sports Council/NGBs
	Encourage greater participation of women in sports activities at local level and in mass participation events such as mini-marathons through facilitation of year-round training groups	Ongoing implementation of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) grant scheme to increase female participation	Irish Sports Council/LSPs
Increased awareness of opportunities for female participation in sport among women and in the media	Inform women about their possible participation in mass participation events	Measured increases in participation of 1.5 per cent for the general population and 3 per cent for children (these targets relate to male and female)	Irish Sports Council
	Inform women about local sports structures and opportunities to participate in their areas		Irish Sports Council
	Increase capacity of organisations to deliver programmes to women and girls	Expansion of NGB and LSP grant scheme	Irish Sports Council/ NGBs/ LSPs
	Further develop awareness of the "Women in Sport" brand associated with projects under the initiative	Wide recognition of logo which was launched in September 2006	Irish Sports Council
	Promote participation of women in sport by highlighting opportunities and good practice on Irish Sports Council Website and in mass media	Ongoing maintenance of "Women in Sport" website Ongoing maintenance of "Women in Sport" e-zine	Irish Sports Council/ media

PROTECTING WOMEN

Health and Safety for Women in Employment

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA), which operates under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, is the State Body responsible for enforcing occupational safety and health law – the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and associated statutory instruments.

While the safety, health and welfare regulations apply equally to men and women in the workplace, there are specific provisions in occupational safety and health legislation providing protection to pregnant women at work. Where risks to women exist, an employer is required to undertake a risk assessment and to take account of this in the safety statement. Where an employer is informed by an employee of her pregnancy, the employer is required to assess the risks. This is underpinned by both Irish and EU legislation. Detailed information is provided on the Health and Safety Authority website – www.hsa.ie – which has a dedicated section entitled "Pregnant at Work FAQs".

Objective 10: To ensure the health and safety of pregnant and breast feeding women at work

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Written policies in relation to health and safety for women at work, as appropriate	Where risks to pregnant and breast feeding women occur, ensure that all employers include an assessment of these risks as an element of the Safety Statement	Immediate	All employers
Awareness programmes in relation to health and safety for women at work	Continue to create awareness of potential hazards to pregnant and breast feeding mothers within the work place	Immediate	Gender Equality Div, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Social partners/ Health and Safety Authority (already on HSA website)

Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

The Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying said that workplace bullying is an increasing problem. Whether this is due to an increasing incidence of bullying or to an increasing awareness of the unacceptability of bullying behaviour was not clearly demonstrable¹¹⁸.

A survey carried out by the ESRI for the earlier Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying in 2000/2001 showed that 7 per cent of persons said they were bullied in the workplace. The incidence level was substantially higher for women, at 9.5 per cent, than for men, at 5.3 per cent. The highest risk was found in the public administration, education and health sectors, which have high levels of female employment¹¹⁹.

The incidence of workplace intimidation across Europe is considered to be around 10 per cent, with women being more vulnerable than men. Women are concentrated in high-risk sectors, such as education, health, hotels and restaurants, and social services. A report on sexual harassment in the workplace in EU Member States prepared for the Irish Presidency of the European Union in 2003 found a lack of statistical data on the incidence and nature of sexual harassment in most of the countries. Where data was provided, it showed a higher incidence of such harassment for women. Following this review, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, at the conference to launch the review, recommended that data be collected on a wide number of issues, including data relating to the incidence of sexual harassment (e.g. by type of harassment involved and by the gender of the harassed/harasser), also the profile of the harasser and the profile of the victim, profile of the organisation where it occurred, etc.¹²⁰

The Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying, in its 2005 Report, made recommendations for new health and safety and industrial relations legislative provisions and for new state procedures to address the problem of workplace bullying. One of the recommendations was that a follow-up survey, similar to the ESRI 2000/2001 survey, be conducted to establish a baseline from which the effectiveness of the new structures and processes would be measured. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

¹¹⁸ Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying : 2005 ; p.9

¹¹⁹ Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying : 2001, p.26

¹²⁰ D/JELR : Report on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in EU Member States: 2004

commissioned the ESRI to carry out this survey which is ongoing at the time of publication of this Strategy. The results of the survey (which will be published), the Report of the Expert Group and the views of the social partners will be brought to Government with recommendations on how best to implement the report's recommendations.

There are three State Agencies who are now in a position to offer advice and assistance to both employers and employees in relation to workplace bullying and harassment, depending on the specific nature of the issue. These are the Health and Safety Authority; the Labour Relations Commission; and the Equality Authority (which covers specifically the nine grounds of discrimination). The individual Codes of Practice are within the remit of those Agencies. They act as a reference point for the Agencies in offering advice and assistance to both employers and employees and are also a source of information in providing guidelines. The Health and Safety Authority is currently preparing an update of its Code of Practice on Bullying in the Workplace in light of the requirements in the new Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004, explicitly prohibit both harassment on any of the nine discriminatory grounds (including gender), and sexual harassment in the workplace. The Equality Authority has published a Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment in the Workplace.

Objective 11: To protect women from bullying and harassment in the workplace

Indicator	Actions might include	Target	Responsible
Reduced incidence of bullying and harassment in the workplace	Preparation of a revised Code of Practice for employers and employees in the prevention and resolution of bullying at work	2007	Health and Safety Authority
	Media campaigns to promote awareness of bullying	2008	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ ICTU/ IBEC
	Further consideration of bullying and harassment under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005	2009	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment/ Health and Safety Authority
	Identify and gather better statistics and indicators in relation to the incidence of bullying	2010	CSO/ Equality Authority/ Labour Relations Commission/ Courts Service, as appropriate

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Comprehensive legislative measures have been put in place to address violence against women in Ireland and the body of legislation compares well with that in other European jurisdictions. Key provisions introduced to combat violence against women are:

- The Criminal Law (Rape) Amendment Act, 1990
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act, 1997
- Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2002
- The Sex Offenders Act, 2001

- Criminal Justice Act, 2006
- Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act, 2006

The Garda Síochána have put measures in place in relation to the investigation of crimes of domestic violence and sexual violence, through the establishment of a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit and through the development of a written pro-arrest policy in relation to domestic violence intervention, which is currently being reviewed and updated.

The most recent Garda statistics¹²¹, which relate to 2005, show that some 5,500 incidents of domestic violence were reported to the Gardai in that year while 377 cases of rape of women, 69 cases of rape (section 4) and 934 other cases of sexual offence against a women were reported¹²². The detection rate for headline sexual offences (against men and women) in 2005 was 42 per cent¹²³. In 2005, there were 1,188 breaches of orders made under the Domestic Violence Acts 1996 and 2002 and these included a mix of breaches of barring orders, interim barring orders, protection orders and safety orders.¹²⁴

Data collected by NGOs also show large numbers of women contacting them for support and counselling. In 2003, 18,902 calls were made to Women's Aid National Helpline while 11,863 calls were made to Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's National Helpline. Trafficking and prostitution are also regarded as violence against women and present separate challenges requiring specific responses.

Funding for support services in the field of violence against women comes from a number of Government Departments and Agencies. The key source of funding is the Health Service Executive, which delivers health services and personal social services to support victims. The Health Service Executive also makes funding available to the Non-Governmental Organisations which play a key role in support the victims of violence against women. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government makes funding available to local authorities for the provision of crisis accommodation for victims of domestic violence. An independent review¹²⁵ on strategies for the homeless has recently recommended that refuge provision and occupancy be examined under the aegis of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women.

It is widely acknowledged that women living in violent situations can make informed choices about the options available to them, only if they are provided with accurate information, advice and support. To this end, awareness raising has been one of the key objectives of the National Steering Committee in recent years. Accordingly, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform makes significant funding available for awareness raising initiatives. The justice system, funded through the Department, also engages in the detection and prosecution of offences in relation to domestic violence. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform also supports a number of intervention programmes working to rehabilitate perpetrators of violence against women.

¹²¹ Garda Síochána : Evaluation of Policing Plan 2005 : p.5

¹²² Garda Síochána : Annual Report : 2005 : p.31

¹²³ Garda Síochána : Evaluation of Policing Plan 2005 : p.4

¹²⁴ Garda Síochána : Annual Report : 2005 : p.78

¹²⁵ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government : Independent Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies : Fitzpatrick Associates : 2006

The Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women, published in 1997, provided the first national strategy on the issue of violence against women in Ireland and led to the establishment of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSCVaW). Almost 10 years on, significant progress has been made in this field, reflected in improved service provision and awareness raising as well as effective responses from the criminal justice system.

The increase in reporting of violence against women since the publication of the Task Force Report in 1996 and the level of calls to support services indicates that the provision of information and the availability of support services have enabled women to come forward instead of continuing to suffer in silence. Nonetheless, violence against women remains a widespread and serious problem.

It is clear that, in common with every country which confronts this issue, an amount of work remains to be done in Ireland to fully come to terms with this problem. Domestic and international research work continues to point to widespread under-reporting of what, in most instances, are very serious crimes.

A review of the work of the National Steering Committee since its foundation is approaching completion and this will result in a five year strategic plan for the further development of services to overcome violence against women. In this context, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is intending to bring forward proposals to establish a small executive office under the aegis of the Department to provide a well co-ordinated “whole of Government” response to violence against women and domestic violence.

This will require the new agency to work closely with the other Departments and with the State Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations engaged in the funding and delivery of front-line services. To facilitate this new Office in its work, it should be authorised to arrange and accept secondments from other relevant agencies to assist in its activities from time to time. The Department is also in active discussion with the National Crime Council in relation to the establishment of a dedicated researcher post within the Council to develop a permanent research competence in the field of violence against women and to draw down emerging international research.

Among the future developments which will emanate from this new strategic work programme are more cohesive services, enhanced training and awareness initiatives and a deeper understanding among care professionals and the public of this criminal problem which affects not only women but their wider families, often including very young children.

International co-operation in relation to violence against women has increased in recent years with the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe all promoting actions to address the problem and to encourage a best practice approach. The European Commission makes a funding package available under the DAPHNE Programme to support trans-national initiatives and research related to violence against women and children.

Objective 12: To combat violence against women through improved services for victims together with effective prevention and prosecution

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
An effective and appropriate response is available to victims of violence against women	Establish an Executive Office under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to ensure delivery of a well co-ordinated “ whole of Government” response to violence against women and domestic violence	2007	Government, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and all relevant Government Departments
	Augment the research team in the National Crime Council to enable it to provide dedicated research to support the Government response to violence against women	2007	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, National Crime Council
	Ensure that the voluntary and statutory front line services address the needs of victims of domestic violence and dependent family members	Ongoing	Health Service Executive
	Ensure that essential support services are made available to all recent victims of sexual violence on a 24-hour basis	ASAP	Health Service Executive
	Personnel of all health services to be trained to fully understand the impact of sexual, emotional and physical abuse	ASAP	Health Service Executive
	Provide emergency accommodation for women forced to leave their homes because of domestic violence	Ongoing	Local Authorities/ Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
	Implement the recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women subgroup on treatment services for victims of rape and sexual assault	Ongoing	Department of Health and Children/ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Health Service Executive
	Increase in reporting of crimes of VaW, together with an increase in the number of arrests, charges and convictions for such crimes and a decrease in attrition rates	Promote effective criminal justice responses, including any necessary legislative responses	Ongoing
Implement the findings of the 2005 review of Garda policy on domestic violence		Ongoing	An Garda Síochána

Effective and properly monitored intervention programmes for perpetrators and victims of domestic violence, with the safety of women and children as the paramount consideration	Provide funding for the development, operation and ongoing monitoring of effective intervention programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence	Ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Develop and expand Sex Offender Treatment Programmes	Ongoing	Probation & Welfare Service/ Irish Prison Service
An increase in the levels of public awareness of the various aspects of violence against women	Develop appropriate media and other strategies which ensure that victims of VaW are aware of the services available in their area.	2007	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ NSCVaW
	Provide funding to the NSCVaW and to local and regional groups to undertake awareness raising initiatives	Ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ NSCVaW/ Health Service Executive/ Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs/ community groups
	Develop targeted campaigns to raise awareness of VaW amongst a wide audience, including the general public, service providers and all agencies within the criminal justice system	Ongoing	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in co-operation with the NSCVaW

TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN

It is estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 persons are the victims of trafficking throughout the world each year and that 100,000 women are the victims of trafficking in Europe. The Council of Europe¹²⁶ Organised Crime Situation Report 2005 confirms that, in Europe, most victims of trafficking are women and girls who are exploited for sexual purposes. The report states that 'the market for commercial sexual services is considered a major force driving trafficking' and that 'in a number of countries, prostitution or the "red light milieu" serve as an entry point for organised groups in a given area'. It is also suggested that other women are trafficked in parts of Europe to enter domestic service and other low paid employment sectors.

According to Europol,¹²⁷ all the indications, to date, are that trafficking in human beings takes place on a much smaller scale than does illegal immigration. However, the Europol report acknowledges that the nature of human trafficking is such that it is harder to identify and quantify. The report also recognises the greater harm to victims from the exploitation, intimidation and violence associated with human trafficking.

Three principal elements contribute to the growth in the phenomenon of human trafficking – vulnerability, demand and organised crime. In countries of origin, there is no shortage of victims whilst in countries of destination, often wealthy Western democracies, there is no shortage in demand for sexual services. The supply of victims is encouraged and sustained

¹²⁶ Council of Europe : Organised Crime Situation Report 2005

¹²⁷ Europol : EU Organised Crime Report 2005

by many factors including poverty, the attraction of higher standards of living to be found elsewhere, lack of employment opportunities, violence against women and children in their country of origin, discrimination against women, government corruption, political instability and armed conflict. Constantly growing sex markets sustain the demand and it is estimated that Europeans spend billions of Euro every year on prostitution and other commercial sexual services.

Organised crime groups and networks exploit the vulnerable situation of women and children in many countries in order to make substantial profits from market opportunities for sexual services and cheap labour. It is estimated that trafficked women can be resold up to seven times along the way. The UN and International Organisation for Migration estimates put the annual profits generated by organised crime groups at between US\$7 billion and US\$10 billion globally.

While trafficking may occur less frequently than illegal migration, Ireland is at risk from the same threats of trafficking as its EU partners. It is reported that, in recent times, Garda operations have uncovered a small number of trafficking cases, involving Eastern European nationals in trafficking and attempted trafficking activity. The Gardaí are reported to have encountered a small number of cases of Eastern European women being trafficked to Ireland for the purpose of sexual exploitation within their own ethnic communities. Although the number of known trafficking cases in Ireland may be small, it is still a matter of the utmost seriousness. Trafficking impacts upon its victims. Women and children may find themselves as the innocent victims of and at the whim of violent crime organisations led by both women and men. It may lead to women suffering degradation and humiliation and a fear for their future safety and economic wellbeing if they seek help. It is imperative that Ireland does everything to prevent this suffering from continuing and from happening into the future.

The 2006 Report on Trafficking by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and An Garda Síochána¹²⁸ demonstrates that Ireland is active in preventing the State from becoming a preferred destination for traffickers. The Report has made thirteen separate recommendations including the strengthening of legislation, continuation of special Garda operations and increased cross border co-operation in order to ensure that this does not become a more widespread problem in Ireland.

In July 2006, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform published the Heads of a new Bill (entitled the Criminal Justice (Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Offences) Bill) in relation to Trafficking which repeals and strengthens the existing legislation. This will be enacted as soon as possible. The Department also collaborates with international work exchanging information to address the problem of trafficking.

¹²⁸ DJELR/Garda Síochána : Report on Trafficking in Human Beings : May 2006

Objective 13: To address the issue of trafficking of women and children

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Ensure that levels of trafficking of women and children do not increase	Continue to take a proactive approach to the prevention and detection of human trafficking and prosecution of offenders	Ongoing	Garda Síochána
	Deprive perpetrators of trafficking of the proceeds of their criminal activities	Ongoing	Garda Síochána/ Criminal Assets Bureau
	Foster collaboration between Garda Síochána and NGOs in relation to “intelligence” on trafficking	Ongoing	Garda Síochána/NGOs
Strengthen legislation against trafficking	Bring forward legislation to comply with EU Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings	As soon as possible	D/JELR
Support mechanisms for victims of trafficking	Put in place appropriate support mechanisms for victims of trafficking to enable them to re-establish their lives	As soon as possible	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service/ NGOs
Create awareness of trafficking	Undertake media campaigns to promote awareness of trafficking in human beings and its linkages with the “sex industry”	As appropriate	D/JELR

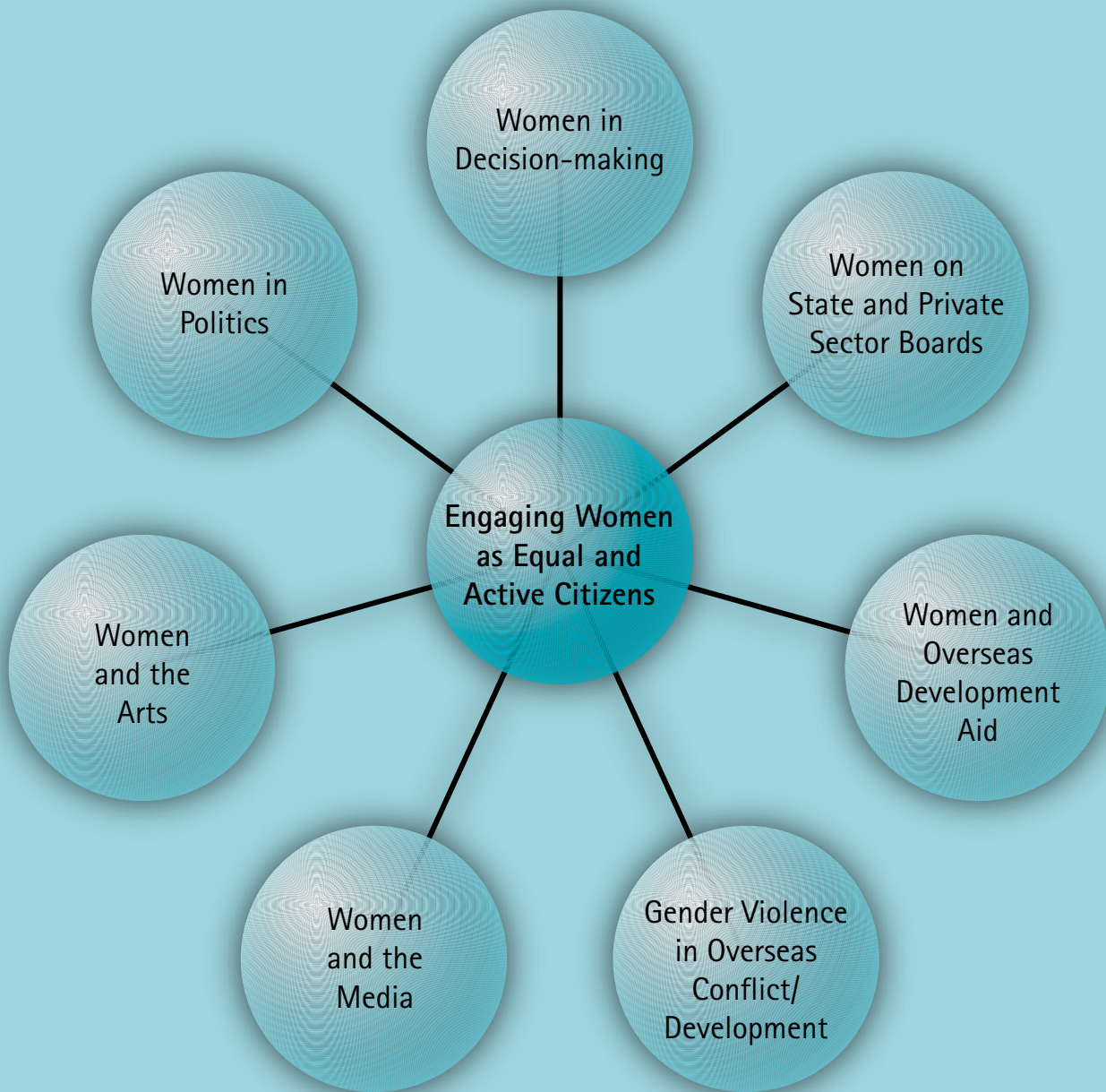
FIGURE 5: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES UNDER THE SECOND THEME

ENSURING THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN	
7.	To enhance the work/life balance for women
8-A	To improve the health status of women in Ireland through gender focused policies
8-B	To improve the physical health status of women in Ireland
8-C	To improve the reproductive and sexual health status of women in Ireland
8-D	To improve the mental health status of women in Ireland
8-E	To promote healthy lifestyles for the women in Ireland
9.	To increase the number of women participating in sport and physical activity in Ireland
10.	To ensure the health and safety of pregnant and breast feeding women at work
11.	To protect women from bullying and harassment in the workplace
12.	To combat violence against women through improved services for victims together with effective prevention and prosecution
13.	To address the issue of trafficking of women and children

THEME 3

Engaging Women as Equal and Active Citizens

FIGURE 6 KEY ELEMENTS



ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS

CHAPTER SIX

Theme Three: Engaging Women as Equal and Active Citizens

In 1992, the Second Commission for the Status of Women committed to the establishment of gender equality as a value in Irish society. It endorsed the views of Her Excellency President Mary Robinson who had noted in an address at Trinity College earlier in the year that

If the imbalances of the past came... not simply from legislative and economic inequality but from profound resistances and failures of perception, then it follows that, to right that balance, we must do more than review our legislation and restate our economic structures. We must also fundamentally re-appraise our view of who, and what, is valuable in our society. We must look with fresh and unprejudiced eyes at the work of women, the views of women, their way of organising and their interpretation of social priorities. To achieve this, we must I believe begin at the beginning and alter our way of thinking.

...At the moment equality between the sexes is seen as a women's issue. It is not. It is perceived as a threat to the traditional structures of a society. And it is not. But because of these flawed interpretations, the approach to achieving equality has been similarly flawed... Therefore the accounting of progress is recorded less through deep and generous shifts in established thinking, and more by listing laws or doing a number count of the women in public positions... The elusive balance requires a more fundamental re-evaluation of the role, the worth and the contribution of all women to their society.¹²⁹

The Second Commission on the Status of Women sought

“the permeation of society by women's values to complement men's values, the adoption of the creative methods of problem solving used by women with correspondingly less reliance on hierarchical and patriarchal methods and the evolution of a norm in society from a male only stereotype to a composite one which takes account of the entire population, both women and men”.¹³⁰

It has already been noted that, in the intervening thirteen years, the role of women in Irish economic life has changed immensely. Similarly, economic growth has brought greater affluence and has improved the wellbeing and socio-economic status of many women and their families. However, a review of the participation of women in Irish political life and in senior positions of influence in other spheres has not advanced to the same extent.

This Theme deals with the political and decision-making spheres and refers to all activities where power is enacted, including decision-making procedures within all types of

¹²⁹ As reported in the Report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women

¹³⁰ Second Commission on the Status of Women

organisations and institutions, policy-making procedures, and decision-making within political life.

The National Economic and Social Forum has pointed out that political injustice can occur when and wherever power is enacted; in the realms of decision-making, including policy-making, and in power structures generally. It may take the form of political exclusion, political marginalisation, political trivialisation or political misrepresentation. Equality of power is about eliminating relations of dominance and subordination in social life. It refers to all types of political equality, including the protection of civil and political rights and the democratisation of decision-making procedures in public institutions.¹³¹

NESF is of the view that women continue to face obstacles to political empowerment. Existing political structures are designed to suit men's culture and lifestyles and can be problematic for women. It argues that political equality is also about the democratisation of social relations in other institutions where power is exercised, including work, education, social welfare, health, the family and the administration of justice.¹³²

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

It is nearly one hundred years since women got the vote, some 35 years since the appointment of a woman to the Cabinet in modern times, and over 30 years since the removal of the marriage bar in the civil service, enabling women to continue to work after marriage. However, while a woman holds the position of President of Ireland, there are only three female Cabinet Ministers and only three women hold the post of Secretary General (administrative head of Department) or equivalent rank in Government Departments. A relatively small number of State Boards are chaired by women, while women also serve as Director/Chief Executive of fewer than a dozen State Agencies, and those Agencies which have women Directors/CEOs are most frequently associated with "caring".

TABLE 12: WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	Percentage who are women
Percentage of Cabinet Ministers who are Women	20
Percentage of Dail Deputies who are Women	14
Percentage of senior Civil Servants ¹³³ who are Women 2005	11
Percentage of Chief Executives of "top 500" companies who are Women	4

Ireland is not alone in grappling with the issue of the under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making. "Women in decision-making" is a key focus of the European Commission's Road Map for Equality between Women and Men. The Commission's Impact Assessment Document notes that

Despite considerable progress over the last few years, women are still under-represented in political and economic decision-making and in leadership positions in most EU countries. While there are major differences among countries, the Commission's

¹³¹ NESF : A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues : 2002 : p.51

¹³² op cit : p.52, 53

¹³³ Appointments as Secretary General, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary in the General Service of the Civil Service only.

*database shows that in 2005, women made up only an average of 22 per cent of senior ministers, 23 per cent of members of the lower house of parliament and 20 per cent of the upper house. Results are also poor for the private sector, where women represent just 10 per cent of the members of the highest decision-making bodies of the top 50 publicly quoted companies and only 3 per cent of the presidents of these bodies.*¹³⁴

Within the Irish judiciary, the Courts Service website shows that at the end of 2006, two of the serving eight Supreme Court judges are women, as are four of the 33 High Court judges. Ten women serve among the 33 judges of the Circuit Court, while 12 of the 55 District Court judges are women. However, this equates with only a 22 per cent representation for women across the judiciary.

Women in Politics

The percentage of women in Dáil Eireann¹³⁵ during the current period is 14 per cent or just one woman to each six men. In local Government, the 2004 Local Government elections saw an increase in female representation to 19 per cent, but this level falls far behind most other European countries. The Council of Europe recommends a minimum rate of 40 per cent representation of each sex in both central and local government.

While the number of women holding elected political office in Ireland is low, it is understood that Irish political parties have a significant proportion of female members. This level of female participation belies the suggestion that women are not interested, or do not have the time to engage politically, but the key issue which requires consideration is that few women emerge as candidates for public office. The advancement of female candidates has been addressed pro-actively in a number of other countries where a list system has been used by political parties to ensure gender balance among lists of political candidates. However, this system does not appear to be proven in its outcomes. Any changes to the electoral system would of course require a Constitutional amendment.

Positive action has an important role to play in improving the position of women in decision-making. A number of political parties availed of grants under the Equality for Women Measure of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan to review the position of women in their structures and to develop action plans to increase the number of women running for elected office. The outcomes of the next elections will show whether this positive action yields immediate outcomes or will require a longer lead-in period to build upon female representation among our local, national and international political representatives.

Representation of women at local political level is also comparatively low. The table below shows recent statistics gathered by the CSO in respect of female representation in five separate local representational fora, appointment to some of which is by election while others are by nomination/appointment.

¹³⁴ European Commission : A Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006 - 2010

¹³⁵ CSO : Women and Men in Ireland : 2005

TABLE 13: WOMEN MEMBERS OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

	No. of women Members	Women as % of total
Regional Authorities	31	13.7
Local Authorities	151	17.1
County Development Boards	252	24.0
County Enterprise Boards	129	25.6
Vocational Education Committees	210	32.4
TOTAL	773	23.4

Again it clearly shows the under-representation of women. It may of course be that the pool of women members available for selection is too small at present to facilitate a better gender balance in the case of authorities and committees which are based on agreed nomination procedures.

While some progress has been made, the public decision-making landscape in Ireland still remains very much male dominated. Although the position of women in the public service has improved over the years, they are still significantly under-represented in the top management positions. Some 67 per cent of all “general service” civil servants in 2004 were women, but only 9 per cent of positions in the top three grades (Secretary General, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary) are held by women¹³⁶. A third of those in the administrative grades (Administrative Officer to Principal) were women while 73 per cent of the executive and clerical positions were filled by women. This is all the more surprising as some thirty years have passed since the removal of the “marriage bar” which, it might have been assumed, would have offered women the opportunity to advance in greater numbers to the upper levels.

The Government decided in 2001 to address issues of gender equality within the Civil Service. It now requires Departments to set strategic objectives in their Strategy Statement for gender equality for all staff, as part of the integrated Human Resource Management policy. Departments are also required to set equality goals for promotion grades where women are under-represented.

In the Private Sector, boardrooms remain largely male dominated, as are the senior executive positions. Of the top 100 companies¹³⁷ in Ireland, it is understood that only four¹³⁸ have female chief executives at the time of writing. With the exception of one family owned retail chain among the four, these are all foreign owned companies and operate in the area of technology, which might be regarded as unexpected given the technology sector is often seen as non-traditional in relation to the employment of women. The extension of the measure of female representation at the top among the leading 500 companies leads to a slight narrowing of the female representation to 3.8 per cent among chief executives.

Small numbers of women are beginning to achieve partnership in leading accounting and legal firms, as the impact of the numbers of women pursuing third level qualifications in

¹³⁶ Derived from CSO : Men and Women in Ireland 2006 and IPA yearbook

¹³⁷ The Top 1000 Companies – Irish Times 26 May 2006

¹³⁸ Dunnes Stores, Apple Computer International, Vodafone, O2

relevant disciplines begins to feed through to the professions. Outside of these professions, only a small number of women have reached the top in the private sector.

The senior executives of trade unions also reflect this general trend towards male domination at the upper levels, even among those unions which largely represent sectors that are considered more typically female. However, the election in 2005 of 11 women - including two female vice-presidents - to the ICTU Executive Council, shows that progress can be made when a major national organisation makes a concerted effort to address deficits. ICTU operates a dedicated “Lift” programme to advance women in the trade union sector.

The Government’s target of representation by a minimum of 40 per cent of either gender on State Boards/Committees remains un-realised, although there has been some progress in recent years and the figure for female representation is now about 34 per cent.

Women’s participation in Irish life generally is significant, particularly through community and voluntary activities, and in arts, sports and cultural organisations. Women’s involvement in the community sector also extends to promoting and supporting participative democracy to voice their concerns and those of their communities. However there are persistent patterns of a lack of females in decision-making in such organisations. It may be that women who are active in political parties and in voluntary, sporting and other organisations may find it necessary to play a less prominent and less structured role which can be fitted in around their many other roles as workers, mothers and carers. It may be that women are not encouraged to seek nomination because of the preconception on the part of their male counterparts that they lack interest and/or the support mechanisms which would enable them to address all their commitments.

Women on State and Private Sector Boards

Change on many fronts is required to enable more women to reach the top decision-making positions in Irish society. Some of these changes are cultural, requiring a break from the traditional roles previously played by women who tended to operate behind the scenes rather than to the forefront of activity. This is an outcome of stereotyping and of often patriarchal attitudes towards women’s role in society. The situation raises questions about the commitment of the key actors in society: Government, Unions, Employers, Political Parties and Civil Society, to support proactively, to resource and to encourage women’s full participation in all aspects of Irish life. They also reflect and mirror the difficulties experienced by women in accessing and progressing through high level employment.

It may also reflect the lack of self belief and self confidence which is still found frequently, even among very successful women in Ireland, following years of socialisation in a tradition-laden environment. A number of educational programmes have addressed gender issues in girls’ schools since the 1980s but it was only recently that gender issues were raised in male secondary education and then only in a very limited way through the introduction of the “Exploring Masculinities” Programme on a pilot basis. This programme attracted considerable media attention and introduced a forum for boys in transition year to discuss and develop their thinking on a wide range of cultural issues in relation to gender and behaviour.

Given the complexity of the issues involved, and that many of these issues encroach on the private domain, it is likely to take a longer period than the lifetime of this Strategy to

achieve the equality in representation and participation in decision-making at the higher levels that would reflect the proportion of women in Irish society. That said, significant change is possible, and this Strategy sets out a number of measures designed to deliver on that change.

Objective 14: To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland

Indicator	Target	Action	Responsible
Percentage of women in the Dáil	Political parties should develop action plans to increase number of female candidates in General Elections	Significant increase in representation of women at all future elections for local authorities, Dail, Seanad and European Parliament	Political Parties
	Political parties should publish gender disaggregated statistics on participation and representation		Political parties
Percentage of women on State Boards/Committees	Government/Ministers will appoint members to State Boards in line with the gender targets set by Government	40 per cent of each gender on each State Board	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Nominating Bodies
	Other nominating bodies will nominate male and female representatives to State Boards to enable Government/Ministers to make selection to ensure gender balance on Boards		Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and all relevant Government Departments/ all bodies which make nominations to State Boards
	Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to State Boards	Mid 2008	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ other Government Departments
	Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of State Boards	End 2008	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ IPA/ CMOD/ other training and educational bodies
Percentage of women on boards of private sector companies	Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to the boards of private sector companies	Mid 2008	IBEC/ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of private sector boards	As appropriate	IBEC/ Employers/ Professional organisations/ Training provider
Ongoing review of Civil Service and broader public service Gender Equality Policy	Review Civil Service Gender Equality Policy	Early 2007	Department of Finance/ all Government Departments and Agencies
	Develop new Civil Service Gender Equality Strategy based on Review		
	Develop Gender Equality Strategy for the Public Service modelled on Civil Service Strategy through establishment of working group	Report by end 2008	All Government Departments and Agencies

Percentage of women in management position in levels in the Civil and Public Service	Continue to monitor target of 33.3 per cent for female Assistant Principal Officers within Civil Service	Ongoing	All Government Departments
	Set target of 27 per cent for female Principal Officers within Civil Service by Government decision and incorporate target in Departmental Strategy Statements and Annual Reports to reflect these commitments	Target to be reached in five years	

WOMEN AND THE ARTS

Cultural aspects of life in Ireland are expressed through many fields within the arts, which provide opportunities to people both to participate in and enjoy the arts as part of an audience. It also allows for the expression of the cultural identities of the diverse people who comprise Irish society today. The Arts Council is the body mainly charged with developing policy in relation to the arts in Ireland.

The Arts Council's recently published arts strategy, "Partnership for the Arts", includes goals which seek to assist artists in realising their artistic ambitions, to make it possible for people to extend and enhance their experiences of the arts and to strengthen arts organisations countrywide in order to secure the basis of a vibrant and stable arts community. The objectives and strategies below are particularly focused on increasing and enhancing women's participation in the arts, in line with the goals and actions of "Partnership for the Arts."

Objective 15: To increase the number of women involved in the arts in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Percentage of women in decision-making or management positions in the arts	Offer leadership in the area of governance, through the publication of policy and resource documents	Further resources to complement "A practical Guide for Board Members of Arts Organisations" to be developed under current Arts Council Strategy (2006 – 2010)	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon
	Establish a forum for women working in the arts which will explore common issues facing them and develop a working agenda to address these issues	By 2008, the Arts Council aims to collate information on all the arts organisations it funds. From data collected, the Arts Council will set targets for 2009 onwards	
To promote awareness of equality in the arts	Publish guidelines on equality specific to the arts	2008	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon
	Offer leadership in the area of governance, through the publication of policy and resource documents	At least 25% of arts organisations funded will have participated in focused discussions with the Arts Council concerning governance by 2009	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon
	Provide advice and leadership in the area of equality and the arts		

Percentage of women audience at arts events (including theatre, music, opera, readings, exhibitions, festivals, etc)	Arts Council will undertake comprehensive survey including people's experiences of the arts in 2006 and 2007	Establish targets based on survey findings	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon
Percentage of women participating in the arts (as practitioners, facilitators)	Arts Council survey will include measurement of women's active participation in the arts	Establish targets based on survey findings	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon
	Collect data regarding the number of women currently studying to become arts practitioners or facilitators		The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon/ Department of Education and Science/ Third level institutions
	Provide advice to women who participate, or would like to participate, in the arts		The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon/ Third level institutions
Percentage of women who use facilities (including arts centres, galleries, theatres, etc)	Examine the current physical infrastructure for the arts and ascertain the level of usage by women	By 2008, the Arts Council will collate information on all arts organisations it funds and will examine possible targets for 2009 onwards	The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon/ Arts organisations/ Arts institutions/ Local authorities/ The Equality Authority

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

The importance of achieving gender balance and the elimination of gender stereotyping are particularly important for the media, be it in print, through broadcast or through advertising. The issue of "Women and the Media" was accorded status as one of the critical areas of concern under the UN Beijing Platform for Action¹³⁹ which noted that

The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications – electronic, print, visual and audio – must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforced women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The world-wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately.¹⁴⁰

Subsequently, two annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) addressed "women and the media" as one of the two key themes for consideration at its annual meeting. In 1996, CSW endorsed the text from the Beijing Platform and noted that civil society had an important role in exercising its influence on media content and stereotyped portrayal through consumer action and advocacy. It argued in favour of media networks which would make or strengthen their commitment to gender equality and called on public media to set an example by their commitment and contribution to the advancement of women.

¹³⁹ UN : Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*

In 2003, CSW again focused on women, the media and information technology. The Commission concluded, inter alia, that governments, civil society, including the private sector and other stakeholders should take effective measures to combat the growing sexualisation and use of pornography in media content; should encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities; and should combat ICT- and media-based violence against women, including criminal misuse of ICT for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and trafficking in women and girls.

The Commission recommended the development and use of ICT as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including those affected by violence and abuse and other forms of sexual exploitation.

The Government has introduced legislation in the form of the Broadcasting Act 2001 to regulate the broadcasting media in Ireland, in particular, the public service broadcaster, RTÉ. This Act complements the Broadcasting Authority Act 1993 in that there is a statutory requirement for gender balance on the RTE Authority, the board of TG4 as well as on the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

Under the Equality for Women Measure, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform funded a project within RTÉ, the national broadcaster, which conducted a gender equality audit of management positions in the company and also compiled an electronic database of specialised female contributors available to participate in programmes.

Since Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth reports under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Government has introduced the Public Service Broadcasting Charter¹⁴¹, published in June 2004. The Public Service Broadcasting Charter sets out the obligations of RTÉ to its audience under the relevant legislation¹⁴². In relation to gender, the guiding principles of the Charter stipulate that

no editorial or programming bias shall be shown in terms of gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religion or membership of a minority community.

and that

in its programming and editorial content, RTÉ shall strive to resist gender stereotyping.

There is a need for the development of increased awareness of gender issues and the avoidance of gender stereotyping among journalists in both the print and broadcast media and among presenters in the broadcast media. This might be achieved by a positive action measure to make awareness training available to these professionals. Such a positive action measure might also be made available to the advertising profession.

¹⁴¹ Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources : June 2004

¹⁴² Broadcasting Act, 2001

Objective 16: To use media proactively to support gender equality and the advancement of women

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Ensure that the portrayal of women in the media is not stereotyped	Develop voluntary regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women in the media	Ongoing	Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources/ Equality Authority/media entities
	Establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct concerning women in the media	For discussion	Media entities/ Advertising Standards Authority/ Broadcasting Commission of Ireland
	Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the impact of gender stereotyping on the role of women within society	2008	Media entities/ media professionals
Use the media to promote positive messages to foster true gender equality	Promote women's participation in the media at all levels	Ongoing	Media entities
	Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the contribution they can make to the achievement of true gender equality through their portrayal of women	2008	Media entities/ media professionals
Awareness raising of the issues of stereotyping and the promotion of gender equality	Make support available for the development of awareness raising on the issue of gender stereotyping and the positive portrayal of women	2007	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Media entities/ Media professionals
Ensure that women's needs are addressed in a constructive manner in the media	Increase the number of media programmes made for and by women	For discussion	Public sector broadcasting

WOMEN - THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The important contribution which the promotion of gender equality can make to international development is evidenced by the active engagement of the United Nations in fostering the advancement of women in all countries in the developed and in the developing world. The Council of Europe also fosters gender equality as an important instrument for the achievement of human rights within its programme of work which is underpinned by the European Charter on Human Rights.

Ireland has long been a prominent member of both the Council of Europe and the United Nations while it has also had a long history of engagement in overseas development aid to support less developed countries. The European Union also has a strong focus on the use of gender equality as an important element of its foreign and development policies and has included commitments to gender equality in many of its agreements with less developed countries.

Gender and Ireland's Overseas Development Aid Programme

Initially in 1986, Ireland's development co-operation programme adopted a "Women in Development Policy". Since 1985 gender has become a cross-cutting priority for Ireland's development policies and strategies. In 2002, Development Co-operation Ireland (now Irish Aid) published a Gender Equality Policy which has three key objectives:

- To advance equal rights for men and women;
- To eliminate gender inequalities in access to, control of, and benefit from services; and
- To support women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision-making.

The recently published "White Paper on Irish Aid"¹⁴³ reaffirms the commitment to the promotion of gender equality noting that

Addressing gender inequality is about implementing the fundamental human right to equality. It is also essential to effective poverty reduction.

During the past two decades, there has been some progress in gender equality with more women in politics and the public sphere and better access to education and employment. Women have become more vocal, more organised and more aware of their human rights.

However, gender inequality remains a central development challenge. Women bear an intolerable burden of care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Women are suffering an increased number of incidents of violence and rape. The terms of their employment are often exploitative and the conditions dangerous. Women account for two thirds of the world's poor in developing countries, rural women are responsible for 60 – 80 per cent of food production; but have limited control over land and other necessary assets.¹⁴⁴

Irish Aid seeks to assist in the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were agreed at a United Nations Summit meeting and which require the international community to achieve the following goals by 2015:

1. *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;*
2. *Achieve universal primary education;*
3. *Promote gender equality and empower women;*
4. *Reduce child mortality;*
5. *Improve maternal health;*
6. *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease;*
7. *Ensure environmental sustainability;*
8. *Develop a global partnership for development.*

While MDG 3 may appear to be the most relevant to this Strategy, all of the Goals directly impact upon the lives of women and their families. In the developing world, as in Ireland,

¹⁴³ Government of Ireland : White Paper on Irish Aid : 2006

¹⁴⁴ ib. id. : p.62

women are at greater risk of poverty and are therefore less likely to avail of education and appropriate health care to develop and support themselves and their children. Accordingly, the new White Paper on Irish Aid includes a number of measures and commitments which specifically address the needs of women in Ireland's partner countries.

Objective 17 - A: To foster the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals through Irish Aid

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
A reduction in the numbers of women living in poverty and greater women's empowerment in developing countries	Mainstream gender considerations in all development co-operation activities	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Aid partners
	Undertake specific actions to improve the position and status of women	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Aid partners/ programme country governments ¹⁴⁵
	Increase funding to women's organisations to ensure that women's needs and interests remain on the development and human rights agenda	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Aid partners/ programme country governments
	Promote economic empowerment of women, create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, ensure greater access to quality education for both boys and girls and support community-based health programmes that enable women's access to reproductive and other health services	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Aid partners/ programme country governments
	Work against gender based violence with national and international partners (See also Objective 17 - C)	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Aid partners/ programme country governments/ Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence
	Support legislative changes that increase women's right to property and other resources	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments
	Encourage investment in infrastructure that reduces women's unpaid work burden and thereby enables greater access for women to economic opportunity and decision-making	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments

¹⁴⁵ Irish Aid works in seven programme countries - Lesotho, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Timor-Leste

Promote education for all with an emphasis on girls	Continue investment in primary education with emphasis on girls' education and eliminate gender disparity in primary education	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments
Reduce women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS especially in sub Saharan Africa	Ensure that HIV remains on the agenda through development of new gender specific HIV/AIDS policy and strategy based on 2005 evaluation	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments
	Ensure that gender specific HIV/AIDS programming is resourced and improve gender specific HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments
	Advocate for further investment in microbicides internationally and maintain or increase current annual investment in the development of microbicides at €3 million	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs, International Partnership for Microbicides and other multilateral and bilateral partners

Multi-Lateral Partnership to Support Women

Ireland's engagement with the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of gender equality and the advancement of women extends beyond the status of women of Ireland. All three multi-lateral organisations are actively engaged in the promotion of gender equality for women everywhere, with both a human rights and an economic focus.

In the field of development, Ireland has long been a contributor to the key UN funds which impact upon development, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In its recent White Paper, the Government has committed itself to continue to work with these Funds, adopting a more robust role, including engagement in the definition of policy objectives for the funds and the evaluation and audit of programmes.

The European Union and its Member States together form the largest donor of aid to the developing world and is also the key trading partner with the developing world. This status places a burden upon the European Union to engage in a responsible and responsive manner as a key stakeholder which can foster growth and development in a part of the world which experiences less advantageous climatic conditions and where life for the majority is a struggle to overcome poverty and disease. The European Commission promotes a strong focus on gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality in the management and delivery of projects under the European Development Fund to which Ireland is a significant contributor.

In relation to the European Development Fund, the White Paper also commits to an increased engagement by Ireland in influencing policy making, particularly by working with like minded EU Member States in order to

- Seek to ensure that a greater proportion of EU assistance goes to the least developed countries;
- Encourage other EU donors to move to 100 per cent untied aid;
- Seek to strengthen coherence at EU level, in order that policies in all relevant areas reinforce the Union's development objectives.¹⁴⁶

Objective 17 - B: To use multi-lateral aid and development policy to promote the role of women and gender equality in developing countries

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Stronger provisions on gender equality incorporated into existing or future European Union – third country trade agreements.	Promote gender equality proposals in European Union external relations fora	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
	Ensure that input into trade agreements takes into consideration the differential impact of trade policy on women and men	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
	Promote the provision of untied aid by other Member States	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Other Member States
Achievement of Millennium Development Goals	Promote actions in multi-lateral development aid which foster the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those which impact upon women	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ UN/ EU/ Aid partners
Increase gender mainstreaming in developing countries	Strengthen analytical capacity at Partner Government level to mainstream gender effectively across government policy and programmes	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs in partnership with programme country governments

Reference has already been made in the Strategy to the Millennium Development Goals and the areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. Ireland's foreign policy and overseas development aid is specifically supporting the achievement of these goals and targets through interventions and interactions at multi-lateral level and in bi-lateral agreements with donor countries. This work is proceeding through a wide range of initiatives.

¹⁴⁶ Government of Ireland op. cit. : p.81

Gender Based Violence in Conflict, Post-Conflict and Development

The recent White Paper on Irish Aid notes that

*Promoting gender equality is about helping women to realise their human rights. These rights are set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. There is no valid exemption from the basic principles enshrined in those instruments through special provisions based on national, cultural or religious considerations.*¹⁴⁷

The White Paper specifically identifies the prevention of gender based violence and the development of responses to it as a priority. In 2005, Irish Aid, the Defence Forces and Irish human rights, humanitarian and development agencies formed a consortium to work towards addressing the issue of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in conflict, post-conflict and other developing-country environments. The Joint Consortium commissioned research on the extent to which responses to GBV have been institutionalised by agencies and to look at international good practice. In December 2005, the Consortium launched the study report including steps to be followed by agencies to respond effectively and systematically to GBV. This was followed by the production of a guidance note on how to institutionalise GBV responses in 2006.

Within this context the Government is committed to highlighting the issue of this violence and to work towards a more systematic response internationally.

Objective 17 – C: To enhance the capacity of Irish Aid and Development Partners to respond effectively to Gender Based Violence in conflict, post-conflict and developing environments

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Protection of women from intimate partner violence and other forms of gender based violence	Support policies and operational programmes of EU, UN and Council of Europe on Gender Based Violence	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ EU/ UN/ Council of Europe/ development partners
	Support the ongoing activity of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/ Irish Human Rights and Development NGOs/ development partners
	Continue to advocate internationally for greater attention and resources to be devoted to the prevention of gender-based violence	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs/multi-lateral organisations/ development partners

¹⁴⁷ op. cit p.61

Integration of gender perspectives into implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security – in all phases of conflict: prevention, resolution and post-conflict peace-building.	Pursue the inclusion of gender-related measures in the mandates of peacekeeping operations; provision of resources for gender advisers / units in peacekeeping operations; and awareness and enforcement of codes of conduct for peacekeepers	2007	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN
	Work to ensure that women are involved at every stage of peace negotiations in the planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN
	Press for an increased number of women sent by troop-contributing countries to UN peace missions, and for women to hold 50% of the UNSG Special Representative and Special Envoy positions	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN
	Pursue the inclusion of gender-based violence in the statutes of any future ad hoc international tribunals established by the Security Council	2015	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN
	Support the exclusion of impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, including gender-based crimes, from post-conflict amnesty provisions	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN

Finally the Department of Foreign Affairs is actively committed to the promotion of human rights for women through all its work in partnership with the United Nations.

Objective 17 – D: To ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all parts of the United Nations System

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Integration of the Human Rights of Women throughout the UN system, improvement of the Status of Women in the UN system, implementation of the UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2005/42, and achievement of the goal of 50/50 gender distribution throughout the UN system	Support the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Ongoing	Department of Foreign Affairs working in partnership with the Institutions of the UN

FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES UNDER THE THIRD THEME

ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS	
14.	To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland
15.	To increase the number of women involved in the arts in Ireland
16.	To use media proactively to support gender equality and the advancement of women
17-A	To foster the advancement of UN Millennium Development Goals through Irish Aid
17-B	To use multi-lateral aid and development policy to promote the role of women and gender equality in developing countries
17-C	To enhance the capacity of Irish Aid and Development Partners to respond effectively to Gender Based Violence in conflict, post-conflict and developing environments
17-D	To ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all parts of the United Nations System

ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY

FIGURE 8 KEY ELEMENTS



IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implementing The National Women's Strategy

EMBEDDING THE STRATEGY IN GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES

This National Women's Strategy draws together aspirations for the women of Ireland which impact upon and require support across all policy sectors: social; economic; cultural and administrative. Its implementation will require commitment from many different Ministers and many strands of society, from the broader social partners and interest groups and also from the women of Ireland.

The outcomes to be achieved through the implementation of the Strategy will benefit the entire population and will enable Ireland to shine internationally as a country which has specifically addressed the needs of women and, in so doing, has achieved greater social and economic prosperity, greater social cohesion and has enhanced the wellbeing of its female population. However the benefits are not confined to the female population but will also affect women as mothers, as partners, as co-workers, as members of our society and will therefore benefit everyone, male and female, young and old.

The achievement of the aims of the Strategy requires a renewed political, financial and administrative commitment to underpin existing initiatives and to support the new proposed initiatives, which will help to enhance the diverse roles of women within our country. It requires an increased awareness of gender mainstreaming within public policy formation. It also requires a change in societal attitude among both men and women so that women can achieve their full potential within a refocused Irish society that embraces the fundamental principle of equality between women and men.

This attitudinal change must be accompanied, of necessity, by a new self-belief among women in Ireland and preparedness to recognise and seize opportunities to advance their individual contributions to Irish society at all levels while also enjoying a greater level of personal wellbeing thanks to the implementation of the aspirations of this new Strategy.

Institutional Support

The main point of responsibility for policy on gender equality in Ireland is the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Department has responsibility for the development of equality legislation and policy, with a specific Division within the Department dedicated to work on gender equality¹⁴⁸.

The Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal, which are statutorily independent, have been established in accordance with legislation promulgated by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and are funded through the Department.

The Equality Authority is responsible for combating discrimination and promoting equality across the nine grounds¹⁴⁹ covered by the Equality legislation. The Equality Tribunal is the forum for redress for unlawful discrimination and its decisions are legally binding.

¹⁴⁸ Gender Equality Division (including Violence against Women)

¹⁴⁹ Gender, Marital Status, Family Status, Disability, Age, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Membership of the Traveller Community

Gender Mainstreaming

Within the institutions and Member States of the European Union, Gender Mainstreaming has been adopted as the main strategic instrument to achieve gender equality. The United Nations too has been a key actor in developing and promoting the mainstreaming approach. Gender Mainstreaming has been defined by the European Commission as

*not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women*¹⁵⁰.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has explained “gender mainstreaming” succinctly in its policy document on gender equality and Irish overseas aid. The Department identifies the following important steps which are required in good policy making with a gender mainstreaming focus:

TABLE 14 PRINCIPLES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING¹⁵¹

1.	Understanding the policy environment – what is the legislative and institutional framework?
2.	Consulting men and women, boys and girls: special care must be taken to ensure that women's and girls' needs are articulated
3.	Assessing gender differences and inequalities in roles, responsibilities, needs, constraints and access to opportunities and resources
4.	Disaggregating data by sex
5.	Setting explicit gender equality objectives
6.	Developing gender equality indicators to measure progress
7.	Supporting gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems
8.	Drawing together good practice and lessons learned
9.	Building alliances with likeminded partners and encouraging co-ordination
10.	Promoting positive images of women and men and avoiding stereotypes
11.	Using gender sensitive language in all communications

Given that it is a relatively new development, it is not surprising that gender mainstreaming is still not widely understood in relation to public policy development in Ireland. This is not to disregard a number of developments that provide a solid basis on which to develop gender mainstreaming on a firm footing into the future. Rather it is to create awareness that all public policy measures have a gender impact and therefore all public policy makers should be trained to consider the gender outcomes of their proposals automatically, in accordance with good practice on gender mainstreaming. Indeed, Ireland has embraced gender mainstreaming as a key element in our gender equality policy. Article 2 of the Amsterdam Treaty commits the European Community to having as its task the promotion of “equality between men and women”, while Article 3 outlines the activities of the Community and states that

“In all the activities referred to in this Article, the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women”.

¹⁵⁰ European Commission

¹⁵¹ Department of Foreign Affairs

Gender Mainstreaming became more prominent in Ireland in 1999, when the Government decided that most Measures under the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 would be gender mainstreamed. This decision went far beyond the minimum requirement laid down by the European Union which required only that the EU co-funded employment and training measures be gender mainstreamed. It indicated a new commitment on the part of Government to adopt the approach across a significant proportion of State activity.

This decision was underpinned by the establishment of the NDP Gender Equality Unit within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and of the Education Equality Unit within the Department of Education and Science. Both Units are currently co-funded by the European Social Fund. Apart from their guidance work with Measure Leaders and Managing Authorities, the two Units have also produced major bodies of research which will inform discussion and policy formulation into the future.

From those beginnings, gender mainstreaming has become central to the formulation of a number of key policy documents, such as the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion), the National Reform Programme and Ireland's Development Aid Programme. However, while the process has started, it is less certain that it is yet sufficiently well established or so widely implemented that gender mainstreaming could yet be regarded as a confirmed part of the policy-making process.

Progress has been made by the dedicated Gender Equality Units, (a) located in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform which specialised in gender mainstreaming in the National Development Plan and the Community Support Framework for Ireland in the period 2000 to 2006; (b) located in the Department of Education and Science (see page 42); and (c) the Department of Finance Unit which ensures that the Civil Service as an employer has a clear focus on equality issues.

The challenge now is to develop an operational structure in all Departments that will ensure that all policies being developed are gender mainstreamed. This is essential for the achievement of the goals of this National Women's Strategy. Individual Departments are committed to the further development of their expertise on gender mainstreaming while the Gender Equality Division within Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, together with the small expert team in its Gender Equality Unit, will play a central role in encouraging the ongoing development of policies on gender equality and gender mainstreaming; monitoring progress towards real gender equality; identifying, and replicating as appropriate, good practice in other jurisdictions; providing guidance to other Departments and Agencies; and fostering gender awareness and full gender mainstreaming in other Government Departments.

Such an approach is that favoured and recommended by the European Commission and endorsed in the Gender Equality Pact adopted at the EU Council in Spring 2006. It is expected that this approach would be a major contributor to the achievement of "true gender equality". Although this National Women's Strategy is focused on equality for women, gender mainstreaming serves to ensure that the differing impacts on men and on women of each policy instrument is considered at all stages of its development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is therefore a powerful tool with the capacity to identify and address all gender inequalities.

In addition, the application of gender mainstreaming to equality proofing mechanisms can identify and address the impact of policies on particularly disadvantaged groups. Similarly, employment equality reviews and equal status reviews, undertaken by the Equality Authority have an important role to play in promoting gender mainstreaming in organisational systems and practices.

Incorporating a Gender Perspective into Departmental Strategy Statements

While all Memoranda to Government are required to make mention of their possible impact on a range of principles including gender equality and social inclusion, the analysis presented is frequently brief. In this regard, the public service reform programme – the Strategic Management Initiative, and its constituent parts – has a particularly important role to play in the success of this National Women's Strategy in the public sector. To ensure that a strategic approach is taken to the mainstreaming of gender equality in the future, consideration might be given to the identification within each Departmental Strategy Statement and Business Plan of policy areas within a Department's competence which contribute to the attainment of "true" gender equality.

The Department of the Taoiseach's Guidelines on the preparation of Departmental Strategy Statements¹⁵² recommend that consistency be shown between Strategy Statements and a number of cross-Departmental policies and initiatives. It is recommended that this National Women's Strategy be added to the list to be considered in the preparation of future Strategy Statements.

As mentioned previously, the Civil Service Gender Equality Policy also requires individual Departments to set strategic objectives and equality goals for increasing women's representation, particularly at the higher management levels. Departments are required by Government decision to include such targets in their Strategy Statements. The Department of Finance points out¹⁵³ that

The inclusion of strategic objectives and equality goals in each Department's Strategy Statement is a key element of the achievement of gender equality in the Civil Service.

Gender Budgeting

Some 22 years ago, Australia adopted the new concept of gender budgeting, which has since been introduced in a number of countries, many of which are British Commonwealth countries.¹⁵⁴ Interest in the concept has also grown in Europe with work undertaken under the auspices of both the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Council of Europe. Gender budgeting has been defined by a group of Council of Europe Experts as

*an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.*¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Department of the Taoiseach : October 2004

¹⁵³ Department of Finance : Circular 42/2001 : September 2001

¹⁵⁴ Association of Budgeting and Financial Management : New York : 2002

¹⁵⁵ Council of Europe Expert Group : quoted in Opinion of EU Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

As interest in this form of gender mainstreaming grows, it would be important that the Department of Finance consider evidence of the usefulness of the tool in formulating the Estimates for Public Expenditure and the Annual Budget. However international evidence shows that for gender budgeting to work the availability of series of gender disaggregated data and of specialist staff are essential and therefore its implementation requires careful consideration and planning.

Objective 18: To implement gender mainstreaming as the principal instrument for the achievement of gender equality in Ireland

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Gender mainstreaming embedded in the key structures and process of all Government Departments (and Agencies)	Re-establish NDP Gender Equality Unit as Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit by end 2007	In place at end 2007	Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Establish formal Gender Mainstreaming Supports in Government Departments by end 2008	End 2008	Government Departments
	Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit to provide training and support to other Departments	2007/2008	All Departments/ Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit
	Departmental Strategy Statements to include linkages with the National Women's Strategy as a cross-Departmental Initiative	With effect from 2007	All Departments and Offices/ Central Gender Mainstreaming Unit
	Prepare and circulate detailed guidance to all Government Departments in relation to the provision in the Cabinet Procedures that Memoranda for Government require an assessment of gender impacts	As soon as possible	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Equality Authority
	Training on gender mainstreaming to be included as an intrinsic part of training programmes	As soon as possible	All Departments/ CMOD/ IPA/ other training services
	Consider evidence for the introduction of gender budgeting with a view to its introduction if the case in its favour proves positive	Ongoing	Department of Finance

FUNDING THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY AND POSITIVE ACTIONS TO FOSTER GENDER EQUALITY

The National Development Plan 2007–2013 has made available a package of €148 million to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to:

- Deliver further initiatives under the Equality for Women Measure, pioneered in the previous NDP (€68 million);

- Implement the National Women's Strategy 2007–2016 (€58.64 million); and to
- Support the Department's work to address Violence against Women (€21 million)¹⁵⁶.

The National Development Plan 2007–2013 also makes provision to a wide range of other Government Departments to undertake actions which link with this Strategy. These include actions in relation to education, training, social inclusion. The Gender Equality Measures in the National Development Plan are also expected to benefit from European Social Funds, as gender equality links closely with the aims of European Social Policy.

The achievement of the key aims of this National Women's Strategy – the economic advancement of women; the enhancement of their wellbeing; and their increased engagement in civil society – requires the collaboration of all Government Departments, many State Agencies, the social partners, employers, employees and women and men in Ireland. This Strategy contains seventeen key objectives and a further eleven sub-objectives relating to the three central themes of socio-economic inclusion; wellbeing and engagement. It also contains a further three objectives in relation to its implementation. Some of these objectives are already being addressed, at least in part, in the context of overarching public policy initiatives such as the advancement of social inclusion; the health services; etc. Others will require new initiatives to enable women to achieve their full potential in the economy, in their personal lives and/or in civil society.

As was pointed out previously, the implementation of this Strategy does not fall to any single Department or Agency but necessitates a creative approach to make funding available to those stakeholders who can contribute to the achievement of its aims through the delivery of positive actions. This dedicated funding stream for the National Women's Strategy complements both existing Exchequer supports and new interventions proposed under the various streams of the new NDP, including in particular interventions in the productive sector and human resources development which may help to advance the role of women in economic activity.

Funding from the National Development Plan 2007–2013 may also be made available to the social partners; to community based groups; and to other suitable bodies who wish to undertake high quality, cost effective initiatives which aim to promote the advancement of women in accordance with the aims of this National Women's Strategy.

Given the importance of fostering and achieving true gender equality, awareness raising, both of the National Women's Strategy and of the key factors which impact upon gender equality, is an essential element in the implementation of this Strategy.

Thus the National Development Plan 2007–2013 will support a range of positive actions to be undertaken by Government Departments, State Agencies, the social partners, community groups and public and private enterprises which would advance the role of women in the economy, in society and in decision-making. These initiatives also underpin the economic

¹⁵⁶ The main activities to be funded under the National Development Plan are Perpetrator Programmes and Awareness Raising Initiatives. Key funding for the provision of front-line services to support victims of Violence against Women is channelled through the Health Service Executive.

goals of the European Union which emphasise gender equality as a mechanism for sustained economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion.

Positive Actions through the Equality for Women Measure

While legislation and gender mainstreaming are the mainstays of policy to achieve true gender equality, these mechanisms must still be complemented with well targeted positive action measures to address deficits which still exist despite the presence of a corpus of legislation. Positive action measures have a particular importance in redressing imbalances between women and men in key sectors or areas.

To this end, the Equality for Women Measure was developed under the National Development Plan 2000–2006. The Measure, which was allocated €38 million, including €6.8 million from the EU Structural Funds, has supported a wide range of projects aimed at improving the economic, social, cultural and political lives of women. The Measure has provided training to over 7,100 women and significant numbers have progressed into employment, or further education/training. The second Phase of the Measure has had a particular focus on women living in disadvantaged urban and rural areas. The Measure also supported projects which fostered entrepreneurship and women's participation in leadership and politics.

While much has been achieved under the Equality for Women Measure, there is still a need for a further programme of positive actions at the level of the community, in addition to actions by Government Departments, State Agencies and the social partners, including trade unions, employer organisations, individual employers and interest groups. Such positive actions are permitted under the Employment Equality Act to contribute to full equality in practice between women and men and under the Equal Status Act to promote equality for women who are disadvantaged or to cater for the special needs of women.

These positive actions should be distinguished from State support for those organisations that provide support to women in their own right. This support which is indispensable to the sector should be coherent and coordinated to avoid duplication and overlap.

Objective 19: To provide financial support to implement the National Women's Strategy

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Focused coherent funding of activity supportive of the implementation of the Strategy	Build upon the initiatives promoting gender equality and the advancement of women which were funded under National Development Plan 2000 – 2006	New initiatives which will contribute to the aims of this Strategy and to EU gender equality goals	Department of Finance, Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ social partners, etc.
	Create a new fund which will be available to undertake positive actions aimed at fostering better gender equality and the achievement of the objectives of this Strategy	A range of new initiatives which become suitable for mainstreaming	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ other Departments, Agencies etc.
Awareness of the National Women's Strategy and of true gender equality	Undertake awareness raising programmes to foster understanding of gender equality	An annual awareness raising programme	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform/ Equality Authority

INSTITUTIONAL ROLES

Role of the Equality Authority

The Equality Authority was established in 1999 under the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and its powers and functions were expanded under subsequent legislation. The legislation establishes general functions for the Authority including

- work towards the elimination of discrimination under the nine specified grounds, which include gender;
- the promotion of equality of opportunity in relation to these grounds;
- the promotion of public awareness of a range of legislation, some of which have a gender impact;
- the making of recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to equality and its body of legislation.

The Authority also has a range of explicit powers which enable it to implement some of these functions in an Irish context while EU legislation also calls upon national bodies equivalent to the Equality Authority to engage with the European Commission in some of the Commission's work in the area of gender.

Given its functions and expertise, the Equality Authority can play a role in assisting with the implementation of this Strategy through ongoing collaboration with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and with the broader implementation mechanisms envisaged in the Strategy. It may be appropriate to introduce closer co-ordination of the work programmes of the Department and the Authority in the area of gender through the agreement of actions which would be of mutual interest.

Role of the National Women's Council of Ireland

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) is an umbrella organisation for women and women's groups in Ireland, and represents some 165 women's groups. The organisation has been in place since 1973 and the organisations it now represents have a membership of some 300,000 women. The role of the NWCI¹⁵⁷ is to work with its members to determine its core priorities and to undertake a broad range of activities at local, national and international levels. This work includes:

- Representing women's issues on a broad range of statutory and non-statutory bodies;
- Commissioning research on key policy areas;
- Developing policy submissions to Government and Agencies on issues relating to gender equality
- Undertaking outreach and development projects;
- Undertaking communications work, through networking, the media and information dissemination to affiliates and the general public.

The National Women's Council of Ireland currently receives significant grant funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to enable it to undertake its activities. The Council is well positioned to contribute to the task of implementing the

¹⁵⁷ Source : National Women's Council of Ireland

National Women's Strategy by identifying the needs of its member organisations and their members; by commenting on the implementation of the Strategy and by identifying changing circumstances which may require the Government to refocus the Strategy into new areas of action.

International Collaboration

The achievement of true gender equality is still a task on hand in all of our European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations partners. The exchange of good practice is essential and this is facilitated through ongoing dialogue with other States in a number of different fora. The European Union provides funding for trans-national projects which also enable countries to work together and share experiences.

It is intended that further collaboration would be fostered during the lifetime of this Strategy in each of these fora and through bi-lateral contacts with our closest neighbours - Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

MONITORING PROGRESS ON THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY

The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform was tasked by Government with the co-ordination of the Inter-Departmental Committee which has prepared this National Women's Strategy. The complexity of the Strategy has already been noted. Therefore its achievement will be equally complex.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will have responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the National Women's Strategy. Public awareness will be stimulated through the publication of periodical reports.

Progress in relation to the social inclusion elements of this Strategy will also be reflected in the annual Social Inclusion Report prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion under the terms of *Towards 2016*. To facilitate co-ordination and the exchange of information, the Inter-Departmental Committee, which was responsible for the drafting of this report, will continue to meet regularly to review progress on the key objectives.

To support this process, a National Women's Strategy Co-ordinating Committee will meet periodically to afford the opportunity to bring together a broad membership, including

- representatives of each Government Department (at Principal Officer level);
- representatives of equivalent grade from relevant State Agencies, including the Health Services Executive;
- representatives of the social partners;
- one representative of the National Women's Council of Ireland and two elected representatives (with designated alternates) of its constituent women's interest groups; and
- a representative of the Equality Authority

to discuss matters relating to the implementation of the Strategy and to women in Ireland. This Co-ordinating Committee may also commission additional research to underpin its work, should it deem this necessary.

Both the Inter-Departmental Committee and the Co-ordinating Committee will be chaired and serviced by officials from the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Any Strategy covering a ten year period requires interim review to take account of changing circumstances and to ensure that the Strategy retains its relevance. To this end, this Strategy will be subject to an interim review every three years and to any additional review as directed by the Government or by agreement among the social partners.

Finally, monitoring of the implementation of this Strategy implies the availability of good quality gender disaggregated data. Where these are not already available, the Strategy requires Departments and Agencies to include this as part of the development of their data strategies. At a minimum, systems must be put in place to provide the data needed to support the indicators and targets listed in the Strategy.

Objective 20: To ensure that the National Women's Strategy is fully implemented

Indicator	Action	Target	Responsible
Effective implementation of Strategy	Prepare periodic reports on progress on implementation of National Women's Strategy	As requested	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Continue to convene Inter-Departmental Committee and establish wide reaching Co-ordinating Committee to review implementation of the Strategy and discuss issues of interest to women in Ireland	First meetings to take place before end June 2007 and half yearly thereafter	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Publish periodic reports on implementation of Strategy on Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform website and otherwise	As appropriate	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Social Partnership agreements to include a commitment to implement the Strategy and to include monitoring of implementation of Strategy as part of monitoring of agreement	As appropriate ¹⁵⁸	Government and Social Partners
	Departmental Data Strategies to reflect the need to gather gender disaggregated data generally, and in particular, to ensure that the data needed to support the implementation of this Strategy is available	2009	Central Statistics Office/ all Departments and Agencies

¹⁵⁸ Depending on the existence of future agreements

Strategy reflects changes in environment, including progress in implementation	Undertake Interim Review of Strategy every three years	2010 and again in 2013	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform / all Government Departments/ Social Partners
	Organise seminars to review implementation of Strategy involving interested parties, including NGOs	First to be held in Autumn 2008 and every two years thereafter	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
	Monitor progress on addressing inequalities and advise on how to address any barriers encountered	On-going	Equality Authority

FIGURE 9: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY	
18.	To implement gender mainstreaming as the principal instrument for the achievement of gender equality in Ireland
19.	To provide financial support to implement the National Women's Strategy
20.	To ensure that the National Women's Strategy is fully implemented

APPENDIX 1

Terms of Reference for Inter-Departmental Committee Appointed to Oversee the Development of National Women's Strategy

The Committee was tasked to:

1. take responsibility for drafting and finalising a National Women's Strategy, as committed to in Sustaining Progress
2. consult with the Social Partners and the National Women's Council of Ireland, through the Consultation Group, in developing the Strategy
3. advise in relation to a communication plan for the publication and launch of the Strategy.

APPENDIX 2

Membership of the Inter-Departmental Committee

Chairperson: Mr. Bob Browne, Assistant Secretary,
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

DEPARTMENT	NAME (Principal Officer)	SUCCESSOR(S)	ALTERNATES(S)
Gender Equality Div, Justice, Equality & Law Reform	Mr John O'Callaghan (to Sept 05)	Ms Pauline Moreau (from Sept 2005)	
Agriculture & Food	Mr Aidan Murray	Mr Andy Irving	
Arts, Sport & Tourism	Ms Susan McGrath		Ms Teresa Doolan
Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs	Mr Colm Treanor	Ms Mary Hurley	Ms Siobhan Stack
Communications Marine & Natural Resources	Ms Noreen O'Mahony	Ms Ciara Bates	Ms Anne Monaghan
Defence	Mr Conor Kerlin		
Education and Science	Mr John Quinlan	Mr. Seamus McLoughlin	Ms Maureen Bohan
Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mr Padraig Cullinane		Ms Marie Dempsey
Environment, Heritage & Local Government	Mr Peter Greene	Mr Brendan Pocock	
Finance	Ms Marie McLaughlin		
Foreign Affairs	Ms Anne Barrington	Mr Charles Sheehan	Ms Siobhan Egan
Health and Children	Mr Chris Fitzgerald	Mr Brian Mullen	Ms Paula Mullin Mr Joe Doyle
Women's Health Council	Ms Geraldine Luddy		
Childcare Directorate (Office of Minister for Children since 01/2006)	Ms Pauline Moreau	Ms Moira O'Mara	Mr Darragh Doherty
Social & Family Affairs	Ms Helen Faughnan		Ms Marian Hand
Taoiseach	Mr John Shaw		Mr Colin Menton, Mr Andrew Nugent
Transport	Ms Gay Sellars		
Secretary	Ms Brenda Lynch	Mr Ian Kelleher	

APPENDIX 3

Terms of Reference for Consultation Group on the National Women's Strategy

The National Women's Strategy will be drafted by the Inter-Departmental Committee, consisting of representatives of all Government Departments.

The National Women's Strategy Consultation Group consists of the Social Partners and the National Women's Council of Ireland. It will receive drafts of the National Women's Strategy as it is developed by the Inter-Departmental Committee and will input to the development of the National Women's Strategy on an ongoing basis.

The specific terms of reference of the National Women's Strategy Consultation Group are:

1. to receive and comment on drafts of the National Women's Strategy as prepared by the Inter-Departmental Committee
2. to advise in relation to the content of the National Women's Strategy
3. contribute to the development of a communications plan for the publication and launch of the Strategy

APPENDIX 4

Membership of the Consultation Group

Chairperson: Mr. John O'Callaghan, Principal,
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
(to September 2005)

Ms. Pauline Moreau, Principal,
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
(from September 2005)

NAME	ORGANISATION	NAME	ORGANISATION
Mr David Joyce	Trade Union	Ms Rachael Long	Community & Voluntary Pillar
Ms Rosheen Callender	Trade Union	Mr Frank Goodwin	Community & Voluntary Pillar
Ms Noirin Greene	Trade Union	Ms Mary McGreal	Farming Pillar
Ms Maria Cronin	Employers Organisations	Ms Therese Murphy	National Women's Council of Ireland
Sr Brigid Reynolds	Community & Voluntary Pillar	Ms Joanna McMinn	National Women's Council of Ireland
Secretary	Ms Kathleen Connolly (to March 05)	Ms Brenda Lynch (from Mar 05 to Mar 06)	Mr Ian Kelleher (from March 06)

Role of the Equality Authority

The Equality Authority has offered guidance throughout the process.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY