

UNECE

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

BEIJING DECLARATION

AND

PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND

BEIJING + 5

RESPONSE

OF

IRELAND

Gender Equality Division
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Dublin
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Note

This document was prepared in March 2009 in response to a questionnaire from UNECE, the European Regional Body of the United Nations, which is undertaking an overview of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the context of Beijing+15 which will be the key theme of the 2010 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

It presents an overview of some of the key issues on gender equality in Ireland at the present time.

**UNECE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION
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RESPONSE OF IRELAND

**Part One
Overview of achievements and challenges
in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment**

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The concept of "equality" is enshrined in the Irish Constitution (1937) which states that

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

1.1.2 This pronouncement has been further developed through a strong body of equality legislation which governs equality in employment and in the provision of goods and services, across a number of grounds, including gender, age, family status. This is further complemented by a package of legislation which makes family friendly leave arrangements available to support the engagement of women in the labour market.

1.1.3 The period 2004-2009 has seen significant legislative and policy achievements in the promotion of gender equality and issues which impact upon women. A new, ten year National Women's Strategy (2007 – 2016) has been published (2007). Strengthened structures have been put in place in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law reform to address Violence against Women and Human Trafficking, through the establishment of two dedicated executive offices. Further information is given in Part 2.

1.1.4 In the same period, Parental Leave and Maternity Leave have been increased. The Maternity Benefit scheme has been significantly improved in terms of both the duration of the payment and the level at which it is paid. Further information is given in part 2.

1.1.5 This period has also seen the introduction of a further social partnership agreement "Towards 2016" in Ireland, which has as its goal the achievement of

"a dynamic, internationalised and participatory society and economy, founded on a commitment to social justice and economic development that is both environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive."

1.1.6 The period under examination has also seen further increases in the labour market participation of women and other advances in relation to women's engagement, socio-economic status and general development. The effect of the current economic downturn has begun to show an impact on the Irish population, but at present the impact is greater on male employment than on female employment.

1.1.7 Irish Aid has also continued to focus on gender in its interventions in developing countries building upon the goals of its 2004 Gender Equality policy.

1.2 Government Policy Discussions and Parliamentary Debates

1.2.1 The introduction of new legislation has led to extensive Parliamentary debate on each piece of legislation. In addition, issues of concern may be raised by the Opposition parties and these are debated in full session of either House. The bi-cameral system of Government in Ireland is also complemented by a cross-Party Parliamentary Committee structure which can hold hearings on issues to specific issues of concern. These Committees may call upon officials and external speakers to present evidence on issues and may lead to recommendations in relation to the topics under discussion. Further information is contained in Part 3.

1.2.2 Public policy making requires the consideration of the impact of a policy proposal on each sex at the development, implementation and evaluation stages. All documents, including legislative proposals, being submitted to Government for approval must include a gender equality impact statement to include the likely effects of the policy on both men and women and, if necessary, to identify any actions necessary to ensure that the policy promotes gender equality.

1.3 Responsibility for the Achievement of Gender Equality

1.3.1 Responsibility for the achievement of gender equality in Ireland rests with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. A dedicated Division within his Department (Ministry) prepares and implements policy in this regard.

1.3.2 This structure is complemented by the national equality machinery comprising the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal. Although funded through the vote of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, these bodies are independent of the Department and have a remit which extends to all equality nine grounds covered in the Irish legislation.

1.3.3 In addition, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is the principal funder of the National Women's Council of Ireland, the umbrella organisation for women's groups in Ireland.

1.3.4 Additional information is given in Part 3.

1.4 National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016

1.4.1 Following the publication of the National Action Plan for Women in 2002, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform was tasked by the Irish Government with the preparation of a National Women's Strategy. In this co-ordinating role, the Department worked with all other Government Departments to prepare a comprehensive Strategy. It also consulted with the social partners, the Equality Authority and the National Women's Council of Ireland.

1.4.2 The National Women’s Strategy (NWS) is the Government’s statement of policy and priorities in relation to the advancement of women in Irish society for the period 2007 to 2016. It was launched by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in April 2007 in the presence of three other Government Ministers. It was prepared by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and its preparation was overseen by an Inter-Departmental Committee.

1.4.3 This Strategy honours a commitment made to the social partners and to the United Nations at the Beijing+5 Review in 2000. Moreover it 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.

1.4.4 The NWS is intended to have a resonance with all women in Ireland and has as its vision:

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

1.4.5 The NWS aims to be comprehensive and contains twenty Key Objectives and over two hundred planned actions. The 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.

1.4.6 The objectives are arranged under these themes as follows:

SUB-THEMES IN 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		

1.4.7 A full list of the objectives is given in Part 4 of this response.

1.4.8 Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy rests with the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. This is being achieved through committee structures including a Monitoring Committee which is being chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health. The Department also has responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the progress made in implementing the Strategy and prepares annual Progress Reports. A 2007/2008 report is being prepared and it is intended that this will be published.

1.4.9 Because contexts can change significantly over a ten year period, the NWS also contains a commitment to undertake an Interim Review of the Strategy every three years. The first interim review is due to take place in 2010 with a second review in 2013.

1.4.10 In addition to the “practical” commitments contained in the NWS in relation to the three key themes, the Strategy also contains commitments in relation to gender mainstreaming and to review evidence in support of gender budgeting.

1.5 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action

1.5.1 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) impacts in a positive way on the promotion of gender equality in Ireland.

1.5.2 Its concluding observations (formerly comments) are circulated to all Government Departments as appropriate and serve as a guidance for the development of new and revised policies. It was referred to in the development of the National Women’s Strategy 2007 -2016 (NWS) which addresses all the key areas of concern for women in Ireland today.

1.5.3 Similarly Beijing, Beijing +5 and the Commission on the Status of Women provide useful structures and recommendations against which national policies can be benchmarked.

1.5.4 Work is underway on the preparation of Ireland’s next Progress Report to CEDAW.

1.6 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

1.6.1 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are utilized in Ireland’s national framework for overseas development. Gender Equality is a priority issue for Ireland’s development cooperation programme.

1.6.2 Irish Aid published its Gender Equality Policy in 2004. The policy focuses on the achievement of gender equality as an essential component of sustainable human development.

1.6.3 The White Paper on Irish Aid (2006) reiterates gender equality commitments and undertakes to support specific actions to improve the position and status of women and to increase funding for women's organisations. It also highlights "a specific focus on preventing and responding to gender based violence" and a commitment to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

1.6.4 Further information is at Section 2.7 of this report.

Part Two

Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 As mentioned previously, considerable progress has been made in Ireland to advance gender equality thanks to the publication of a National Action Plan and more recently to the National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016 (NWS). The paragraphs which follow include reports of key developments in relation to the areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.

2.2. WOMEN AND POVERTY

2.2.1 The NWS includes as its first key theme the equalisation of socio-economic opportunity, which, it is envisaged, will be achieved in part through the increased engagement of women in the labour market and, in part, through a range of interventions which foster social inclusion.

2.2.2 The Government's strategic approach to social inclusion is contained in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion), a multi-policy and cross cutting approach as well as a societal response involving Government at all levels, social partners, communities and families. It is overseen by a Cabinet Committee. The overall goal of the NAPinclusion is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2 % and 4 % by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016.

2.2.3 While all of the high-level goals in relation to NAP Inclusion are relevant to women, specific attention is given to improving child income supports and promoting the employment participation of lone parents, linking to commitments in the National Women's Strategy on labour market participation, workplace advancement and the gender pay gap.

2.2.4 The table below shows statistics from the Central Statistics Office Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in relation to poverty, and poverty among women.

Measure	2003	2007
Consistent Poverty (1) – total population	8.2%	5.1%
Consistent Poverty (1) – women	9.3%	5.2%
Consistent Poverty (1) – lone female parents	34.3%	18.3%
Consistent Poverty (1) – older population	5.9%	2.0%
Consistent Poverty (1) – older women	6.7%	2.0%
At risk of poverty (2) – total population	19.7%	16.5%
At risk of poverty (2) – women	20.4%	17.0%
At risk of poverty (2) – lone female parents	n.a.	34.7%

Source: Central Statistics Office: EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC), 2004 (for 2003 revised) and 2007

(1) Consistent poverty measured at 60 per cent of income combined with deprivation

(2) At risk of poverty measured at 60 per cent of income

2.2.5 The Irish social welfare system includes a number of payments, which are payable to women who might otherwise be at risk of poverty. Conditions usually apply. Details of some of the key payments and the numbers of beneficiaries in both 2003 and 2007 are given in the following table. (It is worth noting that the cost of living increased by 16 per cent over this time period.)

**FEMALE BENEFICIARIES UNDER SELECTED STATE SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEMES
2003 AND 2007**

	2003			2007		
	No of women receiving benefit		Basic weekly payment (1)	No of women receiving benefit		Basic weekly payment (1)
State Pension (contributory)	65,411		€157.30	78,431		€209.30
State Pension (non-contributory)	50,130		€144.00	61,914		€200.00
One-parent family allowance	77,459		€124.80	83,311		€185.80
Widow's Pension	92,617		€130.30	97,482		€191.30
Maternity benefit	10,594		Varies	20,948		varies
	No of families receiving child benefit (2)	No of children in respect of which benefit paid	Monthly payment per child	No of families receiving child benefit (2)	No of children in respect of which benefit paid	Monthly payment per child
Child benefit (3)	534,009	1,034,851	1 st and 2 nd €125.60	576,612	1,110,715	1 st and 2 nd €160.00
			3 rd and other €157.30			3 rd and other €95.00

Source: Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Notes (1) Excludes allowances for dependents

(2) Child benefit normally paid to the mother

(3) An additional payment of €1,200 per annum per child aged under 6 years was introduced in 2006 - this is intended as a contribution to childcare costs

2.2.6 Overall, some 523,000 weekly social welfare supports were paid from the State to women each week in 2003, while the number of supports paid rose to about 577,000 in 2007. This excludes child benefit. Women may receive a combination of payments within the structure.

2.2.7 Child benefit is paid to the mothers (or guardians) of all children irrespective of family means. The rates of Child Benefit have been increased very significantly since 2001, by over 200% for the first and second child and by over 185% for each other child. Child benefit is now payable at monthly rates of €166 (for the first and second child) and €203 (for the third and subsequent children). In the same period, total expenditure on Child Benefit has increased by almost 300%. The annual expenditure on child benefit was approximately €2.4 billion in 2008. Details of the numbers of beneficiaries are summarised in the table above.

2.2.8 The Department of Social and Family Affairs also operates a number of initiatives which aim to assist persons to become economically independent. These include

- The Back to Education Allowance scheme facilitates the long-term unemployed, lone parents and other social welfare recipients in gaining access to second chance education, either at second or third level, by payment of a weekly allowance to raise educational qualifications and skills levels to meet the requirements of the modern labour market. In the academic year 2004/2005, 4,248 women availed of the Back to Education Initiative while, in 2007/2008, this number had increased to 5,182.
- The Activation and Family Support Programme which was restructured in January 2008 to assist individuals and families to enhance their employability through education, training and personal development opportunities and to improve their quality of life. It targets people who find it most difficult to access employment and the means to achieving improved quality of life. In the period 2004 – 2009 over 120 projects costing over €2 million catered specifically for women.
- A Government discussion paper, “Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents,” put forward proposals to tackle obstacles to employment for lone parents and other low income families including the introduction of a new social assistance payment for low income families with young children. Testing of the non-income measures contained in the discussion paper took place in two areas from November 2007 to February 2008 with a small number of One-Parent Family Payment recipients, particularly those whose children are older. It is hoped to progress this process further in 2009.

2.2.9 Much attention has been given to women’s access to pension entitlement in both State and private schemes. Measures are in place since 1994 to protect the pension entitlements for up to 20 years for those who take time out of the paid workforce for caring duties. There are also a number of other ways in which pension entitlements can be protected:

- People who qualify for payments such as ‘Carer’s Allowance or Carer’s Benefit may, subject to conditions, qualify for credited contributions for the period during which they receive the payment.
- In addition, the yearly average contribution rate required for a minimum state pension has been reduced from 20 to 10. These measures have been beneficial to people with less than complete insurance records, particularly older women.
- Other measures are discussed in the Green Paper on Pensions which was published in October 2007 and decisions in relation to them will be made in the context of the framework for future pension policy which the Government expects to publish shortly.

2.2.10 Supplementary pensions coverage for female workers has increased significantly in comparison to their male counterparts. In Quarter 1 2002, 45% of females and 57% of

male workers had a pension. In Quarter 1 2008, this gap had narrowed, as the rate for female workers had increased to 50% and the rate for males was 56%. The Pensions Board is continuing to run focused initiatives through the National Pensions Awareness Campaign aimed at increasing pensions' coverage amongst women.

2.2.11 The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme aims to counter disadvantage and to promote equality and social and economic inclusion in communities. The Programme targets the most marginalised areas, communities and individuals, in particular those experiencing cumulative disadvantage. During 2008 (up to end September), 18,849 adults were supported under the Services for the Unemployed measure of the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, of which 10,063 were women. Of this number, 4,971 women were supported to participate in education and training, 1,144 were assisted into employment and a further 249 were helped to enter self-employment.

2.3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

2.3.1 Primary and Secondary Education

The Department of Education and Science plays a significant role in mainstreaming gender at primary and secondary education levels in Ireland:

- Boards of Management of Primary and Second level schools are required to produce a School Plan setting out how they propose to deliver on the equal opportunities objective.
- The Department of Education and Science supports positive action measures to address social exclusion and inequality in the education system.
- In line with statutory requirements and Government policy, the promotion of gender equality using the strategy of gender mainstreaming is evaluated in the course of subject inspections and in whole-school evaluations in primary and post-primary schools.
- All new inspectors receive training in gender equality issues during the induction programme. In addition, presentations and inputs on gender equality issues are included in the continuing professional development (CPD) programme of the Inspectorate.
- Indicators have been developed by the Inspectorate to evaluate the gender mainstreaming process in the course of inspections.
- To assist schools in providing equal opportunities for girls and boys, through the strategy of gender mainstreaming, the Inspectorate has developed resource materials and guidelines. The resource for primary schools *Equal Measures* was disseminated to all primary schools in 2006. The resource contains four booklets, covering: the legislative background; guidelines for schools on the implementation of gender mainstreaming; a variety of exemplar lessons and stimuli for classroom interaction and guidelines for parents in contributing to their school's gender equality policy. A DVD accompanies the booklets.
- A similar resource is currently being finalised for post-primary schools. The resource, *eQuality Measures* will contain five booklets. The additional booklet in the pack is for students which provides examples of activities and ways in which students can contribute to their school's gender equality policy and to gender

mainstreaming. The resource will be disseminated to post-primary schools later in the 2008/2009 academic year.

- 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 in June 2001, with co-funding from the European Social Fund. Following the cessation of EU funding in March 2007 the role of this unit has been integrated into the Central Policy Unit.
- The Unit also supports research in a wide range of areas and at every level from pre-school to third-level related to gender and education. It includes investigation of attitudes and experiences of homophobic bullying in second level schools; positive practices that schools, supported by the stakeholders, have adopted to address issues of sexual orientation; and the specific issue of women representation in Science and Technology sector

2.3.2 Boys' and Girls' Educational Achievement

2.3.2.1 In July 2007 the Department of Education and Science published *Sé Sí Gender in Irish Education* outlining statistics by gender in recent decades in education at primary, second, further and higher levels.

- The report shows that girls are consistently more likely than boys to remain in school to completion of upper second level education, and consistently outperform boys overall in the State examinations, although the gender gap is modest in the international context.
- Subject take-up patterns by gender have remained largely unchanged over time, with evidence of sex stereotyping in subject choice. Boys far outnumber girls in the take up of engineering, technical drawing and construction studies, while girls far outnumber boys in home economics, music, art and European languages.
- In the sciences, significantly more girls study biology and to a lesser extent chemistry, while significantly more boys study physics.
- For a number of years now girls have been out-performing boys in second level State examinations. In 2007, 23.8% of girls achieved a minimum of six grade C's at higher level in the Leaving Certificate as compared with 16.4% of boys.
- There is also an increase in the numbers of girls succeeding at higher levels in non-traditional subjects

2.3.3 Higher Education

2.3.3.1 The Universities Act 1997 and the Education Act 1998 place obligations on educational authorities at primary, secondary and third level to provide equal opportunities for all, including gender equality:

- Under Section 12 of the Universities Act, 1997, universities are required “to promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the university”.

- The *Report of the High level Group on University Equality Policies*, published by the Higher Education Authority in 2004, emphasised the importance of gender equality in higher education.

2.3.3.2 The following points illustrate the current situation with regard to female participation in university education:

- Females accounted for 53% of full-time undergraduate new entrants to higher education in 2007-08 (60% of entrants into universities, 47% into Institutes of Technology and 88% into colleges of education¹).
- New entrant females dominated the Social Sciences, Business and Law, Education and the Health and Welfare categories, while new entrant males dominated the Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction and Science categories. (HEA, 2009)
- In 2006, females outnumbered male graduates at primary degree, master's and post graduate diploma level.
- At doctorate and post doctoral level, 46.5% of graduates are female, and 53.5% are male.
- In 2006, women constituted 43% of all higher education award recipients in science, mathematics and computing. These figures indicate that Ireland will have a good foundation from which to build greater levels of equal opportunities within third level education and in the labour market.
- However, women's representation in engineering has not progressed beyond 16% and women continue to be over-represented in the social sciences.
- More promisingly women now constitute the majority of law, accounting and medical entrants on graduate programmes.

2.3.4 Further Education

2.3.4.1 Adult education is a growing area in Ireland and in this area, women participants outnumber men approximately two to one. In 2007, approximately 74,500 or 67% of participants in adult education were female. Adult education participants tend to have long paths before they take the step to enter a third level course or the labour market.

2.3.4.2 Childcare support for learners in adult education is also aimed primarily at encouraging women back into the education system. In 2007 over 1,700 learners availed of this assistance, the vast majority, c.94%, were female. The numbers of students in each programme is demonstrated in the table below:

	Youthreach	Senior Traveller Training Centres	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme	Literacy	Back to Education Initiative	Post Leaving Certificate Courses	Total	%
Male	1,488	161	1,741	18,242	6,016	8,813	36,461	32.82%
Female	1,508	928	3,636	27,558	19,844	21,148	74,622	67.18%
Total	2,996	1,089	5,377	45,800	25,860	29,961	111,083	100.00%

¹ Teacher training colleges.

2.4 WOMEN AND HEALTH

2.4.1 Women's Health Council

2.4.1.1 Women's health issues are currently overseen by the Women's Health Council (WHC). Ireland was among six countries invited by the WHO to conduct a case study with the aim of performing a gender analysis of a national health policy.

2.4.1.2 The WHC identified the National Cardiovascular Health Strategy as the policy area to be examined and published its report in 2005. Following on from this research, the Council has since published two practical guidelines for service providers on women and cardiovascular health, one for general practitioners in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners and one for emergency doctors in collaboration with the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine.

2.4.1.3 Building on their work on gender sensitive analysis, in 2007 the WHC published a manual for the gender mainstreaming of health services, specifically tailored to the needs of Irish service providers.

2.4.1.4 The Council was also involved in a project which is developing a set of health indicators for the EU, *the European Community Health Indicators and Monitoring project*, providing expertise on gender sensitivity. In addition, the WHC were members of the Council of Europe Committee on Inequalities in Health and corresponding members of the WHO Women and Gender Equity Knowledge Network which fed into the Commission for the Social Determinants of Health report.

2.4.1.5 Other key areas of work for the Council in recent years have been the publication of a number of reports on the menopause, gender-based violence, and cancer.

2.4.2 Health Services targeting women

2.4.2.1 Ireland prioritises ante-natal and post-natal care. Under the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, expectant mothers can avail of combined community and hospital programmes where they are supported in their pregnancy and receive medical care free of charge. National maternity hospitals have developed programmes which provide a high level of personal assistance to birth mothers. Ireland has one of the highest rates of natural births in the developed world. The maternal mortality rate in 2005 was 1, the same as 2004.

2.4.2.2 A five-year Strategic Action Plan to promote breastfeeding has been in place since 2005.

2.4.2.3 The National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) received approval from the Department of Health and Children (D/H&C) to expand Breast Check - the National Breast Screening Service nationwide in 2005. Two new purpose built screening units to serve women in the West and South were officially opened by the Minister for Health and Children on 17 December 2007. Screening of eligible women at both units began in early December 2007.

2.4.2.4 The NCSS has recently completed preparations for the launch of the National Cervical Screening Programme. The Programme will be a quality assured, organised and cost effective Cervical Screening programme available free of charge to all women in Ireland aged 25 – 60. It will be implemented in line with international practice and has been launched in recent months.

2.4.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health

2.4.3.1 The Fertility Rate in Ireland was 1.90% in 2006 and 2.03% in 2007 (note: these are provisional figures.). Since the ICPD conference in Cairo (1994), a formal policy on family planning has been developed and implemented. The Health Service Executive (statutory health authority) is required to make available an equitable, accessible and comprehensive family planning service either directly or by way of an arrangement with other agencies. These services are provided primarily through general practitioners, non-government organisations and, to some extent, maternity hospitals and units.

2.4.3.2 Abortion in Ireland is prohibited except in very limited circumstances. Information on abortion services abroad can be provided within the terms of the Regulation of Information (Services outside the State for Termination of Pregnancies) Act, 1995. Figures from the UK Department of Health indicate that in 2007, 4,686 women gave Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics. The figure for 2007 represents a decrease for the sixth year in a row, with the number having decreased by 1,987 since 2001. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency has been collating data to examine the patterns of women travelling from Ireland to countries other than the UK for abortion procedures. Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands were contacted. The Netherlands, with 445 in 2007, was the only jurisdiction that had significant numbers of women from Ireland travelling for abortion procedures.

2.4.4 The Crisis Pregnancy Agency

2.4.4.1 The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is a statutory planning and co-ordinating body established in 2001 to formulate and implement a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland through:

1. A reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies by the provision of education, advice and contraceptive services.
2. A reduction in the number of women with crisis pregnancies who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive.
3. The provision of counselling services, medical services and such other health services for the purpose of providing support, after crisis pregnancy, as may be deemed appropriate by the Agency.

2.4.4.2 The Crisis Pregnancy Agency operates a “Programmes and Communications” function to bring about a reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies and to provide supports to women who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy.

- The Agency had previously launched a “Positive Options” campaign targeting women who were experiencing a crisis pregnancy. This ongoing campaign was

redeveloped and relaunched in 2007 with a new campaign message “An unplanned pregnancy is not the end of the world”. New television, radio and print medium advertisements were developed. Post campaign testing was very positive with 75 per cent of women recalling the campaign.

- Work began in 2004 on “Think Contraception” a three-year public awareness campaign on the prevention of crisis pregnancy. The television and cinema campaign targets sexually active 18-24 year olds with the message that the consistent use of contraception is the most effective way to prevent unplanned pregnancy. The initial campaign was complemented by advertisements in bars and nightclubs and on the backs of Dublin taxis during the Christmas party season. Response was very positive with two-thirds of respondents recalling the campaign and 73 per cent rating its effectiveness as very to fairly good. Again the ongoing campaign has been redeveloped and relaunched recently.
- Another campaign specifically targets young people to heighten awareness of sexual risk-taking on occasions when alcohol is consumed – holidays, entertainment events, etc.
- The Agency has also developed resources for parents to facilitate and promote discussion between parents and children aged 15 to 17 years on sexuality and relationships.
- Another resource has been developed for children in the older classes of primary schools (about 11 to 12 years).
- More recently the Crisis Pregnancy Agency has worked with Department of Education and Science on the development of a resource package to accompany the Relationship and Sexuality Education programme in Senior Cycle secondary schools.
- A further campaign targets contraception and sexual health for women aged 35 to 55. It had been found that this group may experience a crisis pregnancy due to failure to use contraception on the assumption that fertility is low.

2.4.4.3 The Crisis Pregnancy Agency also makes funding available (over €4.5 million in 2007) to projects which provide supports in the fields of

- Crisis pregnancy prevention,
- Services and supports for women experiencing crisis pregnancy,
- Crisis pregnancy counselling;
- Post crisis pregnancy supports.

2.4.4.4 The development of counselling skills in the field of crisis pregnancy has been a key focus of the Agency and it has now developed a Manual of Good Practice in Crisis Pregnancy Counselling. In addition it has also worked with the National University of Ireland (Maynooth) to develop the first accredited course in crisis pregnancy counselling skills.

2.4.4.5 The Agency has built up a valuable body of research on crisis pregnancy in Ireland. This research enables the Agency to ensure that its work continues to be underpinned by appropriate evidence about sexual health and crisis pregnancy in Ireland. The Agency has successfully published 25 research reports to date.

2.4.5 AIDS/HIV

2.4.5.1 The incidence of AIDS has fallen to a low level in recent years, mainly due to the effectiveness of combination anti-retroviral drug therapies. The total number of AIDS cases reported in Ireland to December 2007 was 957 and there were 37 deaths reported between 2002 and 2007. In Ireland, HIV is now often treated as a chronic condition. Of 362 newly diagnosed cases in 2007, 130 (36%) were female and 209 (58%) were male. Gender was unknown for 23 cases (6%). The mean age at HIV diagnosis was 32.5 years. The mean age among females was 30.4 years and among males was 33.9 years, a difference of 3.5 years.

2.4.5.2 Routine antenatal testing was introduced in 1999 and is effective in identifying women who are HIV positive at an early stage in pregnancy. Of the 130 females with newly diagnosed HIV infection in 2007, 29 were reported to be pregnant at HIV diagnosis. There were 117 babies born to HIV infected mothers in Ireland during 2007. Of these, 91 are not infected, 25 remain of indeterminate status (i.e. do not meet the criteria for HIV).

2.5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

2.5.1 New Structure to Address Violence against Women

2.5.1.1 Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, was established in June 2007 as an executive office of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The work of Cosc covers issues relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence against both women and men, including older people.

2.5.1.2 Cosc's tasks include:

- Working with Government Departments, Agencies, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the sector to ensure the delivery of a well co-ordinated service to support victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Developing and delivering awareness raising strategies to ensure that victims are aware of services in their locality and that society is aware of the extent and impact of behaviours and crimes of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Developing strategies, standards for service delivery and training programmes to in line with best international practice.
- Putting in place strategically based positive actions which work with perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Providing leadership and support to the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSC) and its sub-committees.
- Continuing to implement the recommendations of the 1997 Task Force Report on Violence against Women.
- Working to establish a body of research to inform future policy directions.
- Representing Ireland at international fora.
- Proposing legislative/policy change.

2.5.2 National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women

2.5.2.1 The (NSC) was established in 1998 following a recommendation of the Task Force Report on Violence against Women. Its remit was strengthened in 2008 and it is now tasked to:

- advise on the development and implementation of policies and guidelines for action including those concerning services and supports, perpetrators, and State intervention;
- advise on research to be undertaken;
- assist Cosc in the promotion of interagency co-operation and sharing of information;
- assist and advise Cosc in the development of codes of practice for collecting statistics and monitoring responses;
- assist and advise Cosc in promoting public awareness about the issues involved in violence against women;
- assist and advise Cosc in identification of legal issues affecting the prevention of, and action responding to, violence against women;
- share information on international developments in relation to the issue of violence against women.

2.5.2.2 All national NGOs dealing with violence against women are represented on the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSC). Advisory bodies comprising of locally based government and non-government support services feed into the NSC.

2.5.3 Services to Address Violence against Women

2.5.3.1 Funding is provided to NGOs through state agencies to provide local and national support services. Voluntary domestic violence refuges and rape crisis centres around the country provide emergency hotlines. The hotlines are generally free or on a reduced tariff. These refuges, outreach services and sexual violence centres receive partial state funding from a number of state sources for capital, operational and awareness raising activities.

2.5.3.2 Refuges and rape crisis centres offer a range of services. Refuge provision is provided by non-state support services and funded by the state. There are approximately 1.3 beds per 10,000 population.

2.5.3.3 A range of housing assistance is provided by local authorities including emergency, interim and long-term. The Irish Government funds a range of education and training programmes for disadvantaged and marginalised women, which would be open to victims/survivors of violence against women. In addition, the Government makes funding available to community groups who deal specifically with such victims/survivors.

2.5.4.4 The Department of Social & Family Affairs provides a range of general financial assistance schemes. The Irish Government established a revolving loan guarantee fund as part of its Action Plan to deal with the problems of money-lending. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has the day-to-day responsibility for the operation of this fund.

2.5.5 Prosecuting the perpetrator

- 2.5.5.1 In response to the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, 1996, An Garda Síochána (Irish police force) drafted a policy designed to set out processes and procedures for operational police officers on the ground to implement best practice and ensure uniformity of the implementation of the new legislation.
- 2.5.5.2 The policy has been reviewed and updated and, in December 2007, the revised policy was circulated to all members of the force. This newly revised policy was uploaded onto PULSE (Garda mainframe database) for access by all operational police officers working in the area of Domestic Violence.
- 2.5.5.3 An Garda Síochána provides specific training to all officers in the force regarding domestic and sexual violence as part of the mandatory policy on training. Training is provided initially to recruit officers on joining the police force as part of their initial training. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training is also provided during the course of a police officer's career.
- 2.5.5.4 While the majority of victims of domestic and sexual violence are female, the training is not specifically tailored towards female victims as police officers must investigate incidents of domestic violence where males are also victims.

2.5.6 Prosecution Policy

- 2.5.6.1 The Prosecution Policy Unit was formed within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in the 1st quarter of 2008. Domestic, sexual and gender based violence have been identified as priority areas of prosecution policy. The development of policy guidelines providing detailed advice to Prosecutors on how to implement legislation on violence against women is on-going.
- 2.5.6.2 The Prosecution Policy Unit has made a submission on behalf of the Office to the National Strategy on domestic, sexual and gender based violence focussing on:
- i. Improvements to current policies & procedures.
 - ii. Current & desirable points of interconnectivity with other State bodies & difficulties for the ODPP in interagency work.
 - iii. Proposals to improve the prevention, reduction & responses to these crimes.

2.5.7 Victim Support

- 2.5.7.1 Victim support services are provided by the voluntary sector. State funding is available for such organisations via Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Victim Support, including court accompaniment is generally available throughout the state. Facilities for victim support services are included as a matter of course in the design of new courthouses, and in the refurbishment of existing courthouses, where space and planning restrictions allow. For some types of violent crime, the Gardaí may assign an officer to support a victim.

2.5.7.2 A victim may be entitled to legal aid in civil proceedings, e.g. an application for relief pursuant to the Domestic Violence Act. Potential cases are subject to means testing and merit-testing. In general, separate representation is not available to a victim in any criminal proceeding. The State prosecutes the case on behalf of its citizens. However, where a victim's sexual history is raised as an issue for cross-examination, representation can be granted by the trial Judge in relation to that specific issue and legal aid is available in all such cases without the need for means testing.

2.6 STEPS TO OVERCOME HUMAN TRAFFICKING

2.6.1 The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit was established in February 2008 in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to ensure that the Irish State's response to trafficking is co-ordinated, comprehensive and holistic. It works closely with both State and non-governmental organisations. The Unit is also responsible for the development and implementation of a national action plan to prevent and tackle human trafficking. The National Action Plan will focus on:

- Prevention and awareness raising
- Prosecution of traffickers
- Protection of victims
- Child trafficking

2.6.2 The Irish Government has adopted a multidisciplinary partnership approach to tackling human trafficking in Ireland. Representatives from the Inter-Departmental High Level Group engage with NGOs and International Organisations in a **Roundtable Forum** held about every four months. In addition, five **Interdisciplinary Working Groups** comprising representatives from the relevant Government Agencies, NGO's and International Organisations have been established to progress matters on:

- the development of a National Referral Mechanism,
- Awareness Raising & Training,
- Child Trafficking,
- Labour Exploitation issues, and
- Sexual Exploitation issues.

In total, 34 different state/international/non-governmental organisations are involved in this process.

2.6.3 The Plan, when finalised, will set out the structures to facilitate ratification of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

2.6.4 Legislative measures in the fight against this crime include:

- The **Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008** which became operational on 7 June 2008, provides for penalties up to life imprisonment for persons who traffick other persons for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation or for the

removal of a person's organs. The enactment of this legislation brings Ireland into compliance with the criminal law/law enforcement elements of the European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations instruments against trafficking in persons. The 2008 Act builds on the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998.

A number of prosecutions have already succeeded under the new legislation.

- The **Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill** is currently awaiting the Report Stage in Dáil Éireann, Section 127 of the Bill, provides for a period of recovery and reflection of 45 days (to be increased to 60 days at the Report Stage of the Bill) in the State for alleged victims of trafficking and also, in circumstances where the person trafficked wishes to assist the Gardaí in any investigation or prosecution in relation to the alleged trafficking, a further six months period of residence, renewable, to enable him or her to do so. An administrative framework, reflecting the provisions in the Bill, was introduced in June 2008 to provide for the period of recovery, reflection and residency in the State during the period between the full enactment of the provisions of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. These arrangements have recently been amended to provide that where a person is under the age of 18 years, the best interests of the child will always be considered in the granting and revocation of a temporary residence permission.

2.6.5 Partnership with An Garda Síochána (Irish Police Force)

2.6.5.1 Relevant information is shared on a case-by-case basis and Liaison Members from Garda National Immigration Bureau have been appointed to a number of Government and NGO' agencies operating in this area. The establishment of the Human Trafficking and Co-ordination Unit within GNIB has assisted in furthering relationships between An Garda Síochána and NGOs and procedures are now in place to identify victims/potential victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.

2.6.5.2 The Document and Intelligence Unit at GNIB are very much involved in analysing and assessing information/intelligence fed into them by operational members of An Garda Síochána.

2.6.5.3 Members of GNIB also sit on the five Interdisciplinary Working Groups established by the AHTU.

2.6.5.4 A training Course entitled "Tackling Trafficking in Human Beings, Prevention, Protection & Prosecution" has been developed jointly by An Garda Síochána and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). A number of NGO's were involved in delivering this training also to ensure a multi-agency approach to training in this phenomenon. 250 Gardaí have been trained to date in this course. 300 Probationer Gardaí have received training. Training and Awareness-Raising has been provided to over 770 members of An Garda Síochána.

2.6.6. Other Awareness Raising on Human Trafficking

2.6.6.1 Awareness Raising Training has also been provided between July 2008 and February 2009, to in excess of 130 persons from a number of professional organisations as an introduction to human trafficking and setting out the indicators of human trafficking.

2.6.6.2A “Blue Blindfold” human trafficking awareness raising campaign was launched by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Garda Commissioner under the European G6 initiative in October 2008. The campaign was aimed at both the general public and public sector personnel. The key theme of the campaign is “Don’t close your eyes to human trafficking”.

2.6.6.3 Funding through the National Women’s Strategy was also approved in April 2008 for Ruhama (an NGO) to make a 3 minute film and a 50 second edited version for the purpose of educating ‘punters’ or potential ‘punters’ to the exploitation underpinning the commercial sex industry and to address the demand side of sex trafficking. The film was launched in November 2008 and was shown on a number of national television channels and on a satellite sports channel. The film will also be a valuable tool for educational programmes for boys and girls to stress the unacceptable nature of discrimination based on sex, the importance of gender equality and the dignity and integrity of every human being.

2.7 WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT/SUPPORT FOR WOMEN THROUGH IRISH OVERSEAS AID

2.7.1 Partly linked to the topic of “Women and Armed Conflict”, it is worth looking at the significant focus which Ireland’s development cooperation programme places on gender equality.

2.7.2 The White Paper on Irish Aid (2006) reiterates gender equality commitments and undertakes to support specific actions to improve the position and status of women and to increase funding for women’s organisations. Irish Aid published its Gender Equality Policy in 2004. The policy focuses on the achievement of gender equality as an essential component of sustainable human development. The policy objectives are:

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

2.7.3 Key Achievements include the following:

- ***Building Institutional Capacity***
Irish Aid has increased staffing allocations to gender equality and women’s empowerment. The dissemination of the gender policy was accompanied by training of all headquarter staff. Additional gender training has been provided for newly recruited staff at headquarters. All programme countries have had mainstreaming training and a gender mainstreaming module was piloted in Uganda in 2007.

- ***Networking internationally and building strategic partnerships***
Irish Aid actively participates in multi-lateral fora that promote gender equality and women's empowerment at an international level - e.g. Irish delegations to the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, the EC Gender Experts meetings, OECD/DAC GenderNet, and in the Nordic+ gender experts group. *As Chair of the Human Security Network (HSN), an informal group of countries which maintains dialogue on issues pertaining to human security, Ireland has chosen to focus on gender-based violence as the priority theme of its Chairmanship for the period May 2008-May 2009.* At programme country level Irish Aid participates in government-donor or donor coordination mechanisms on gender equality where these exist (e.g. Irish Aid will take up the chair of the Donor Partner Group on Gender Equality in Tanzania in 2009).
- ***Budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment***
A specific Gender Equality budget line has been in place since 2004 and increased from €75,000 in 2004 to €1,000,000 in 2008. This dedicated gender equality budget allows Irish Aid to identify and test new approaches, strategies and partners that can be mainstreamed into bilateral, multilateral and civil society programmes in the future.
- ***Mainstreaming Gender***
At country programme level, Irish Aid has increased its actions towards supported effective gender mainstreaming,

For example, In Timor-Leste, advancing women's social, political and economic empowerment is an Irish Aid strategic objective. On women's political empowerment, Irish Aid funded UNIFEM and Timorese women's organisations to support women standing for election and to build trust and confidence of communities in women candidates. In local elections, 29 women were elected as chiefs and 1,300 women elected on village councils. In the 2007 Parliamentary elections women took almost 30% of the seats in parliament – one of the highest percentages in the region.

2.7.4 Irish Aid also highlights “a specific focus on preventing and responding to gender based violence”. Irish Aid is a founding member of the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence which is a unique collaboration between Irish humanitarian, development and human rights organisations, Irish Aid and the Irish Defence Forces. The Consortium supports the improvement of the institutional and collective capacity of member organisations to respond to gender based violence.

2.7.5 Conflict Resolution

2.7.5.1 The Department of Foreign Affairs Conflict Resolution Unit has adopted Resolution 1325 as one of its cross-cutting themes, which will inform all of the Unit's activities. In conjunction with Irish Aid, the CRU is leading on the development of Ireland's National Action Plan on UNSC Resolution 1325. It is currently developing its Resolution 1325 Action Plan in partnership with a number of Irish (Aid) Programme countries.

2.7.5.2 Ireland recently co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence in Conflict and made a strong statement outlining Ireland's commitment to addressing issues of sexual violence and abuse and to implementing the provisions laid out in this resolution and in UNSCR 1325. Ireland also made a strong statement at the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security on behalf of the Human Security Network, which strongly condemned impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

2.8 WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

2.8.1 Participation of Women in the Labour Market (as at Quarter 4 2008)

2.8.1.1 Ireland's strong economic performance in recent years has delivered significant advances for gender equality. The number of women at work has risen by over 140,000 since quarter 4, 2003. This follows a period of unprecedented growth which saw the number of women at work double in an eight year time span. The number of women in employment currently (Q4/2008) stands at 906,700, which equates with an employment rate for women of 59.0%. The employment rate for women peaked at 61.5 per cent in late 2007 and remained above the EU's so-called Lisbon target of 60% for a number of quarters before the current quarter. Female participation rates have risen from 50.5% to 53.7%, an increase of 3.2%, during this six year period while male rates have increased by only 2% over this period of time.

**TABLE
EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION RATES
BY SEX, 2003 AND 2008**

	Employment (000)		Unemployment (000) (Rate)		Participation Rate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2003	1,062.30	770.4	59.7 (5.3%)	39.5 (4.9%)	72.1%	50.5%
2008	1,145.3	906.7	117.3 (9.8%)	52.9 (5.2%)	72.2%	53.7%

2.8.1.2 The next table looks at the occupational split by sex in 2003 and in 2008. The table illustrates that there is still a very significant segregation by occupational group. In absolute terms, the numbers of women in managerial and administrative roles and professional roles have increased by 21,000 and 32,000 respectively over the five year period, but in percentage terms, the increase is smaller. The engagement of women in typically female roles such as clerical and secretarial posts and sales posts is still very marked.

**TABLE
PERSONS IN EMPLOYMENT BY
GENDER AND PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BY SEX 2003 AND 2008**

	Male		Female	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
Managers and administrators	20.9	19.0	11.3	11.9
Professional	10.5	11.0	12.4	14.1
Associate Professional and technical	6.8	7.2	12.6	12.4

Clerical and Secretarial	4.9	5.3	22.0	20.7
Craft and related	21.8	22.0	1.7	1.3
Personal and protective service	7.0	7.8	15.1	17.2
Sales	5.4	6.0	12.1	12.1
Plant and machine operatives	12.7	12.5	4.3	2.8
Other broad occupational groups	9.9	9.3	8.5	7.6
TOTAL (%)	100	100	100	100
Total in employment by sex (000)	1,062.3	1,145.3	770.4	906.7

2.8.1.3 The table which follows shows that women are more likely than men to work shorter hours. This may well reflect the continuing increase in the participation of married women in the labour market. (The labour force participation for married women has grown from 48.4 per cent in Q4/2003 to 54.1 per cent in Q4/2008.) The table shows that on average women work 31.1 hours compared with 40 hours per week for men. Nearly 78 per cent of women are likely to work 40 hours or fewer, compared with only 43.8 per cent of men.

TABLE
PERCENTAGE IN EACH GROUP BY AVERAGE HOURS WORKED BY SEX
2003 AND 2008

Hours worked	Male		Female	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
1 – 19 Hours	2.4	2.8	12.4	13.3
20 – 40 hours	39.9	41.0	64.5	64.6
More than 40 hours	42.8	41.1	17.1	16.1
Flexible	14.8	15.1	5.9	6.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
Average hours worked	41.6 hrs.	40hrs.	32.1hrs.	31.1 hrs
Total in employment by sex (000)	1,062.3	1,145.3	770.4	906.7

2.8.1.4 The National Framework Committee for Work-Life Balance Policies continue to support and facilitate the development of family friendly policies aimed at assisting the reconciliation of work and family life at the level of the enterprise.

2.8.1.5 The increased participation of women in the work force has been accompanied by improvements to maternity and adoptive leave provisions as well as the introduction of parental and carer's leave. The current provision of maternity leave makes 26 weeks of consecutive paid leave available to Irish mothers, of which at least two weeks must be taken before the birth. Under Social Welfare Benefit, eighty per cent of earnings (calculated by dividing gross earnings in the relevant tax year by the number of weeks worked), subject to a minimum of €21.80 per week and up to a ceiling of €280.00 a week for 26 weeks.. In the absence of benefit entitlement, a flat rate of maternity assistance is available. The majority of public sector employees may draw their full salary during periods of maternity leave.

2.8.1.6 Mothers may also take a period of up to 16 weeks of consecutive unpaid maternity leave.

2.8.1.7 Parental leave arrangements were amended in 2006. Unpaid parental leave of up to 14 weeks may now be taken for each child in the period before the child reaches 8 years of age (16 years in the case of a child with a disability). Force majeure leave is available for a period of three days over a 12 month period.

2.8.1.8 The Carers Leave Act 2001 enables employees to get leave of absence of up to 65 weeks to care for a relative. A Carer's Benefit is available to workers who avail of this entitlement if they have the relevant number of social welfare contributions. It can be paid for up to two years.

2.8.2 Training of Women in and for Employment

2.8.2.1 The Irish national training agency, FÁS "Expanding the Workforce" (ETW) Programme aims to improve women's access to, and participation in, the labour market. The primary focus of the programme is to progress women, or returnees, into employment as quickly as possible. The process also aims to influence and support employers in examining and improving their work practices. The target group for the ETW programme is women who:

- Have been out of the workforce for a period of 12 months or more;
- Are not in receipt of Jobseeker Allowance or Jobseeker Benefit;
- Are identified as wishing to return to work;
- Need assistance/development to take the next step back to work.

2.8.2.2 A review of the ETW process was completed in 2007. The review examined the delivery of training, the level of participation in training, and good practice in providing a service to women returnees. Barriers hindering the return of women to training and employment included issues around information, access, self-confidence, childcare and other financial barriers, lack of flexibility in employment and course provision, and the absence of progression opportunities.

2.8.3 Women and Entrepreneurship

2.8.3.1 The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report - Entrepreneurship on the Island of Ireland - tracks Ireland's entrepreneurial activity over a range of specific indicators including gender. The 2007 Global Entrepreneur found that Ireland showed a significant increase in the number of women entrepreneurs, with women's entrepreneurial activity rising to 5.9% in 2007 from 4.2% in 2006, representing over 1,000 women on average starting new businesses in Ireland each month.

2.8.3.2 Enterprise Ireland provides business development assistance to companies. Overall Enterprise Ireland financial and advisory supports are equally available to both men and women. There are no specific gender based supports available for women entrepreneurs. Equal opportunities have benefits for individuals, the economy and society in general as such Enterprise Ireland adheres to principle of excellence by selecting on merit.

2.8.3.3 Enterprise Ireland monitors and encourages female entrepreneurship in Ireland by:

- Organising a high level international Female Entrepreneurship Policy and Proactive Conference in Ireland in September 2006. This conference brought together international speakers, entrepreneurs and policy makers to share their understanding of female entrepreneurship.
- Developing female entrepreneurship case studies and profiles for use in Irish schools and third level institutions. This positive role models of female entrepreneurship will be used to promote the idea of women entrepreneurs.
- The Going for Growth Initiative, which was rolled out in October 2007, was supported by Enterprise Ireland and the NDP Gender Equality Unit with EU funding. This initiative was designed to be complementary to the role of the development agencies and aims to support women entrepreneurs with a clear aspiration for growth by providing peer support and leadership of a more experienced or *lead* entrepreneur. A series of roundtables on a pilot basis were set up (2007).

2.8.3.4 The work of Enterprise Ireland is complemented at local level by the 35 City and County Enterprise Boards (CEBs). CEBs have been very successful at attracting the active participation of women in their range of training programmes such as Start your Own Business courses and Management Development Programmes. During 2007 over 21,000 people participated on these training programmes of which 12,000 were female (nearly 60% of total participants). Given that women own some 30% of all businesses nationally this suggests that, on a pro-rata basis, women are accessing far more CEB training programmes than men.

2.8.3.5 The CEBs also collaborate on the organisation of National Women's Enterprise Day. This initiative aims to support women already in business and those thinking of starting their own business by providing an opportunity for businesswomen to network with others in start-up and expansion phases of business, attend free on-site mentoring clinics, listen to case studies of successful women who have set up their own business and to talk to exhibitor service providers from the State and private sector (e.g. FAS, Enterprise Ireland, CEBs, CRO, ISME and the Patents Office). The first such event was organised in 2007 and its 2008 successor was over-subscribed and brought together over 150 new and budding female entrepreneurs.

2.8.3.6 The Department of Education and Science has also actively fostered enterprise in schools through the development of core skills in the curriculum and through specific programmes in Enterprise in senior cycle. Schools are also active participants in Enterprise' schemes such as *Junior Achievement*, *Youth Enterprise Ireland*, or *Young Entrepreneurs*) or in school industry links programmes. This work is supported extensively through the County Enterprise Boards and chambers of commerce.

2.8.4 Women in Agriculture

2.8.4.1 The Report of the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture was published in September 2000 and contained 36 recommendations in total, covering a very broad range of policy and operational areas relating to women in rural communities generally. All of the recommendations were pursued by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and a comprehensive progress report on all of the

recommendations relevant to government departments and agencies was finalised. This indicates that the recommendations have been fully taken into account by all the relevant Government Departments and agencies and provides evidence of the substantial progress achieved, in as far as was possible, across the broad range of issues raised by the Advisory Committee.

2.8.4.2 In recent years there has been an increase in the number of agricultural holdings owned by women in Ireland. Between 2003 and 2008, the latest date for which statistics are available, the number of farms owned by women increased from 11,900 to 12,700 an increase of 800.

2.8.4.3 The issue of Social Welfare entitlements for farm spouses was recently addressed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) who published a leaflet which clearly sets out how commercial partnerships are viewed from a Tax and PRSI point of view. The leaflet was jointly produced by the DSFA and the Revenue Commissioners in conjunction with the Farm Bodies. Generally spouses working with their partners do not pay social insurance contributions. However, as the leaflet clarifies, spouses who operate in a “commercial partnership” may be brought into the social insurance system. In this way, both spouses incur a liability to pay self-employed PRSI and build up entitlements towards a contributory State Pension and other Social Welfare benefits.

2.8.4.4 Over 12,800 farmers and/or their partners attended these Agricultural training courses in 2008. The courses range from 12.5 hours up to major up to major awards. Some 15% approx of participants in Teagasc courses in 2008 were women. The courses with the highest rate of female participation included horticulture and equine studies at the higher level with female participation rates of 43% and 52% respectively. In the less advanced courses the more popular choices for women include Information Technology and Alternative Enterprises. Some of these courses are conducted at night time to facilitate people who would not be in a position to attend during the day.

2.8.5 Childcare to support women in employment and training

2.8.5.1 The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 made a significant investment in the development of child day care services. It received support from the European Union and led to the creation of 39,550 new childcare places and supported a further 26,900 existing places.

2.8.5.2 A successor programme is now in place and this is expected to create a further 25,000 new childcare places.

2.9 WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

2.9.1 Women are still very much under-represented in political office in Ireland with women occupying less than 14 per cent of the seats in the two Houses of Parliament. However Ireland has had two successive female Presidents since 1990 and three of the cabinet Ministers are women (including the Tánaiste or Deputy Prime Minister). Women also hold two junior Ministerial posts.

2.9.2 Women only form 3 per cent of Chief Executives of the top 500 private sector companies. Recent statistics show that 220,000 men hold managerial and administrator roles, while there are only 112,000 women at this level.

2.9.3.1 Within the Irish Civil Service 66 per cent of civil servants in general grades are women while only 13 per cent of those at the top two levels are women. Accordingly there is a need for further advancement of women into decision making roles.

2.9.3.2 Government policy with regard to equal opportunities in the Civil Service has continued to focus on increasing the representation of women in the key middle management grades with the aim of ensuring that a sufficiently large pool of women would be available to provide more senior managers.

2.9.3.3 The adoption of strategic objectives and targets, both centrally and at individual Department level, has proved successful in addressing the representation of women in the key middle management grade of Assistant Principal. The target is that one third of all posts at Assistant Principal level be filled by women by June 2005 has been achieved in all Departments and exceeded in several. A shift in focus has been set on individual targets in the Assistant Principal grade relevant to existing level of representation of women in each Department. The next challenge will be to ensure that the increases achieved at this key grade are followed through in the senior management grades. The target is that 27% of Principal Officer level posts be filled by women by 2011.

2.9.3.4 The Department of Finance has an Equality Unit which supports the development of equality initiatives in the civil service, including on gender equality. The Unit drafted a new gender equality policy and monitors Government targets in this area. The Unit liaises directly with Personnel Managers in Government Departments who are required to report annually on gender equality issues.

2.9.3.5 The Irish Civil Service continues to monitor and improve on a comprehensive range of family- friendly working arrangements that are available to staff.

2.9.4 Women's representation on State Boards

2.9.4.1 In July, 2002, the Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (with special responsibility for Equality), initiated a review of the gender balance composition of the State Boards and Committees under the aegis of Government Departments with a view to taking measures to redress gender imbalances, where the 40% target set by Government in 1993 had not been reached.

2.9.4.2 In January 2005 the Government decided that all agencies nominating persons to State Boards and committees should provide both male and female nominations to the relevant Minister. Female membership on State Boards at end of 2007 was 34% as compared to 29% in June 2002. During 2007, women comprised 41% of appointments made to State Boards. The percentage of State Boards chaired by women exceeded 20% at end December 2007 compared with 14% in June 2002.

2.10 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

2.10.1 See part 3 for details of the Equality machinery which deals with gender equality in Ireland

2.10.2 Equality for Women Measure

2.10.2.1 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has delivered a programme of positive actions to support gender equality since 2000. The first Equality for Women Measure covered the period 2000 – 2007 and formed part of the National Development Plan for the period. The Measure was part funded by the European Social Fund.

2.10.2.2 The Measure was delivered in a number of phases. Phase I of the Measure covered the period 2000 to 2004 and contained eight Strands, which were largely open to applications from State Agencies, NGOs and Community based not-for-profit groups

- A. Access to employment, education and training with a particular emphasis on retraining and upskilling of women.
- B. Career development for women.
- C. Entrepreneurship among women.
- D. Innovative projects for disadvantaged women and women over 50 years of age.
- E. Promoting gender balance in decision making. Gender proofing of personnel policies.
- F. Family friendly policies in employment.
- G. Programme of research.

2.10.2.4 Phases 2 and 3 (2005 – 2007) specifically focused on women living in areas of urban and rural disadvantage and were largely focused on the preparation of marginalised women for employment and the engagement of women in decision making.

2.10.2.5 Almost €30 million in funding was made available over the eight year period to 140 projects. It is estimated that over 30,000 women engaged with the various projects with over 8,000 receiving formal training programmes.

2.10.3.1 In May 2008, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform announced a successor Measure which would encompass four Strands addressing:

- Access to Employment
- The advancement of women already in employment
- Women and Entrepreneurship
- Women and Decision-making

2.10.4 This new Measure will, when implemented, build upon the learning from the previous Measure. Its full implementation is linked to the public financial situation at present and is under active consideration at time of writing.

Part Three

Institutional development

3.1 Ministerial and Departmental Responsibility

3.1.1 As previously reported, cabinet responsibility for gender equality rests with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform who has the support of a Minister of State with responsibility for Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health.

3.1.2 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Strategy Statement aims to promote a caring, integrated and equitable society and notes that the Department and the Justice organisations are responsible for supporting programmes whose aim is to develop a more caring society in which equality of opportunity is promoted and advanced. The Department addresses issues of equality, discrimination and diversity in terms of gender, racism, disability and any other spheres requiring attention and also ensures that all legally resident immigrants are supported in integrating into Irish society.

3.1.3 The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, has responsibility, under the direction of the Minister, for fostering the achievement of true equality between women and men in Ireland; implementing specific commitments in the Programme for Government on gender equality; monitoring national and international commitments on gender equality; and reporting on gender equality issues for which other Government departments and State agencies are responsible. This includes implementation of the National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016. It also includes funding for a programme of positive actions to foster gender equality. In its role, the Gender Equality Division also represents Ireland at a number of international fora, including EU, UN and Council of Europe.

3.2 Work of Parliamentary Committees

3.2.1 As mentioned previously, the Joint Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights and its Select Committee continued their work of considering the impact of national equality policy and legislation on women. The Committees debate legislation on women's rights and provide a parliamentary focus for women's groups and others to discuss women's policy concerns.

3.2.2 Over the past five years, the Committee has undertaken work related to gender issues which influenced the formulation of legislation and/or policy making. Among the discussions which took place were the following:

- May 2004 - discussion on the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Bill, which was subsequently enacted.
- December 2004- similar process was followed in relation to an Adoptive Leave Bill
- December 2004 – discussion on the National Domestic Violence Intervention Agency
- April 2005 - Childcare
- May 2006 - Human Trafficking

- January 2007 - Domestic Violence
- December 2008 – Discussions with Equality Rights Alliance

3.3 National Mechanisms – the Legal Base

3.3.1 The Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2008 prohibit discrimination in the workplace, self employment and in vocational training. The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008 prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, facilities, accommodation and education. The legislation outlaws discrimination on the following nine grounds:

- gender,
- marital status,
- family status,
- age,
- disability,
- sexual orientation,
- race,
- religion and
- membership of the Traveller community.

3.3.2 These pieces of legislation also provided for the establishment of the Equality Authority (established 1999) and the Equality Tribunal (previously the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations (established 1999) and replaced by the strengthened Equality Tribunal in 2004).

3.4. National Mechanisms – The Equality Authority

3.4.1 The Equality Authority was established in 1999 under the Employment Equality Act 1998. Although funded through the Vote of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Authority is an independent state body. Its functions and powers were amended under the Equal Status Act 2000, the Equality Act 2004 and the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008.

3.4.2 This legislation establishes the general functions of the Equality Authority. These include:

- To work towards the elimination of discrimination in relation to the areas covered by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2008 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008.
- To promote equality of opportunity in relation to employment and vocational training and in relation to the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education.
- To provide information to the public on the working of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2008, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008, the Maternity Protection

Acts 1994 and 2004 and Adoptive Leave Acts 1995 to 2005. The Parental Leave Acts 1998 to 2006 also accords the Equality Authority an information role on the provisions of the legislation

- To keep under review the workings of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2008, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008, the Maternity Protection Acts 1994 and 2004 and the Adoptive Leave Acts 1995 to 2005 and to make recommendations for necessary change to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

3.4.3 The equality legislation provides the Equality Authority with a range of explicit powers to implement these functions. These include:

- to provide assistance at its discretion to those who consider that they have been discriminated against if there is an important point of principle involved or if it is unreasonable to expect the person to represent themselves;
- to prepare Codes of Practice for submission to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform which, if approved, can be relied on in relevant court proceedings;
- to undertake or sponsor research;
- to conduct an inquiry for any purpose connected with its functions and to recommend actions on foot of this inquiry;
- to undertake or sponsor activities related to the dissemination of information;
- to invite a business to carry out an equality review and prepare and implement an equality action plan or, where appropriate and where the business does not have less than fifty employees, to carry out such a review and prepare such an action plan on its own initiative;
- to take cases on its own initiative in certain defined circumstances.

3.4.4 The Annual Reports of the Equality Authority show that the Authority responds to about 10,500 queries each year. These can relate to any of the nine grounds for discrimination listed in the Irish legislation. Queries in relation to the Maternity Protection Acts, Parental Leave and Adoptive Leave form the majority (about 75 per cent) of these queries.

3.4.5 The Authority also has a body of legal case files on hand at any one time. The Authority's most recent Annual Report (2007) shows that, of the 737 cases on hand in 2007, the age ground was the highest for case files under the Employment Equality legislation that year (24 per cent), with the disability ground the highest if all three pieces of legislation were considered together. Race (63 files) and gender (65 files) were also a significant focus of cases under the Employment Equality Acts.

3.4.6 The Equality Authority has also published a body of research projects and have actively engaged with small and medium sized enterprises, and with larger public and

private sector employers in the development of equality reviews and action plans and a number of other initiatives which raise awareness and address issues in relation to equality.

3.4.7 The Equality Authority has recently published its new Three Year Strategy, to cover the period 2009 – 2011. This Strategy “builds upon ten years of investment in the equality infrastructure” and includes the following strategic goals:

- The majority of people in Ireland are aware that they have rights and responsibilities under equality legislation and that they have statutory leave entitlements.
- Enhanced access to redress under Irish equality legislation and EU Equal Treatment Directives for people experiencing discrimination.
- A proactive approach by employers and service providers in key sectors to promote equality and achieve compliance with equality legislation.
- Continuous enhancement of evidence for and understanding of equality issues.
- Practical responses made to critical priority issues for groups experiencing inequality.
- An effective and efficient Equality Authority.

3.5 National Mechanisms – The Equality Tribunal

3.5.1 The Equality Tribunal is the accessible and impartial forum to remedy unlawful discrimination. It is an independent statutory office which investigates or mediates complaints of unlawful discrimination. It operates in accordance with the principles of natural justice and its core values are impartiality and professionalism, accessibility and timeliness.

3.5.2 The Tribunal has powers to investigate under three pieces of legislation: the Employment Equality Acts, the Equal Status Acts and the Pensions Acts.

3.5.3 The Equality Tribunal's principal role is the investigation and mediation of complaints of discrimination in relation to employment and in relation to access to goods and services, disposal of property and certain aspects of education. This protection against discrimination applies to all nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited under the new equality legislation. Where a complaint of discrimination is upheld, redress can be awarded.

3.5.4 An investigation is a quasi-judicial process carried out by a Tribunal Equality Officer who will consider submissions from both parties before arranging a joint hearing or hearings of the case to enable him/her to reach a Decision in the matter. Investigations are conducted by trained Equality Officers who have extensive powers to enter premises and to obtain information to enable them to conduct an investigation. Decisions are binding and are published.

3.5.5 The 2006 Annual Report of the Equality Tribunal shows that it received 628 referrals in 2006. This included 448 under the Employment Equality Acts, 166 under the Equal Status Acts and 14 under the Pensions Acts. Under the Employment Equality Act, 74 cases referred to gender alone (a decrease of 14 cases from the previous year) while seven of the cases referred under the Equal Status Acts referred to gender alone (again a decrease of 5 cases on the previous year). Under each piece of legislation, significant numbers of cases cite multiple grounds for discrimination (over 20 per cent in each case).

3.5.6 The outcomes of all cases processed by the Equality Tribunal are published.

3.6 Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in Irish Policymaking

3.6.1 Some progress was made in relation to gender mainstreaming across all Civil Service Departments in the early years of the present decade. Each Government Department was asked to appoint a focal point to assist with reporting on gender equality. Departmental Strategy Statements and Customer Action Plans were to include specific references to gender equality. Progress under these measures is currently under review.

3.6.2 The National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 (NDP) (which received considerable grant support from the European Structural Funds) was a €40 billion cross-sectoral investment programme aimed at further developing the Irish economy and Irish competitiveness. The Plan contained specific commitments in relation to gender equality.

3.6.3.1 A dedicated NDP Gender Equality Unit was established in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to foster gender equality within the National Development Plan and in the many Government Departments, State Agencies and other bodies involved in the implementation of the NDP. The Unit assisted policy makers to incorporate a gender equality perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of NDP policies, so that they responded to the needs of both women and men.

3.6.3.2 The NDP Gender Equality Unit promoted gender across the different NDP Operational Programmes of Human Resources and Development, Regional Development, Productive Sector and the Economic and Social Infrastructure by:

- **Providing advice, training and information** - over 1,000 policy makers and social partners were trained by the Unit;
- **Providing data to support gender mainstreaming** – a database of gender disaggregated statistics and sectoral statistical reports in agriculture, business and entrepreneurship, transport and housing;
- **Engaging in a research programme** – the Unit’s broad range of guidance materials including a gender proofing handbook and a set of NDP measure-specific ‘gender equality relevance’ sheets;
- **Monitoring the implementation of Government NDP commitments on gender equality** - the Unit presented an annual assessment of progress;

- **Supporting participation by community & voluntary groups in the gender mainstreaming process** – this work culminated in an international conference which was held during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2004.

3.6.3.3 The NDP Gender Equality Unit initiated a number of innovative projects in support of its work:

- a Labour Market Initiative for Lone Parents;
- an integration project for parents of Irish Born Children who were granted leave to remain in Ireland;
- an enterprise project to promote women in business;
- a project funded under the Change Management Fund which developed modules on gender equality for inclusion in particular third level courses.

3.6.3.4 The achievements of the NDP Gender Equality Unit will inform future policy and activities in relation to gender mainstreaming.

3.6.3.5 A pilot project is currently underway in the Gender Equality Division to develop mechanisms to raise gender mainstreaming awareness in Government Departments. This project will, when fully developed, be rolled out across all Government Departments.

3.6.4 As mentioned previously (see Part 2.8) The **Department of Finance** is responsible for developing policy and promoting best practice in gender equality across the Irish civil service.

3.7 Representing Women's Interests – the National Women's Council of Ireland

3.7.1 The Irish Government continues to make significant funding available (over €40,000 in 2009) to the National Women's Council of Ireland, the umbrella organisation for women's groups in Ireland.

3.7.2 The role of the National Women's Council of Ireland is to work with its members to determine core priorities and 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 such as social welfare reform, childcare and women's health to inform and shape ongoing lobbying and campaigning activity.
- Developing policy submissions to Government and other agencies on matters critical to the achievement of women's equality.
- Building the capacity of women's organisations to organise, lobby and campaign for equality and social change.

- Undertaking outreach and development projects and providing tools and resources to support women and in particular women from marginalised communities to work for change and the advancement of all women.
- Networking, working collaboratively and building solidarity with the broad community sector in Ireland to support and influence a wider social inclusion agenda.
- Media work, issuing regular press releases and participating in television and radio debates to ensure the visibility of issues pertinent to women and to promote public dialogue on the position of women in Irish society.
- Information dissemination, to our affiliates and to the general public, on initiatives, programmes, policy and legislative developments of concern to women.

3.7.4 The NWCI was a member of the National Women’s Strategy Consultation Group which contributed to the development of the National Women’s Strategy. The NWCI is a member of the NWS Monitoring Committee which is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Strategy. The National Women’s Council also represents women’s interests at national social partnership level.

3.8 Monitoring mechanisms on gender equality in Ireland

3.8.1 The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion keeps oversight in relation to the issue of gender equality in Ireland.

3.8.2 Implementation of the National Women’s Strategy is co-ordinated through an Inter-Departmental Committee chaired by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

3.8.3 Progress in the implementation of the Strategy is overseen by the National Women’s Strategy Monitoring Committee, which is chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Gender, Disability Issues and Mental Health. at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.. Membership of the Monitoring Committee includes all Government Departments and relevant State Agencies, together with the Social Partners, including the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI), the Irish Farmer’s Association (IFA) and the Community and Voluntary sector.

3.9 Indicators on Gender Equality

3.9.1 A number of data sets are accessed to provide information on the position of gender equality in Ireland. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is the primary source of national statistics.

3.9.2 In 2004, the CSO developed a new annual publication which focuses on “Women and Men in Ireland”. It contains over 70 indicators arranged across eight domains and includes a number of key statistics which link to European Union gender/social policy.

It also includes time series and comparisons with other EU countries for these key indicators, as appropriate.

3.9.3 Eurostat and the European Commission also gather statistics on gender related issues on a regular basis. The Commission, in collaboration with Member States has also developed a series of indicators in relation to key areas of concern under Beijing and again Ireland has participated actively in this work.

3.9.4 The Gender Equality Division collects data from all Government Departments on the number of Women on State Boards and this Report is presented to Government periodically.

3.9.5 Apart from these publications which focus specifically on gender issues, the CSO also endeavours to present gender disaggregated data for all its key publications. There is scope for further development in this regard and this will be addressed in the future.

Part Four:

Remaining challenges and actions to address them

4.1 Further Actions and Initiatives

4.1.1 As mentioned previously, the Irish Government is committed to the full implementation of the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016. An outline of the structure of the Strategy is given on Part 1.4 of this response.

4.1.2 The Strategy contains over 20 key objectives and work is underway across a range of Government Departments and Agencies to implement the 200 plus actions encompassed under those objectives. The following is a list of the key objectives:

THEME	EQUALISING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN
Objective 1-A	To increase the participation of women in the labour force
Objective 1-B	To decrease the gender pay gap
Objective 2	To promote the advancement of women in the labour force
Objective 3	To support more women as entrepreneurs
Objective 4	To seek to ensure that girls and women achieve their full potential in the education system
Objective 5-A	To ensure that childcare services are optimised to meet the needs of parents and children alike
Objective 5-B	To ensure that the care infrastructure supports women's socio-economic engagement
Objective 6-A	To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty
Objective 6 - B	To reduce the numbers of female lone parents who experience poverty
Objective 6 - C	To reduce the numbers of women experiencing poverty by increasing pension cover
THEME	ENSURING WOMEN'S WELLBEING
Objective 7	To enhance the work/life balance for women
Objective 8-A	To improve the health status of women in Ireland through gender focused policies
Objective 8-B	To improve the physical health status of women in Ireland
Objective 8-C	To improve the reproductive and sexual health status of women in Ireland
Objective 8 - D	To improve the mental health status of women in Ireland
Objective 8-E	To promote healthy lifestyles for the women in Ireland
Objective 9	To increase the number of women participating in sport and physical activity in Ireland
Objective 10	To ensure the health and safety of pregnant and breast feeding women at work
Objective 11	To protect women from bullying and harassment in the workplace
Objective 12	To combat violence against women through improved services for victims together with effective prevention and prosecution
Objective 13	To address the issue of trafficking of women and children
THEME	ENGAGING WOMEN AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS
Objective 14	To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland
Objective 15	To increase the number of women involved in the arts in Ireland
Objective 16	To use media proactively to support gender equality and the advancement of women
Objective 17 - A	To foster the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals through Irish Aid
Objective 17 - B	To use multi-lateral aid and development policy to promote the role of women and gender equality in developing countries
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
Objective 17- D	To ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all parts of the United Nations System
THEME	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY
Objective 18	To implement gender mainstreaming as the principal instrument for the achievement of gender equality in Ireland
Objective 19	To provide financial support to implement the National Women's Strategy
Objective 20	To ensure that the National Women's Strategy is fully implemented

4.1.3 The NWS gives a commitment to undertake an Interim Review of the Strategy every 3 years with the first review to take place in 2010. The Interim Review will provide an

opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the Strategy to date and to incorporate any amendments deemed necessary to improve on the Strategy. The Interim Review will take cognisance of the recent economic difficulties which will pose particular problems for the most vulnerable in society.

4.2 New Commitments linked to the Strategy

4.2.1 In addition, the Monitoring Committee of the National Women's Strategy was asked to identify topics which might be afforded special attention during 2009.

4.2.2 A "Women and Business" Sub-Committee has been proposed by IBEC (the Irish Business and Employers Confederation) under the National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee, of which IBEC is a member. Work on the sub-committee will be advanced during 2009.

4.2.3 A "Women in Politics and Decision-Making" Sub-Committee has been proposed by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) under the National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee, of which the NWCI is a member. Work on the sub-committee will be advanced during 2009.

4.3 Gender mainstreaming

4.3.1 Reference was made in Part 3 to a pilot project being undertaken to achieve greater gender mainstreaming in policy making. This project will be further developed in the coming years.

4.3.2 Gender budgeting has been developed in a number of countries and there is a need to review its relevance to the Irish budgetary process over the next few years. The Irish budgetary situation varies from that of many countries in that it is very centralised with the bulk of public expenditure coming from central taxation. This may make the introduction of a gender perspective into the budget more challenging.

4.4 Other Issues

4.4.1 There are a number of other issues which merit closer examination in the future in an effort to achieve greater gender equality. These include

- The gender pay gap
- The availability of gender disaggregated data
- Segregation in the labour market
- Greater sharing of caring responsibilities in the domestic setting
- Gender stereotyping

4.4.2 Mention is made of all of these issues in the National Women's Strategy and they will be reviewed as time permits within the ten year time frame of the Strategy.

4.4.3 Finally the funding of a further programme of positive actions to support women is under active consideration at present, in light of the difficult public financial scenario.

In the event that the Equality for Women Measure cannot continue to receive funding, it will be necessary to devise other methodologies to foster gender equality in Ireland.