



National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020: creating a better society for all

Department of Justice and Equality
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Foreword by Ms Frances Fitzgerald T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality

The development of this National Strategy for Women and Girls has been a priority for me as Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality. I recognise that women continue to be treated unequally and this Strategy will provide a crucial framework for action to address the remaining obstacles to women's equality.

The Strategy is intended to respond to women's needs across a diversity of identities and situations. It focuses on the needs of working women by proposing to continue to increase investment in childcare, to take action to tackle the gender pay gap, to improve the conditions of women in precarious employment, and to provide additional help to women entrepreneurs. Lone parents and socially excluded women will have improved access to education, training and employment opportunities as a result of this Strategy.

The Strategy's key thread is that of visibility. We need to see more women participating in decision-making across Irish society so that decision-making can be more representative and reflective of both women's and men's priorities. If women are to change their circumstances fundamentally, they need to have greater access to the levers of power across Irish society. We also need to ensure that disadvantaged women, older women, women with disabilities, Traveller and Roma women and migrant women can participate in

key decisions concerning their lives.

Taking the mantra "if you can see it, you can be it", this Strategy aims to shine a light on equal roles for women and girls in all aspects of society - in the domestic and family sphere; in their communities; in education; in working life; in Ireland's cultural and sporting sectors; as pioneers in business, in academic life, in the sciences; and as leaders.

This 'living document' will evolve to respond to the changing patterns of girls' and women's lives. New actions will be added over the coming years. It will support women having children later in life. It will protect the safety of young girls and women online. It will combat the enduring threat of gender-based violence.

Achieving greater equality for women will build a prosperous world for all of us. There is an incalculable gain for society if its members, women and men alike, can expect to enjoy respect, opportunities and the benefits of fulfilling lives.

The National Strategy for Women and Girls sets this ambitious vision for the Ireland of 2021. It is crucial that we take action now so that by 2021, we will be well advanced on the journey to full equality for women and girls.



Foreword by Mr David Stanton T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration

I welcome the publication of the National Strategy for Women and Girls as an important step forward on the journey to equality for women in Ireland. I was pleased to serve as Chair of the Strategy Committee tasked with its development.

The Strategy sets out a series of actions to promote women's equality in the workplace, in sport, in politics and in the arts. It is for the diversity of women, rich and poor, old and young, from all communities, rural and urban. It provides concrete measures to tackle issues such as the gender pay gap, precarious employment or promoting female entrepreneurship. It recognises that women have to get an equal seat at the table if they are to be in a position to influence the decisions that will affect their lives. As a result, it puts a focus on promoting women's leadership, in politics, business, sport, the arts and in local communities. The Strategy seeks to make women more visible so that their voices can be heard on issues of concern for them. The aim is to enable women to be equal and active citizens within Irish society.

Achieving progress on women's equality is in all of our interests. If we enable mothers to realise their potential, their children will have

higher aspirations as a result. Girls and boys will have positive role models for their futures. Getting it right on women's equality will help us to understand how to tackle male disadvantage and inequalities that affect other groups as well.

I am calling on men and boys to play their part in supporting women's equality, to act as equality champions in their families, their schools, their workplaces, among friends and within the community. We can show that women's equality matters to us, that we want our wives, daughters, mothers and girlfriends to have equal opportunities in our society.

Acting together, we have the ability to reach the Strategy's goal of an Ireland where women enjoy equality with men, reach their potential and have fulfilling lives.

“an Ireland where all women
enjoy equality with men and
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1. Background and Context

The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 has as its vision to work towards:

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

The Strategy is a living document, which is influenced by its context and will evolve as circumstances change over the period to 2020.

It is underpinned by the societal values of equality, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, generosity, intersectionality, diversity and respect for human rights. It recognises that achieving its vision will involve shared responsibility between Government, business, civil society and individuals of all genders at national and local level. It will require accountability from public and private sector organisations in the delivery of the actions outlined in the Strategy.

The Strategy’s success will depend on the shared engagement of women and men, girls and boys, in building a fairer society which allows women and men alike to flourish.

1.1 Why do we need a National Strategy?

The National Strategy is the framework through which the Government will pursue actions to advance the rights of women and girls and to enable their full participation in Irish society. A strategic approach is needed to identify remaining barriers which prevent women from achieving their full potential and from enjoying opportunities on a par with men. As opportunities and outcomes can differ for women and girls depending on their age, sexual orientation, gender identity, civil status, beliefs, ethnicity or ability, a national strategy is needed to address instances of multiple discrimination and to put forward positive action measures for women and girls who experience particular disadvantages arising from the intersection of gender with other aspects of their identity. There is an intrinsic right to equality that needs to be addressed.

Action to promote women’s equality will benefit society more broadly. It is recognised that enabling women to exercise rights and opportunities will generate wider prosperity for the country. The OECD has estimated that achieving gender parity would add 0.6 percentage points to the world’s annual GDP growth rate. It has calculated the economic gain for the world at US\$12 trillion.

More broadly, changes in gender norms should enable men to share more fully in caring roles for their children and families and thereby to enjoy the benefits of family life. Equally, a society committed to supporting the potential of all will be more attuned to the needs of men and boys. In addition, policy responses aimed at tackling multiple discrimination against women will benefit men who experience similar disadvantages. The wellbeing of society will gain from an increased priority on equality and from reduced tolerance for violence in all its manifestations.

1.2 European and international context

This Strategy needs to be seen in the context of the promotion of gender equality in the EU and the wider international community. The challenges facing societies in this endeavour vary to an extent from one country to another but have large elements in common as well.

Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union states that the EU shall promote equality between women and men. The same objective is reflected in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 8) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 23).

On 7 March 2011, the Council of Ministers adopted the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020). This covers, in particular, measures to close gender gaps and combat gender segregation in the labour market, to promote better work-life balance for women

and men, and to tackle all forms of violence against women.

The current strategy statement of the European Commission is the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 which prioritises the following areas: equal economic independence for women and men; equal pay for work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, adopted a Declaration and Platform for Action setting out a comprehensive agenda for the achievement of gender equality. The latter called on governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to take action in the following critical areas of concern: the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; inequalities and inadequacies in, and unequal access to, education and training, and in health care and related services; violence against women; the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation; inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources; inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels; insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women; lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of

the human rights of women; stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to, and participation in, all communication systems, especially in the media; gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment; and persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child. The implementation of the Platform for Action is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. At the Commission's session in 2015, governments agreed to strive for full gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2030. Ireland has been elected to the Commission for 2017-2021 and will chair the Commission for two years from 2018. Ireland will use this opportunity to prioritise the promotion of gender equality and the

implementation of agreed commitments.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was agreed at a UN Summit in New York in September 2015, and sets out a plan of action for the world and its people in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. SDG 5 is concerned with the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Targets are set under this goal with a view to ending discrimination, eliminating violence against women and harmful practices, recognising unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring women's full and effective participation in leadership and decision-making, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance



with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, equal access to economic resources, and enhancing the use of enabling technology to promote women's empowerment. In addition, the Declaration adopted with the 2030 Agenda recognises that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial. Other SDGs which are relevant are SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and SDG 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are at the core of Ireland's programme for international development, Irish Aid, which is overseen by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *The Global Island*, Ireland's foreign policy for a changing world, also commits to advancing gender equality, particularly at the multilateral level.

Ireland has been a Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women since 1985. In September 2016, we submitted our Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (established under the Convention). The Reports were considered by the Committee on 15 February 2017. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee welcomed the

progress achieved in undertaking legislative reforms since the consideration in 2005 of the Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports. It also welcomed Ireland's efforts in improving its policy framework in accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women. The Committee made recommendations or urged particular courses of action in relation to the following issues:

- Ireland's reservations to the Convention;
- the elimination of discriminatory stereotypes, the achievement of substantive equality between women and men, Article 41.2 of the Constitution, and section 14 of the Equal Status Act;
- maternity services, abortion and contraception;
- Magdalene laundries, children's institutions, Mother and Baby homes, and symphysiotomy;
- resources for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and funding of non-governmental organizations;
- the formulation of indicators, benchmarks and timelines in this Strategy, gender mainstreaming, and the collection of data disaggregated by sex and other characteristics in order to inform policy and programmes and track progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- use of temporary special measures;
- intersex children;
- violence against women, human trafficking, prostitution;
- women's participation in political and public life;
- women, peace and security;
- education, the labour market, social protection;
- disadvantaged women, rural women;
- women prisoners;
- family relations and maintenance;
- the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and ratification of certain treaties.

The Committee's observations are being considered by the relevant Government bodies.

The realisation of equality between women and men has been high on the agenda of the Council of Europe as well. Its current Gender Equality Strategy covers 2014-2017 and builds upon the vast legal and policy acquis of the Council as regards gender equality. The overall goal of the Strategy is to achieve

the advancement and empowerment of women and hence the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe Member States by supporting the implementation of existing Council of Europe standards. Two of the standards that are relevant are the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, to which Ireland is a Party, and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which we are committed to ratifying.

Ireland has been a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since shortly after its establishment in 1961. The OECD is promoting gender equality in the areas of public governance, corporate governance, development, financial education, health, science, taxation and wellbeing.

The primary goal of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Gender equality is a key element in reaching this goal and is a cross-cutting policy driver for all ILO policy outcomes. The ILO Policy on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming supports a two-pronged approach of gender mainstreaming: analysing and addressing in all ILO initiatives the specific needs of both women and men, and targeted interventions to enable women and men to participate in, and benefit equally from, development efforts.

1.3 The National Women's Strategy 2007-2016

The National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 was adopted after extensive consultation with civil society and stakeholders in the public and private sectors. It set out to achieve progress under three overarching themes: equalising socio-economic opportunity for women; ensuring the wellbeing of women; and engaging as equal and active citizens.

Shortly after publication of the 2007 Strategy, Ireland suffered a severe recession, meaning the priorities for implementation changed and reduced funding was available. However there has been significant progress during the period across a range of areas:

- A robust legal framework for gender equality and to address violence against women is in place, with a substantial body of new legislation introduced over the past decade.
- The policy framework has been fleshed out, and detailed strategies are now in place addressing issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, and women in peace and security.
- The institutional mechanisms for equality and human rights have been consolidated with the establishment in 2014 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and in 2015 of the Workplace Relations Commission. Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, was established

in 2007 and recently published the *Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021*. The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit was established in the Department of Justice and Equality in 2008 and has published the *Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland*. The Child and Family Agency, Tusla, was established in 2014.

- Services to assure the reproductive and sexual wellbeing of women have improved and a first national maternity strategy is in place. Under the strategic direction of the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, births to teenage mothers have halved over the past 14 years and now represent only 2% of all births.

Moreover, gender equality increasingly features in mainstream public discourse, particularly in regard to business and political leadership, healthcare, academia, sports and the arts.

1.3.1 Employment

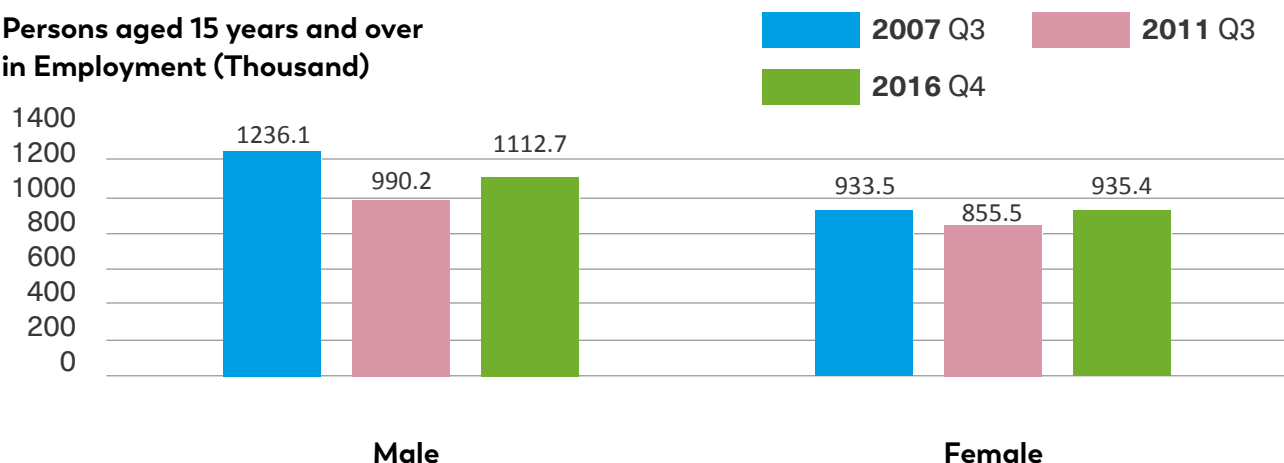
Despite the economic downturn, and consequent shrinkage of employment opportunities from 2008, the number of women in employment has already returned to the levels seen at Q3 of 2007¹.

1.3.2 The Oireachtas and the Judiciary

The enactment of the Electoral (Amendment)

¹ CSO; QNQ19: Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment by Employment Status, Sex and Quarter

Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Thousand)



(Political Funding) Act 2012 introduced gender quotas for national politics, requiring political parties to select at least 30% of candidates of each gender for national elections or else lose 50% of their State funding for the parliamentary term. The outcome was an increase in the number of female candidates running in the 2016 general election. 35 women were elected to the Dáil in 2016, an increase of 10 on the 2011 general election and the highest number of female TDs ever. The percentage of women among Dáil members rose to 22% from 15% in 2011. The report by the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform adopted in May 2016 made proposals for changes to Dáil procedures to make the sitting hours more family-friendly, including by holding many of the House's votes on Thursday afternoons.

There has been a significant increase in the percentage of women serving as judges. Women have been appointed to senior legal and judicial positions in the State. At present, 34% of Irish judges are female. In the District Court, 31% or 19 out of 61 are female. The

Circuit Court has 43% female representation. In the High Court, women constitute 26% of judges and in the Supreme Court, four of the 9 judges are women, including the Chief Justice. The number of female judges has almost tripled in the past two decades.

Other highly visible senior positions in the justice system currently held by women include the Attorney General, the Chief State Solicitor, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the State Pathologist, the Director General of Forensic Science Ireland, the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána, and the Chair of the Policing Authority.

1.3.3 Board Appointments

Progress continued to be made over the past decade to meet the target, set in 1993, that women should constitute at least 40% of the membership of State boards. In 2006, women comprised 34% of all board members. The Government introduced new Guidelines on

Appointments to State Boards in 2014, which included a package of measures to meet the 40% target, including the requirement for Government Departments to establish implementation plans. The Government also set an enhanced target of 45% for boards already meeting the 40% target.

Since the launch of the Guidelines, 30% of over 7,500 applications received for state board appointment came from women, who made up some 45% of the appointments. As of February 2017, women constitute 38% of board members, the highest percentage since the target was introduced. The 40% target has been met by 101 boards (47%), which represents an increase of 8 percentage points since December 2013.

1.3.4 Women in the Civil Service

Significant progress has been made to advance women into senior and middle management positions in the Civil Service. The previous National Women's Strategy set a target for 27% of all Principal Officers to be women. That target has been exceeded significantly. Women now constitute 40% of all Principal Officers, 33% of all Assistant Secretaries and 20% of all Secretaries General. Since 2009, there has been an increase of 13 percentage points in the percentage of Principal Officer positions held by women (27% in 2009) and an increase of 3 percentage points in the percentage of women at Assistant Secretary and Secretary General levels. As part of its wider gender equality programme, the Department of

Foreign Affairs and Trade, has also prioritised increasing gender equality in staff assignments at home and abroad. As of March 2017, women are serving as Heads of Mission (at Assistant Secretary and higher level, at Counsellor level and at First Secretary level) in 25% of Irish Embassies or Consulates General (20 of 80) around the world. This represents an increase from 18% in 2011.

Improving gender balance is a key strand within the Civil Service Renewal Programme. In January 2017, the Government announced further measures designed to foster greater gender equality. The measures announced include a new target of 50/50 for senior level appointments. The merit principle of "best person for the job" will continue to apply in recruitment and promotion competitions and all senior level vacancies are filled by open competition. Where two candidates of equal merit come to the Top Level Appointments Committee for an Assistant Secretary vacancy, preference will be given to the female candidate where women are under-represented on the Management Board of the Department in question.

1.3.5 Changing Families / Changing Gender Norms

Ground-breaking legislative reforms were enacted over the past five years which have advanced the rights of diverse families and have recognised changing family situations and gender norms.

Ireland introduced civil partnership for same-sex couples in 2010 and many children are now being raised by same-sex parents. Ireland then made history on 22 May 2015 when it became the first country in the world to bring in marriage equality for same-sex couples through a popular vote. The Marriage Act 2015 came into operation on 16 November 2015 and provided that same-sex couples could marry and have their relationships recognised by society as equal and enjoying the protection of the Constitution. This also provides legal certainty for the children of same-sex couples. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 was enacted in April 2015. The Act is child-centred and addresses the rights of children to legal security, to the care of their parents and important adults in their lives, and to equality before the law. Step-parents, civil partners and cohabiting partners can now apply for custody, or to become guardians of a child. The Act also makes it easier for grandparents and other key people in a child's life to apply for access. These

reforms in family law recognise the crucial role of parents and the need for a child to maintain meaningful relationships with both parents. The Department of Health is currently undertaking the preparatory work necessary to enable Parts 2 and 3 of the Act, which provide for parentage through donor-assisted reproduction, to be brought into operation.

The Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 introduced paid statutory leave for new fathers for the first time in Ireland. Fathers of newborn children are now entitled to a combined package of two weeks leave and benefit of €230 a week, which they can avail of within six months of the baby's birth. It recognises the importance of enabling fathers to take on a greater sharing of caring responsibilities for their children. The Programme for Government committed to support families where one parent stays at home to care for their children through an increase in the Home Carer's Credit. The credit was increased by 10% (from €1,000



to €1,100) in Budget 2017, providing additional support to jointly assessed couples where one partner works primarily in the home to care for children or incapacitated persons.

Legislative reform has also enabled transgender persons to be recognised in their preferred gender. The Gender Recognition Act 2015 provides for a person to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate to have their preferred gender recognised by the State.

1.3.6 Education

Educational attainment rates for women have risen significantly since 2007 and continue to be higher than they are for men. In 2016, 82.9% of women aged 25-64 had completed at least upper secondary education compared to 71.2% in 2007 (the comparable rates for men are 76.9% in 2016, up from 64.6% in 2007) and 58.4% of women aged 30-34 had successfully completed tertiary education compared to 48.9% in 2007 (the comparable rates for men are 46.4% in 2016, up from 38.7% in 2007). In addition, early school leaving rates for females

have decreased to 4.8% in 2016² from 8.6% in 2007.

1.3.7 Embedding gender in decision-making

The introduction in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 of a positive duty which requires public bodies to have due regard to equality and human rights has provided a mechanism to apply a gender lens to decision-making.

The Department of Social Protection undertakes rigorous and extensive ex-ante and ex-post social impact assessments of the main welfare and direct tax budgetary policies as does the Department of Finance in the case of tax policy changes. This assessment uses a tax-welfare simulation model known as SWITCH, developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), to measure the distributive and poverty impacts of policies on family types, lifecycle groups and gender. Since 2013, integrated social impact assessments, which include the main welfare and direct tax measures, have been published in annual budgets. Their purpose is to inform public understanding on the cumulative effect of budgetary policies on income distribution and social equality.

In addition, based on the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to develop a process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social

2 Eurostat education and training database. 2016 figures are provisional.



rights, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has developed a new ex-post Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Framework as a first step towards supporting a more comprehensive assessment of the impacts of certain budgetary measures on household outcomes.

This new Framework has been designed to complement the current distributive analysis of the proposed tax and social welfare measures set out in the Budget each year by the Departments of Finance and Social Protection and which is published immediately post-Budget. This work will now be supplemented by a series of papers published by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) each year. These papers will focus on policy areas that cannot easily be incorporated into the SWITCH model. In this regard, the papers will largely focus on the impacts of public expenditure on recipients.

As the first step in this iterative process, it is intended to undertake point-in-time exercises examining current expenditure in certain policy areas in order to establish a baseline position. This baseline position should identify the level of spend in a given policy area, and the key drivers of expenditure and will aim to generate a profile of those impacted by the expenditure. This should facilitate the analysis in future years of the impacts of future Budgetary policy changes in those areas. The first two papers under this new Framework were published at Budget time last year and a number of other papers are being developed for publication in 2017.

The Government has committed in the Programme for a Partnership Government to developing the institutional arrangements to support equality and gender proofing in the new independent fiscal and budget office and within key government departments and to draw on the expertise of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) to support the proofing process.

1.4 Challenges

The key challenge is to retain an ambition for women's equality in the context of competing demands for action on other equality issues. A mistaken impression that women's equality has essentially been achieved has served to sap energy and attention from the issues still needing to be addressed. There is a renewed need to make the case, particularly among young women, for continued action on gender equality.

There are particular challenges in the following areas:

1.4.1 Leadership and decision-making

While progress has been made to improve female representation in national politics and on State boards, women remain under-represented in decision-making roles in many areas of Irish life.

Women continue to be under-represented on corporate boards. While the percentage of women non-executive directors of corporate

boards³ increased by 9 percentage points between 2007 and 2016, the percentage still remains low at 16%. Women are similarly under-represented in senior positions in the financial sector. The Central Bank indicated in March 2017 that women occupied only 20% of senior management positions in the financial services sector between 2012 and 2016. As Ireland continues to promote, develop and grow its international financial services sector, diversity and inclusion feature as key elements of the IFS2020 Action Plan 2017. The 30% Club is also preparing a Women in Finance Charter to promote greater participation of women in senior positions in the financial sector.

While gender equality is well-established in Irish higher education legislation, there remains a gender imbalance in the staffing of Irish higher education institutions, particularly at senior levels. Although there is gender-balance at entry-level academic grades, serious gender imbalances occur for higher level academic positions. Currently 81% of academic professor positions are filled by men. Men also represent 72% of the highest paid non-academic staff. This is not a problem that is unique to Ireland. Gender inequality in employment in higher education is an internationally observed issue. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions, published in 2016, highlighted the importance of achieving gender equality in employment in higher education institutions as a “means to maximise their pursuit of excellence and successfully meet the many social, economic and cultural challenges

of the future”. Progress on this ambition will be a focus during the lifetime of this Strategy.

1.4.2 Employment and gender gaps

Labour market participation rates for women have returned to 2006 levels and stood at 53.3% in quarter 4, 2016⁴. The number of women employed increased by 2.7% in quarter 4, 2016 as compared to quarter 4, 2015. However, there continues to be a gap of almost 14 percentage points between the labour force participation rate of women and that of men, which was 67.1% in quarter 4, 2016. While the proportion of men working part-time has doubled since 2006, in quarter 4, 2016 women were still almost three times more likely than men to work part-time, with a third of employed women in that situation.

1.4.3 Income

Consistent poverty levels are higher for women than men. In 2015, the consistent poverty rate for women was 9.1% compared to 8.3% for men. The risk of poverty for women over 65 is 2.6%, slightly less when compared to 2.9% for men over 65. The Government has taken a series of actions to address consistent poverty levels. Budget 2017 increased social welfare payment rates for pensioners, people with disabilities, carers, widows, lone parents and job seekers by €5 per week. In January 2017, the Government increased the level of the National Minimum Wage to €9.25 an hour.

3 Statistics on board membership of ISEQ20 companies, Eurostat, October 2016

4 CSO, Main QNHS Release Time Series Tables, QNHScoreQ42016

1.4.4 Violence Against Women

Domestic and gender-based violence continues to be experienced by women across social classes and situations. According to the *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)* study published in 2014, 8% of women surveyed in Ireland experienced sexual violence by a partner or a non-partner since the age of 15. According to the same survey, 24% of women surveyed in Ireland experienced physical violence by a partner or by a non-partner since the age of 15. The Domestic Violence Bill will enhance the legislative measures available within the civil law system to support and protect victims.

1.4.5 Education and Training

While women continue to outperform their male counterparts in educational attainment rates, it is notable that females remain underrepresented in STEM type courses and careers. The Department of Education and Skills is committed to addressing the gender imbalance in STEM subject uptake and will be preparing a STEM Education Policy Statement and implementation plan during 2017. Initiatives to address negative stereotypes around STEM careers for women are also being undertaken by employers and employer bodies, in recognition of the importance of addressing the imbalanced representation of women in the sector.

The numbers of women in apprenticeship remains low, as acknowledged in the 2014 Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland,

reflecting the concentration of apprenticeships in sectors that have traditionally low levels of female employment. While SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, offers a bursary to employers to encourage them to employ female apprentices in these areas, the level of takeup of apprenticeships by females remains low. The Apprenticeship Council, established on foot of the 2014 Review, is overseeing the expansion of the apprenticeship system into a range of new areas of the Irish economy. In recent months the first of these new programmes has commenced and further new apprenticeships will get underway in 2017, many in sectors with a more gender balanced workforce. As set out in the recently published Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020, SOLAS will review the pathways to participation in apprenticeship in a range of diverse groups, including female participation, in light of the broadening of the apprenticeship system into new areas. The review will be completed in 2018 and any recommendations made will be implemented immediately. As part of the plan to expand apprenticeship, SOLAS will introduce a new branding and marketing campaign which will promote the value of apprenticeship to women and their potential employers.

1.4.6 Women with particular disadvantages

The diversity of women poses a challenge as outcomes on employment, poverty, leadership, and wellbeing can vary widely depending on a woman's situation. Outcomes are significantly poorer for Traveller women across a range

of areas. Lone parents and women with disabilities continue to have much lower rates of labour market participation. Roma and some migrant women also experience significantly poorer outcomes in terms of employment and access to resources. The needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons are less well understood, with less evolved policy responses as a result. Positive action measures are needed where specific categories of women experience particular disadvantages.

1.4.7 Constitutional Issues

The question of Article 41.2 of the Constitution regarding a 'woman's life within the home' was examined by the Convention on the Constitution which reported on it in May 2013. The recommendations of the Convention were subsequently examined and reported on by a Task Force of officials in the Department of Justice and Equality. There is a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government that a referendum will be held on this provision. Taking account of this, proposals will be brought forward, for the Government's consideration, for a Bill to amend the Constitution.

The Government established a Citizens' Assembly in 2016, in line with its Programme for Partnership Government commitment to consider the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Article 40.3.3) and their conclusions on the matter will be submitted to the Houses of the Oireachtas for further debate

later in 2017.

The effect of the Eighth Amendment (Article 40.3.3.) is to prohibit abortion in Ireland except where the life of a pregnant woman is at risk. The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 regulates access to a termination of pregnancy - the main purpose of the Act is to restate the general prohibition on abortion in Ireland while regulating access to lawful termination of pregnancy in accordance with the X case and the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the A, B and C v Ireland case.

1.5 What the Strategy will do

The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 provides the policy framework on which the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to the advancement of equality for women over the next four years are set out. It represents a whole of Government approach to improve outcomes for women, recognises the shared responsibility for achieving these results and the importance of taking measures to the maximum of available resources.

The four-year timeframe has been selected to allow for a focus on early achievement of concrete outcomes, contributing to incremental advances across several fields.

The overall goal is to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life at all levels, and to improve

services for women and girls, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes. In promoting equal treatment and the empowerment of women and girls, this Strategy is inclusive of individuals whose sex characteristics, gender identity or gender expression is female.

The policy framework will focus on the following outcomes – that women and girls in Ireland should

- enjoy economic security and equal socio-economic opportunity with men and boys;
- experience improved physical and mental health;
- exercise equal and active citizenship;
- participate equally in leadership in all areas of Irish life;
- experience a reduction in gender-based violence;

and that a gender perspective is taken into account by the machinery of government.

These outcomes are in line with the global agenda to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in Goal 5 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Strategy sets out the actions to be taken towards achieving these outcomes, the measures enabling and supporting their implementation, and the arrangements by which progress will be tracked and reviewed. Recognising the diversity of women and girls, broad-based actions will aim to take account, where possible, of women's and girls' diversity. In addition, specific actions are proposed to address issues affecting specific groups of women and girls.

The development of proposals to implement the actions included in the Strategy should be strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Public Spending Code to ensure that the best possible value-for-money is obtained whenever public money is being spent or invested, to support the achievement of objectives to which the actions relate and to provide the data required to assess impact and effectiveness.



2. Consultation

2.1 Consultations with civil society and with the public

A public consultation paper was published on 23 November 2016 and written submissions invited on the high level objectives and desired outcomes for the Strategy, and the priorities for action over the next 4 years. The consultation was launched on social media by the Tánaiste, Frances Fitzgerald TD and Minister of State David Stanton TD, who also took an active part in the consultations. The process remained open for written submissions until the end of January 2017, with 95 written submissions received.

A series of public meetings with stakeholders and the wider public also took place during December and January, in Cork, Athlone, Dublin and Sligo, based on the public consultation paper. A summary report of views expressed by participants at these meetings will be published on www.genderequality.ie.

2.2 Contribution of the Strategy Committee

A Strategy Committee was appointed in February 2017 to advise the Department of Justice and Equality on the preparation and implementation of the new Strategy. Its membership included representatives of each

Government Department, the HSE, Enterprise Ireland, the County and City Management Association, Ibec, ICTU, the National Women's Council of Ireland, the USI, the IFA, The Wheel and the Community Platform. The membership of the Strategy Committee is set out at **Appendix I**.

The terms of reference of the Strategy Committee were as follows:

1. The Strategy Committee (“the Committee”) shall advise on the development and implementation of the new Strategy by the Department of Justice and Equality.
2. The Committee shall advise the Department of Justice and Equality on the following, having regard to the results of the public consultation to inform the new National Women's Strategy, and to the individual members' expertise and experience:
 - key issues for women and girls in Ireland that are most relevant to address over the next four years;
 - the priority high-level objectives to be pursued under the new National Women's Strategy;

- the outcomes which the Strategy should aim to achieve; and
 - actions which could be taken to advance those objectives and achieve those outcomes.
3. The Committee shall provide information to the Department of Justice and Equality on:
- data relevant to the situation as regards gender equality in Ireland;
 - indicators, targets and means of monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender equality in Ireland;
 - any other relevant matters.

The Committee met on three occasions during February and March 2017.



3. Structure of the Strategy

The overall goal of the Strategy for the 2017-2020 period is

to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life, at all levels, and to improve services for women and girls, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

It is proposed to advance this goal through six high-level objectives, as follows:

- Advance socio-economic equality for women and girls
- Advance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of women and girls
- Ensure the visibility in society of women and girls, and their equal and active citizenship
- Advance women in leadership at all levels
- Combat violence against women
- Embed gender equality in decision-making

Actions to be undertaken on each of these objectives are set out in chapters 5 to 10.

The Strategy is intended to be a living document. Further actions will be added where necessary over its lifetime.



4. Monitoring and Reporting on Implementation

4.1 Strategy Committee

The Strategy Committee, chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for gender equality, will continue to meet on a regular basis after publication of the Strategy to advise on its implementation. The Committee will also have the task of assessing whether further action is required on specific issues or if actions need to be added to the Strategy or changed to respond to changing needs, and making recommendations to the Department of Justice and Equality in that regard.

It is intended that the facility will exist to add further actions to the Strategy over its lifetime. A prioritisation exercise will take place in relation to the actions to be implemented first. During the initial implementation phase, a traffic light system will be developed aimed at enabling the Strategy Committee to monitor progress on individual actions and across each objective.

Gender Equality Division in the Department of Justice and Equality will support the Strategy Committee in its work and will also coordinate the implementation of the Strategy, with ongoing engagement with relevant Departments, agencies and stakeholders to ensure that progress is on track.

Inter-Departmental teams will be established to problem solve on issues where problems emerge in the implementation of actions.

Audits will be undertaken of the Strategy in terms of value for money and overall impact. A mid-term review will be carried out on the Strategy in mid-2019 as will an independent evaluation in 2021.

On the basis of the Strategy Committee's work, progress reports will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform and published annually on the Department of Justice and Equality gender equality website, www.genderequality.ie.

4.2 Definition of Targets and Indicators

Gender Equality Division will develop targets and appropriate indicators against which the outputs and impact of the Strategy's actions will be measured. The Strategy Committee will advise on the development of targets and indicators for monitoring progress on implementing the Strategy.

4.3 Monitoring and review timetable

Action	Timeframe
Targets and indicators agreed for all actions.	Q3 2017
1 st progress report submitted.	Q2 2018
2 nd progress report submitted.	Q2 2019
Mid-term review concluded.	mid 2019
3 rd progress report submitted.	Q2 2020
Final evaluation report submitted.	Q2 2021



5. Objective One: Advance Socio-Economic Equality for Women and Girls

Women and girls continue to experience barriers to full socio-economic equality. The issues that need to be addressed include the gender pay gap, the higher percentages of women in low-paid and precarious employment, the higher risk of poverty experienced by lone parents, the need to ensure the availability of affordable and quality childcare, the continuing occupational segregation of women and the lower rates of female entrepreneurs.

The Strategy proposes to support mothers in paid employment by extending the family leave entitlements available to parents of young children and by implementing a new national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare.

A series of measures are proposed to address the gender pay gap. These will include the introduction of wage surveys to be undertaken by companies with more than 50 employees and the development of practical tools to enable companies to calculate and to address the gender pay gap.

Female entrepreneurs will be supported through a series of funding programmes and through networking opportunities at local level.

The situation of disadvantaged working women will be addressed through the increase in the National Minimum Wage, the introduction of legislation to regulate precarious work and through the introduction of a new Working Family Payment.

Measures are proposed to enhance access to education and training opportunities, particularly for lone parents and for socially excluded women living in poverty.

A National STEM⁵ Education Policy Statement will be developed to promote greater uptake by girls of science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. A review will also be undertaken aimed at identifying how female participation in apprenticeships can be improved. The aim is to widen the opportunities available to girls and to reduce occupational segregation of women.

With the aim of ensuring that pension policy takes account of the women's differing work patterns, future pension policy reforms will be gender proofed to assess their impact on women as well as men.

5 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

Government Departments, State agencies and partners are already committed to:

- Acting on poverty and social inclusion through the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*.
- Advancing the specific socio-economic situations of particular groups such as migrant, Traveller and Roma, and LGBTI women and women with disabilities, through the *Migrant Integration Strategy*, and the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities* and through the forthcoming *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy*, *National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy*, and *National Disability Inclusion Strategy*, all currently being drafted. The implementation of these strategies will each be monitored and reported on a gender-disaggregated basis.
- Delivering 47,000 social housing units through *Rebuilding Ireland*.
- Reviewing the level and trend in female participation in apprenticeships in 2018 and implementing the *National Skills Strategy 2025*, the *ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018* and the *Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship 2016-2020*. They will also review guidance services, tools and careers information for school students and adults and recommend changes to improve the services available.
- Ensuring access to further and higher education is not determined by gender, socio-economic disadvantage, etc., by implementing the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019* and the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*.
- Placing an emphasis on female labour market participation and female entrepreneurship by implementing the *Action Plan for Jobs* and the *Pathways to Work* programmes.
- Enhancing career progression for researchers and initiatives currently in place to improve participation of women in research and innovation activities through *Innovation 2020: national strategy on research and development, science and technology*.
- Promoting female entrepreneurship as a topic of importance in the mid-term review of the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland*.
- Promoting female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland by implementing the “*Realising our Rural Potential*” *Action Plan for Rural Development*.
- Implementing the *National Youth Strategy*, the overall aim of which is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential by respecting their rights and hearing their voices while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood. A key principle ingrained in the

strategy is to ensure an equality perspective is integrated into all policies and practices.

- Implementing the *Action Plan on School Age Childcare (March 2016)* which highlighted the importance of after-school childcare for continued growth in female labour market participation.
- Implementing the *White Paper on Defence 2015*, which addresses both the current

gender imbalance in the Defence Forces and our commitment to include a gender perspective in our approach to defence policy, planning and operations.

- Implementing the *Framework for Action for One World, One Future, Ireland's policy for international development*.



Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Improved supports for working parents	1.1 Provide a platform of parenting supports for families and working parents.	2020	DCYA
Increased availability of family leave and work-life balance to support parents in their caring role for children	1.2 Publish proposals for the implementation of the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to expand paid leave in the first year of a child's life by end-2017 and legislate for them as soon as possible thereafter.	2017-2020	DJE (lead), relevant Depts and agencies
	1.3 Promote initiatives to support women returning to work from maternity leave.	2017-2020	DJE (lead), relevant Depts and agencies
All parents have access to quality, affordable childcare	1.4 Implement, on a phased basis, a new national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of quality childcare.	2017	DCYA
	1.5 Maximise use of schools and existing community facilities which have suitable environments available for school-age childcare where demand exists and where it can be facilitated by the school patron/trustees. Consider how increased use of school buildings could be facilitated, taking into account the issues raised to date, and engage with property owners and school authorities to facilitate increased use of school buildings where feasible. Engage further with the relevant education stakeholders and school property owners to formulate guidelines for schools to facilitate the use of school buildings out-of-hours.	Q2 2017	DES (lead), DCYA
Information gathered to support Government investment in childcare	1.6 Conduct and publish an independent review of the cost of providing quality childcare in private and community settings, consistent with the principle of ongoing professionalization of the sector.	2018	DCYA

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Increased access to training opportunities for women	1.7 Fund the provision of locally delivered courses for women, comprising a series of training opportunities on self-development and work related skills, to assist a return to the labour market and promote entrepreneurship.	2017-2020	DJE
The gender imbalance in STEM education and careers is tackled	1.8 Produce a National STEM Education Policy Statement along with a detailed implementation plan with responsibilities and timelines clearly outlined.	Q2 2017	DES
	1.9 Review the existing research base on barriers to the uptake of STEM careers by females including subject uptake at post-primary level.	Q3 2017	DES
	1.10 Commence guidelines for promotion of STEM careers to young people and parents (of primary and post primary children), in conjunction with Science Foundation Ireland, parents, guidance counsellors, higher education institutions, the Further Education sector, students and industry, having particular regard to gender imbalance. The guidelines should take account of exemplars of best practice and resource implications.	Q4 2017	DES
Increased female participation in apprenticeships	1.11 Commission a review on pathways to participation in apprenticeship and implement recommendations thereafter. The review will examine patterns of participation by diverse groups in apprenticeship, including female participation, and will identify any barriers existing and will make recommendations for the future.	2018	SOLAS, DES
Increased number of women returners to the labour market	1.12 Publicise the eligibility of homemakers to apply for Springboard+ courses ⁶ from June 2017 and monitor takeup by gender.	from June 2017	DES, HEA
The employment rate of women is brought closer to 69-71% to meet the Europe 2020 target for Ireland	1.13 Consider an action specifically directed at increasing the employment rate of women, having regard to the different needs of different groups (e.g. lone parents).	2017-2020	DJE, relevant Depts and agencies

6 From 2017, the eligibility criteria for ESF-funded Springboard+ programmes has been expanded to include homemakers. It provides free full-time and part-time higher education courses, at level 6 (higher certificate) to level 9 (masters degree) on the National Framework of Qualifications, in areas where there are identified skills needs and/or employment opportunities. Courses to date have been delivered in areas such as ICT, the biopharma sector, construction, entrepreneurship, cross-enterprise skills, the hospitality sector and international financial services.

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Improved position of women on low pay, and/or in precarious or low hours work	1.14 Aim to increase the minimum wage to €10.50 per hour over the next five years, relying on the recommendations from the Low Pay Commission on the level of adjustment each year.	2017-2020	DJEI, Low Pay Commission
	1.15 Bring forward legislation in response to problems caused by the increased casualization of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious work (among men and women).	By 2020	DJEI
Female participation in the Defence Forces increased	1.16 Develop further initiatives to encourage more women to apply for the Defence Forces and to increase female participation at all ranks. This will include a survey to identify any impediments to the advancement of women in the Permanent Defence Force, as well as the impact of the requirements of career courses and overseas service on female retention and advancement.	2017-2020	DDefence
Increased awareness among women, and among employers of employment rights, and redress mechanisms	1.17 Publish statistics every six months on employment equality decisions by the Workplace Relations Commission, disaggregated by the nine grounds of discrimination.	Ongoing	WRC
Increased action by businesses on equality and diversity	1.18 Consider the feasibility and benefits of an “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mark” for business.	2018-2019	DJE (lead), in consultation with DJEI, Ibec and ICTU.
Socially excluded women, particularly those living in poverty, are supported to access education, training and employment opportunities	1.19 Support and resource women’s community development, as a means to provide services and support for socially excluded women. Support community organisations, such as the National Collective of Community-based Women’s Groups, who engage with women who experience disadvantage in order to build capacity and increase participation in existing community-based socio-economic programmes.	2017-2020	DJE (lead) and relevant Depts

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Improved access to education, training and employment opportunities for Traveller and Roma women	1.20 Include actions in the forthcoming National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2020) to support initiatives in relation to Traveller and Roma women's education and employment, including by provision of community-based supports for retention of Traveller and Roma children in the education system.	2017-2020	DJE (lead)
Reduce the gender pay gap	1.21 Undertake a package of measures to tackle the gender pay gap.	2017-2020	DJE (lead), with DJEI, Ibec and ICTU
	1.22 Initiate dialogue between union and employer stakeholders to address the gender pay gap. Develop and promote practical information resources to explain and increase understanding of the multifaceted aspects of the gender pay gap and its causes (i.e. traditional role models, gender-segregated education and labour market, the challenges of balancing work and family life, the difference in participation of men and women in family responsibilities, the availability of quality, affordable childcare facilities and out-of-school hours care, and processes within organisations where imbalance needs to be addressed). Develop practical tools to assist employers to calculate the gender pay gap within their organisations and to consider its aspects and causes, mindful of obligations regarding privacy and data protection.	2017-2020	DJE (lead), relevant agencies, Ibec and ICTU
	1.23 Promote wage transparency by requiring companies of 50 or more employees to complete a wage survey periodically and report the results.	2017-2020	DJE (lead) and relevant agencies

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Increased numbers of women engaged in entrepreneurship	1.24 Provide support for rural female entrepreneurs at start-up stage, e.g. through the 'ACORNS' programme	Ongoing	DAFM
	1.25 Publicise and encourage participation by women in start-ups, including a targeted Competitive Start Fund.	2017-2020	Enterprise Ireland, DJEI
	1.26 Support and publicise women specific entrepreneur awards and events.	2017-2020	Enterprise Ireland, DJEI
	1.27 Deliver the National Women's Enterprise Day on a regional basis.	Q4 2017	Enterprise Ireland, LEOs ⁷
	1.28 Support women in business networks to establish female specific peer learning.	2017-2020	LEOs
	1.29 Provide funding for female entrepreneurship.	2017-2020	DJE
	1.30 Examine, as part of the mid-term review of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, measures that could ensure an increased number of women start and run their own businesses.	Q4 2017	DJEI
	1.31 Continue to publicise the Department's dedicated female entrepreneurship webpages.	Ongoing	DJEI

7 Local Enterprise Offices

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Poverty reduction of female-headed households, including lone parent families	1.32 Reduce the gap in poverty rates between female-headed households and male-headed households. Measures to be undertaken to include programmes to assist return to the labour market and encourage entrepreneurship.	2017-2020	DSP (lead), SOLAS, ETBs
	1.33 Examine the existing suite of in-work supports for families, including lone parent families. Based on this examination, finalise proposals for an approach to the Working Family Payment. The main principles guiding this approach are to make work pay and to reduce child poverty.	2017-2018	DSP
	1.34 Publish an Action Plan for Jobless Households, containing targets aimed at supporting those in jobless households into employment and reducing child poverty.	2017	DSP
	1.35 Promote awareness of and access to Department of Social Protection employment supports, in particular in the area of entrepreneurship (Back to Work Enterprise Allowance), via DSP Case Officers and promotional campaigns, as appropriate.	Ongoing	DSP
The findings of the Independent Review of the amendments to the One-Parent Family Payment are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas	1.36 Commission an independent review of the financial and social effects of the amendments to the One-Parent Family payment made since 1 January 2012, taking into account the effects on welfare dependency and the poverty rates of those in receipt of the one-parent family payment.	2017	DSP
Reform of divorce process	1.37 Seek to reduce the number of years for which spouses must have lived apart before granting a divorce, as per the Thirty-Fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Divorce) Bill 2016.	2018-2020	DJE

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Increased visibility of women's contribution to agriculture	1.38 Clarify any perceived taxation barriers to registering farms in joint ownership, and publicise outcomes.	2017-2020	DAFM, DFinance, Revenue
	1.39 Improve statistics and reporting on women's involvement in the agri-food sector.	2017-2020	DAFM, CSO, Teagasc, Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland
Future pensions policy to safeguard outcomes for women under the State pension system	1.40 All state pensions reform plans proposed by the responsible Department (DSP) (including the current Total Contributions Approach (TCA) reform process) will be analysed for expected gender impact.	2017-2020	DSP, DFinance
Reduce the gender pension gap	1.41 Increase women's access to pensions in their own right by improving their access to private and occupational pensions. Assess the impact of any future reforms to pension policy in this area on women and take actions if appropriate.	2017-2020	DSP, DFinance

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland's international relations	1.42 Support programmes to ensure that women have equal access to and control over resources, services and opportunities.	2017-2020	DFAT
	1.43 Support national and sub-national education strategies that focus on improving access to quality education and skills training to enhance employment opportunities for women and girls.	2017-2020	DFAT
	1.44 Support the development and implementation of social protection policies and programmes that address gender inequality - with a focus on the most vulnerable such as female headed households.	2017-2020	DFAT
	1.45 Ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is prioritised in Ireland's overseas development assistance programme, particularly in relation to agriculture and nutrition.	2017-2020	DFAT, DAFM



6. Objective Two: Advance the Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing of Women and Girls

Health and wellbeing of women and girls over their life course

The Healthy Ireland Framework provides the over-arching context for progressing actions under this objective. Healthy Ireland takes a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to improving health and wellbeing, with a focus on prevention, reducing health inequalities and keeping people healthier for longer. It also seeks to address the many social and environmental determinants that can impact on health and wellbeing, such as education and employment. In that sense, achievement of the other strategic objectives of this Strategy will also significantly contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of women and girls living in Ireland. Healthy Ireland takes a lifecourse approach so the principles of healthy lifestyles are supported throughout life, from childhood to older age, and recognises the significant influence that maternal health can have on the health and wellbeing of babies and children. It is important that a focus on healthy lifestyles is permeated through the various supports provided to parents and families, through various early years and educational settings, as well as through the wider community and workplaces.

The first National Maternity Strategy (2016-2026) endorses a health and wellbeing approach which supports and empowers mothers and families to improve their own health and wellbeing as a strategic priority, in addition to access to safe, high quality woman-centred maternity care, and facilitation of a woman's choice of care pathway.

In recognition of the increased demand for assisted human reproduction, in February 2016 the Health Research Board was engaged to conduct a comprehensive review of international public funding models for assisted human reproduction. This Health Research Board evidence review was published early in 2017 and will be analysed by officials in the Department of Health in the context of considering policy options for a potential public funding model for assisted human reproduction treatment.

Separately, and as committed to in the Programme for a Partnership Government, officials in the Department of Health are currently drafting the General Scheme of legislative provisions on assisted human reproduction and associated research. It is intended that the General Scheme will be completed in 2017. This comprehensive piece of legislation will regulate a range of practices

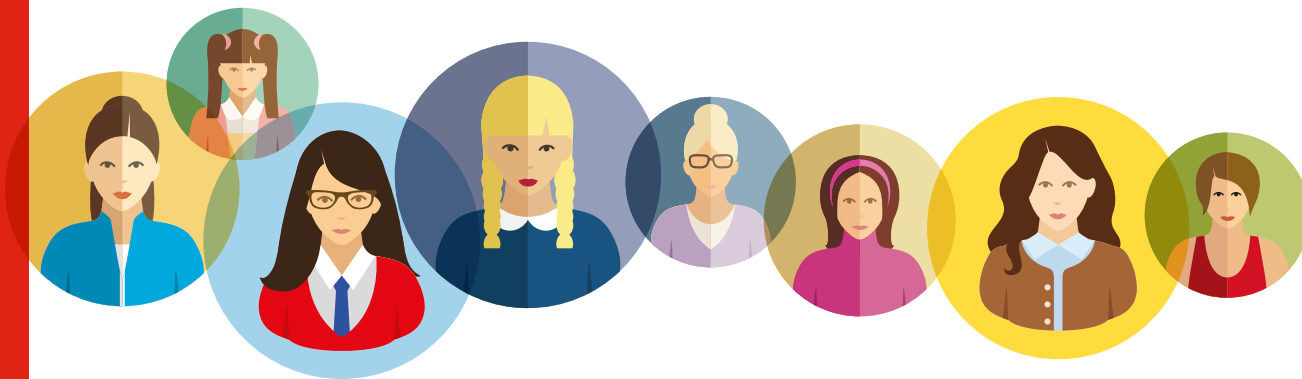
for the first time, including: gamete (sperm or egg) and embryo donation for assisted human reproduction and research; surrogacy; pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) of embryos; posthumous assisted reproduction; and stem cell research. The General Scheme will also provide for an independent regulatory authority for assisted human reproduction.

There are currently a number of issues of focus where further improvements in the health and wellbeing of girls and women could have significant impacts.

The Healthy Ireland Surveys 2015 and 2016 show that while women are generally less likely to be overweight than men, the proportions that are obese are more closely aligned, and women aged 15-24 are much more likely to be obese than men in that age range. In addition, younger women are much more likely to have a substantially increased metabolic risk (waist measurements showing levels of abdominal fat considered to be a predictor of strokes and

premature death due to obesity). Women aged 15-24 also spend longer sitting than any other group in the population. In addition, while men are generally more likely to smoke, no difference exists between men and women aged 15-24. Some of these findings, particularly around levels of overweight and physical inactivity among women aged 15-24, raise concerns about the potential implications not only for their own health in terms of risks of developing chronic disease later in life, but also in terms of their health as parents of the next generation and the effects their health may have in terms of fertility, pregnancy, birth, and neonatal complications and also in the establishment of healthy behaviours in their children. These findings point to the need to empower young girls and women to make healthy lifestyle choices and, through enhanced supports, to improve the health, wellbeing and resilience of women of all ages.

Other specific health issues where further focus is needed to improve awareness and support



healthier choices include smoking cessation, safer alcohol consumption, uptake of the HPV vaccine and consumption of folic acid.

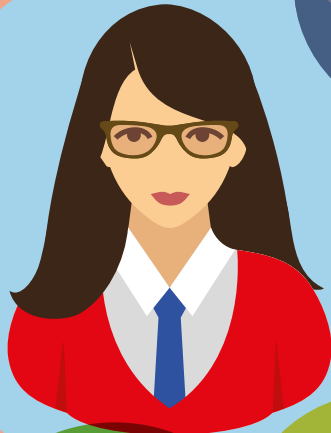
While carers include both men and women, a majority of carers are women, in particular older women. Women also represent a majority of older people with dementia. The continued implementation of both the Dementia Strategy and the Carers' Strategy will improve the situation of women both as carers and cared-for.

The 2016 Programme for a Partnership Government sets out the Government's commitment to the roll out of BreastCheck to women aged 65 to 69 years of age. This extension is currently being rolled out on a phased basis, and will provide important cancer screening to women in this age group. The new National Cancer Strategy sets out the future development of cancer services in Ireland. The number of cases of cancer in women increased year on year between 1994 and 2014. The National Cancer Strategy has a significant focus on prevention and early diagnosis which will help to address the rising numbers of women with cancer in Ireland. At the same time, more women are surviving cancer than ever before, and the new Strategy will ensure that services are provided to enable all cancer survivors to return to as normal a life as possible.



Government Departments, State agencies and partners are already committed to:

- Implementing *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people* and supporting the *National Youth Health Programme*.
- Implementing the *Healthy Ireland Framework* and a range of policies and strategies under the Framework, including *Tobacco Free Ireland*, the *National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland: Get Ireland Active*, the *National Sexual Health Strategy* and the *Obesity Policy and Action Plan: A Healthy Weight for Ireland*.
- Implementing the *Action Plan on Bullying* which sets out that all grounds for harassment under the Equal Status Acts should be listed in anti-bullying policies (i.e. gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).
- Implementing *Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020*.
- Addressing the specific health needs and wellbeing of Traveller, Roma, LGBTI women and women with disabilities will be in the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy*, the *LGBTI Inclusion Strategy*, and the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy*, respectively.
- Implementing the *Joint Probation Service-Irish Prison Service Strategy: an Effective Response to Women Who Offend 2014-2016*.



Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Improved physical and mental health & wellbeing of women and girls	2.1 Strengthen partnership work with the National Women's Council of Ireland in identifying and implementing key actions to address the particular physical and mental health needs of women and girls in order to advance the integration of their needs into existing and emerging health strategies, policies and programmes through an action plan for women's health.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE, NWCII
Improved outcomes for carers and cared-for women	2.2 Continue to implement the <i>National Carers' Strategy</i> and the <i>National Dementia Strategy</i> . Exploration of the regulation and financing of the home care sector.	Ongoing	HSE
Increased availability of primary care services	2.3 Provide maternity cover for staff absences in primary care centres where possible. This will help to ensure continuity of the existing level of service where there is a high concentration of women in the health care workforce.	Ongoing	DHealth
Girls and young women are supported in their social and emotional development through the provision of community based youth services	2.4 Ensure a gender perspective is brought to the ongoing reform programme of targeted youth service provision.	2017-2018	DCYA
Increased proportion of women and girls are physically active	2.5 Implement relevant actions in the <i>National Physical Activity Plan</i> to support increased participation by girls and women in physical activity, including the development of programmes to address transitions and drop out from physical activity and sport.	2017-2020	DHealth, DTTAS, DES
Improved health and wellbeing of women over 65	2.6 Extend the Breastcheck programme to women aged 65-69 years.	2017-2020	DHealth
Improved healthcare support for women and girls from an intercultural perspective	2.7 The second HSE <i>National Intercultural Strategy</i> will include a specific section directed to the care and support of women and girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds.	Q4 2017	HSE

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Improved healthcare services and health outcomes for women and girls who have undergone FGM	2.8 Continue to raise awareness among healthcare professionals of the Akidwa/Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland resource “FGM: Information for health-care professionals working in Ireland”, developed with funding from the HSE National Social Inclusion Office.	2017-2020	HSE
Improved health outcomes for Traveller and Roma women	2.9 Include actions in the forthcoming <i>National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy</i> (2017-2020) to support initiatives in relation to Traveller and Roma women’s health including by further developing and enhancing the Traveller Primary Healthcare Projects, and continued engagement with national Traveller organisations.	2017-2020	DJE (lead)
Improved health outcomes for LGBTI persons	2.10 Consider in the forthcoming <i>National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy</i> how best to improve health outcomes for LGBTI persons.	2020	DJE (lead)
Enhanced wellbeing and inclusion of LGBT+ young people	2.11 Issue Ireland’s first national Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT+) Strategy for Young People.	2017-2018	DCYA
Improved health, wellbeing and rehabilitation of women offenders	2.12 Implement the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group in respect of women (sub-actions 15, 18, 21-25 relating to improving the standard of female accommodation in Limerick Prison, conducting further research into the particular needs and circumstances of female offenders and the reasons behind the growth in use of imprisonment for women, placing greater focus on step down facilities for female offenders, the use of gender-appropriate community sanctions, promoting greater contact between offenders and their children and family members) and also the greater use of supported and structured temporary release, access to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and development of alternative sanctions to imprisonment.	ongoing	DJE (IPS)
	2.13 A step down facility from prison for female offenders to be opened.	Q1 2018	IPS, Probation Service

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Reduction in smoking by women and girls	2.14 Awareness campaigns and smoking cessation supports, targeted at groups of women and girls with greatest smoking rates. In conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society, continue delivery of the 'We Can Quit' programme which supports women in disadvantaged areas.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE
Reduction in prevalence of smoking in pregnancy	2.15 Implement the recommendations in the <i>National Maternity Strategy (2016-2026)</i> to provide on-site smoking cessation services in maternity hospitals/units and provide formalised smoking cessation training for midwives and other frontline health professionals.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE
Reduction in unsafe alcohol consumption by women and girls	2.16 Conduct awareness campaigns and support programmes aimed at reducing alcohol consumption among young women, and other targeted groups. This includes relevant recommendations in the <i>National Maternity Strategy (2016-2026)</i> and the aim of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill to specifically provide for health warnings on the harms of drinking during pregnancy on all alcohol labels.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE
Increased proportion of mothers who breastfeed	2.17 Implement the HSE <i>National Breastfeeding Action Plan 2016-2020</i> to advance public support of breastfeeding. This would include the establishment of an inter-agency group to address cultural and other barriers and to normalise breastfeeding.	2017-2020	HSE and others
	2.18 Extend provision for breastfeeding breaks under employment legislation (currently available to mothers of children under 6 months).	Q2 2018	DJE, DCYA, DHealth, DJEI
Improved and standardised maternity care	2.19 Implement the <i>National Maternity Strategy (2016-2026)</i> . The Strategy aims to ensure that appropriate care pathways are in place in order that mothers, babies and families get the right care, at the right time, by the right team and in the right place. It recognises that, while all pregnant women need a certain level of support, some will require more specialised care. Accordingly, it proposes an integrated model of care that encompasses all the necessary safety nets in line with patient safety principles.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Data to guide effective supports for women with disabilities before and after they have children	2.20 Undertake further research to guide maternity services and supports for women with disabilities during and post pregnancy.	Q4 2019	NDA
The supports to all mothers, as provided by the statutory National Healthy Childhood Programme, are comprehensively delivered	2.21 Within the context of the <i>National Healthy Childhood Programme</i> (based on a model of progressive universalism), continue to provide the totality of the universally delivered programme of support to mothers.	Ongoing	HSE, DHealth
Improved services to meet mental health needs of women during pregnancy and post-natally	2.22 Design and develop peri-natal mental health service capacity.	2017-2020	HSE
Enhanced nutrition outcomes through increased awareness	2.23 Increase awareness of the importance of healthy eating and folic acid supplementation, particularly among younger women.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE
Drug services meet needs of pregnant women and mothers of young children	2.24 The new Drug Strategy will aim to increase the range of wrap-around services to meet the needs of women who are using drugs and/or alcohol in a harmful manner, including those with children and those who are pregnant.	2017	DHealth
Surrogacy and assisted human reproduction regulated	2.25 Publish the General Scheme of legislative provisions for regulation of surrogacy and assisted human reproduction. Consider policy options for a potential public funding model for assisted human reproduction treatment.	2017; 2017-2018	DHealth
Women and girls experience improved sexual health and wellbeing and reduced incidences of negative sexual health outcomes	2.26 Implement key recommendations of the <i>Sexual Health Strategy</i> , including those related to sexual health, relationships and sexuality education, and the provision of accessible, friendly sexual health services for all women; and improve HPV vaccination rates in girls and counter misinformation related to this important cancer-preventing vaccine.	2017-2020	DHealth, HSE

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Response to the findings of the Citizens' Assembly put in place	2.27 A Special Oireachtas Committee has been established to consider the Citizens' Assembly report and recommendations on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution and report to both Houses of the Oireachtas within three months of its first public meeting.	Ongoing	Relevant bodies
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland's international relations	2.28 Further address the specific hunger and nutrition priorities of maternal and child nutrition. Work to scale up nutrition specific interventions, in particular those which target the 1000-day window of opportunity and prevent stunting (maternal nutrition, breast-feeding and complementary feeding).	2017-2020	DFAT
	2.29 Within the context of national legislative frameworks, support universal access to quality maternal and reproductive healthcare (including ante-natal care and family planning services).	2017-2020	DFAT





7. Objective Three: Ensure the Visibility in Society of Women and Girls, and their Equal and Active Citizenship

Women and girls continue to be less visible than men and boys in key areas of Irish life, such as in sport or in the arts. Women athletes enjoy less visibility on broadcast media. Women are seriously under-represented as writers and directors in the theatre and in film. This inhibits women's ability to participate on an equal basis in these areas of life, leading to a loss of opportunity for the women concerned. The loss of the potential contribution of diverse women and girls is also to the detriment of society and communities. Social, cultural and sporting activities would benefit from more active engagement by women and girls. There is also a need for women and girls to be encouraged to engage more strategically as equal and active citizens. While women and girls volunteer at the same rates as men, they tend to do so outside formal structures. Consequently, the community engagement of women and girls may not create the same access to decision-making opportunities and influence as that enjoyed by men and boys.

The Strategy proposes a series of measures to promote greater visibility of women in sport, of women athletes on broadcast media and of women in the arts, film and the media. It proposes targeted measures to encourage Traveller and Roma women to engage as equal and active citizens. Recognising the

importance of developing the capacity of young women to become future leaders through their engagement as active citizens, the Strategy includes measures to promote greater participation by young women in the youth sector.

As restrictive gender norms may create barriers preventing women from enjoying visibility on an equal basis with men, action will be taken to encourage organisations to highlight restrictive norms and to develop an agenda for promoting more enabling gender norms.

Government Departments, State agencies and partners are already committed to:

- Promoting the effective participation in public life of groups such as Traveller, Roma, migrant, LGBTI women and women with disabilities through the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy*, the *Migrant Integration Strategy*, the *LGBTI Inclusion Strategy*, and the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy*, respectively.
- Developing *Ireland 2040 - the new National Planning Framework*, and developing *National Guidelines for Child-friendly Communities*.



- Implementing the *National Cultural Policy: Culture 2025* (forthcoming).
- Continued support of the Sport Ireland *Women in Sport* programme.
- Implementing *Our Communities: A framework policy for local and community development in Ireland* (2015) and the *Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2015-2017*.
- Implementing *The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World, 2015*, which commits to advancing gender equality globally and *Global Irish: Ireland's diaspora policy*.

Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Positive gender norms promoted	3.1 Hold a referendum on Article 41.2.1 of Bunreacht na hÉireann regarding a “woman’s life within the home”.	By 2020	DJE
	3.2 Develop an initiative to explore how to consult children and young people on addressing gender-stereotyped norms.	2017-2020	DCYA, DJE
	3.3 Establish a programme of activity, including research, awareness-raising and cultural activities, to promote positive gender norms and to challenge negative gender norms.	2018-2020	DJE
	3.4 Support initiatives to encourage men and boys to be champions of gender equality, drawing on the Men Advocating Real Change, HeForShe, MAN Up and WhiteRibbon initiatives.	2017-2020	DJE, DCYA
Greater female participation in sport and physical activity	3.5 Implement actions recommended in a new national sports policy framework currently being developed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and expected to be launched in mid-2017.	2017-2020	DTTAS & Sport Ireland
	3.6 Promote greater visibility of, and funding for, women’s sport and physical activity, including specific initiatives in areas such as Get Walking, Get Running, Get Cycling and Get Swimming.	2017-2020	DTTAS & Sport Ireland
	3.7 Undertake measures to promote greater visibility of women’s sport in broadcast media. Designate the Ladies Football and Camogie Finals as Events of Major Importance, to ensure they are available for free-to-air broadcasting.	2017-2020	DCCA

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Greater visibility of women in the arts, as participants and in content	3.8 Continue to increase the visibility of women in arts and heritage, including as contributors, creators, curators, in governance and in content through the introduction of gender policies in our National Cultural Institutions, the Irish Film Board and the Arts Council.	2017-2018	DAHRRGA, National Cultural Institutions, Arts Council, Irish Film Board
	3.9 Continue to support the increasing visibility of female creative talent, in the film industry by implementing the Irish Film Board's Gender Equality Six Point Plan, and in the audiovisual sector.	ongoing	DAHRRGA, Irish Film Board, DCCAE
	3.10 The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) will, as part of the implementation of its Statement of Strategy 2017-19, take action to support increased representation of the diversity of Irish society in the broadcast media, with particular focus on gender equality.	2017-2019	Broadcasting Authority of Ireland
Greater levels of participation by Traveller and Roma women in public life	3.11 The forthcoming National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2020) includes commitments to facilitate participation in public life by Traveller and Roma women, including by continuing to fund and support the National Traveller Women's Forum, Mincéirs Whiden, and relevant local community Traveller and Roma projects.	2017-2020	DJE (lead)
Improved data and information with regard to the impact on quality of life for women with disabilities moving to new models of independent living in the community	3.12 Analyse data to evaluate the impact of the policy of moving from institutional care to living in the community, in terms of the extent of community integration for women with disabilities compared to men with disabilities over the period 2016 to 2019.	Q2 2020	NDA
Greater levels of participation in public life by deaf women and girls	3.13 Extend hours of Irish Sign Language (ISL) remote interpretation service to evenings and weekends. Propose legislation to ensure that all public bodies provide Irish Sign Language (ISL) users with free ISL interpretation when accessing or availing of their statutory services.	Q2 2018	DJE (lead)

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Greater gender perspective in youth work	3.14 The Youth Service Grant Scheme supports the provision of volunteer-led youth services; reform of this funding programme will be undertaken with a greater focus on gender and on encouraging the participation of girls, including ethnic minority girls, in youth activities.	2020	DCYA
Women's role in development, peace and security promoted	3.15 Implement the Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015-2018.	2017-2020	DFAT (lead)
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland's international relations	3.16 Support programmes which focus on empowering women, and on strengthening their decision-making role at all levels.	2017-2020	DFAT





Objective Four: Advance Women in Leadership at All Levels

This Strategy's priority will be to advance women's leadership in a wide range of areas – in politics, State boards, corporate boards, the civil service, diplomacy, local communities, the youth sector and in sport. The aim is to ensure women's full and effective participation in, and equal opportunities for, leadership, at all levels.

The objective to advance women in leadership is important for the following reasons:

- women should have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives;
- a key aspect of a representative society is that its leaders are representative of that society;
- it is recognised that the decision-making process benefits from the contribution of a wider range of perspectives.

The Strategy will provide renewed impetus for action to ensure that all State boards achieve the 40% target for representation of women and men. Where the 40% target has been reached, Ministers and nominating bodies will be encouraged to move to a 45% target aimed at achieving gender parity in State board representation.

The Strategy will be the framework for

measures to increase the participation of women on corporate boards which will begin with a review of the current situation to identify recommendations for change.

Action will be taken to increase the participation of women in local government and to support women to have greater visibility in decision-making at community level.

In view of the historic under-representation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions, measures will specifically be taken to provide greater opportunities for Traveller and Roma women to participate in leadership, including in the community and voluntary sector.

Government Departments, State agencies and partners are already committed to:

- Implementing actions under the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* to increase gender balance at senior levels in the Civil Service. This includes new 50/50 targets agreed by Government for senior level appointments and the stipulation that, where two candidates for an Assistant Secretary position are deemed of equal merit by the Top Level Appointments Commission (TLAC), priority would be given

to the female candidate where women are under-represented on the Management Board of the Department/Office in question. The measures proposed by the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB) and agreed by Government also extend a range of supports for staff at all levels. These will include: supporting women during and after maternity leave; extending flexible working; increased

mentoring and focus on career development; raising awareness of gender inequality and unconscious bias; and monitoring trends as we progress towards a more equal workplace. The CSMB has also agreed on a statement of objectives and guiding principles which will guide the CSMB, HR managers and Departments/Offices in taking forward this work.

Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Business leadership is more gender-balanced	4.1 Commission an independent review of the situation of women in the governance and senior management of companies in Ireland and of measures to promote and to increase women's representation, such as targets for business.	2018	DJE (lead) and relevant organisations
	4.2 Informed by the recommendations of the independent review (at action 4.1), develop and implement a package of measures to promote greater representation of women on corporate boards and in the senior management of companies.	2018-2019	DJE (lead) and relevant organisations
Greater female representation in leadership in the agriculture sector	4.3 Encourage female involvement in decision-making and leadership in all parts of the agri-food sector, especially through mentoring and positive case studies.	2017-2020	Agri-food stakeholders
Greater female representation in the leadership of sports organisations	4.4 Implement actions recommended in a new national policy framework currently being developed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and expected to be launched in mid-2017.	2017	DTTAS & Sport Ireland

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Greater female representation in politics	4.5 In line with the Action Programme for Effective Local Government ' <i>Putting People First</i> ' (Chapter 11.8), work with local authorities, the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) and political parties to promote and assist women candidates. Investigate potential supports to promote the participation of women in the 2019 local government elections.	2017-2020	DHPCLG
Greater focus on women's participation and on gender issues at community level	4.6 In the context of supporting a greater focus on women's participation and on gender issues at community level, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) will provide key supports to those most in need in our communities, including disadvantaged women, Traveller and Roma women and women with disabilities, in all Local Authority areas throughout the country. Programme Implementers (PIs) will also ensure gender equality is reflected in their own internal practices regarding their employees and relationships with sub-contractors and suppliers, etc. This will depend on PIs reflecting on their human resources processes to tackle unconscious gender bias and to create a workplace where both women and men can advance into leadership position.	2017-2020	DHPCLG
Achieve gender balance on State Boards	4.7 All Government Departments and State Agencies, together with the Department of Justice and Equality and PAS, to implement measures aimed at accelerating progress towards the target of 40% representation of each gender on all State Boards. Such measures may include engagement with external nominating bodies and awareness raising among eligible groups of women. The actions taken should be reported to DJE on an annual basis, highlighting the proportion of boards under the Department's aegis for which the target has been met.	2017-2020	All Depts (except DFAT), PAS
	4.8 Consider the gender impact of the new arrangements for appointments to State Boards and report annually on the stateboards.ie website on the effectiveness of the process in ensuring an increase in participation by women on State Boards. (Under these arrangements, the 2014 Government-approved Guidelines require the Public Appointments Service (PAS) to conduct an independent application and assessment process to support Ministers in making appointments to State Boards.)	Ongoing and annual reporting	PAS (lead), DPER

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Greater representation of women in senior positions in the civil and public service	4.9 Research with the ESRI on barriers preventing women from application for senior positions in the Civil Service, and follow-up action.	2017	DJE, DPER
	4.10 Conduct a mapping exercise on gender balance in senior positions in the public service and assess possible barriers to achieving greater representation of women in senior positions. Based on the outcomes of actions to increase gender balance at senior level in the Civil Service and related learning in the public service, evaluate and prioritise actions which could increase the representation of women in senior positions in the public service.	2017-2020	DPER, DJE
	4.11 The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will continue to implement agreed actions arising from the “Gender and Culture Review of DAFM 2015” and provide dedicated resources at senior level with responsibility for progressing these actions. The Department’s Gender Balance Steering Group will identify progress, propose solutions in the event of blockages, promote gender balance within the organisation, and help to address gender balance issues that may arise.	2017-2020	DAFM
Increased gender balance at all levels of the diplomatic service	4.12 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to implement actions under its Gender Equality Action Plan aimed at ensuring greater gender equality at senior levels and in assignments at home and abroad. Among other measures, this commits the Department to seek to eliminate obstacles to greater representation of women at senior levels by extending training on unconscious bias (including for all interview boards); to increase mentoring and executive coaching for women; to integrate gender considerations into a new Human Resources Strategy; to discourage presenteeism; and to ensure gender equality in assignments.	2017-2020	DFAT

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Gender balance promoted in higher education leadership	4.13 A new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education Institutions will include a High Level Systems Level Indicator in relation to Gender Balance and a series of sub-indicators to monitor progress in relation to the governing authority/body, academic council, executive management, academic staff at each grade; professor grades (universities only); senior non-academic staff; achievement and retention of Athena SWAN awards; and level of perceived gender inequality amongst staff members.	Q2 2017	DES, HEA
Greater visibility and voices of socially excluded women represented in policy and decision-making fora	4.14 Support women's community organisations to identify relevant local structures for participation, and support the participation and progression of women within these structures locally, regionally and nationally.	2017-2020	Relevant Departments
Greater participation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions	4.15 Undertake initiatives to promote the participation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions, including in the community and voluntary sector.	2017-2020	DJE
Gender perspective brought to Youth leadership programmes.	4.16 Youth leadership programmes supported through Department of Children and Youth Affairs funding will be required to integrate a gender perspective and reporting on participation will include gender identification.	2017-2020	DCYA
Greater gender equality in decision-making is promoted in Ireland's international relations	4.17 Support increased and enhanced participation of women in parliaments and the development of more gender-sensitive parliamentary institutions that deliver on gender equality.	2017-2020	DFAT



9. Objective Five: Combat Violence Against Women

It is recognised that too many women experience violence, particularly in intimate relationships. At the same time, new issues are emerging which include sexual exploitation of women, sometimes trafficked or migrant women, by those purchasing sexual services. Provisions in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 address this problem and these were commenced by the Tánaiste on 27 March 2017. Equally, an increasing number of women, particularly younger women, are experiencing instances of harassment online, such as revenge pornography.

The Strategy proposes a multi-faceted approach to the issues needing to be addressed under the objective of combating violence against women. It will involve actions to raise awareness, to provide increased protections for victims and to tackle new issues.

A target is set for ratification of the Istanbul Convention (quarter 1, 2018). Action to combat domestic violence will be undertaken within the framework of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. A national awareness raising campaign will run annually for a 6 year period, which commenced in 2016, to raise awareness among the general public and to highlight for victims the options available to them to seek protection in relation

to domestic and sexual violence. Legislative reforms will be undertaken to provide enhanced protections for women experiencing domestic violence. Legislation is also proposed to protect victims of crime and against sexual offenders. The Government will continue to work with NGOs and with the National NGO Observatory on Violence Against Women on this issue.

The Strategy will involve the commencement of the provisions of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 that have not already been commenced. These include provisions intended to reduce for alleged victims of sexual offences the trauma associated with the criminal process and a section on harassment orders. The Strategy also proposes to introduce a new offence to tackle revenge pornography.

Government Departments, State agencies and partners are already committed to:

- Implementing the *Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021*.
- Implementing the recommendations of the *Internet Content Advisory Group 2014*, which highlights the potential harmful

effects of online content on teenage girls and cyberbullying more generally.

- Implementing the *Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2016*, which outlines 65 actions to combat this heinous crime, primarily affecting women and young girls.

Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Istanbul Convention ratified and Strategy implemented	5.1 Implement the actions contained in the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 required to enable Ireland to ratify the Istanbul Convention.	Q1 2018	Cosc
	5.2 Monitor the implementation of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.	Ongoing	Cosc
Increased awareness of domestic and sexual violence	5.3 Implement the national, multi-annual awareness raising campaign - #whatwouldyoudo – to increase the awareness of domestic and sexual violence, and to bring about a change in long-established societal behaviours and attitudes by activating bystanders. It is intended that 2016-2018 will focus on domestic violence and 2019-2021 will focus on sexual violence, with elements of each featuring in each phase of the campaign.	Ongoing	Cosc
Access to civil legal aid improved for persons experiencing domestic violence	5.4 Examine proposals to amend the Civil Legal Aid Regulations to give effect to a reduction in the Civil Legal Aid contribution in domestic violence cases.	2017-2020	DJE, Legal Aid Board

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Enhanced implementation and monitoring	5.5 Requests from non-governmental organizations in relation to targets, outcomes and indicators in the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 to be examined.	2017-2020	DJE
	5.6 Implement the phased 2017 prioritised, health related actions in line with the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2016-2021, (Actions 1.500, 2.100 and 2.400 refer). Train a minimum of 2 staff in each Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) in domestic, sexual and gender-based violence on a train the trainer basis. On completion of training, each CHO to develop a quality improvement plan incorporating further roll out of this training to frontline staff. Develop culturally appropriate toolkits and guidance to support staff dealing with victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.	2017-2020	HSE
	5.7 Ensure adequate funding continues to be allocated to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, which has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, whether in the context of the family or otherwise.	2017-2020	DCYA



Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Enhanced legislative protections and supports put in place for victims of gender-based violence	5.8 Commence the provisions of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 which have not yet commenced, including those relating to harassment orders, evidence, the cross-examination of complainants and regulating the disclosure of counselling records.	End 2017	DJE
	5.9 Complete a review of Section 25 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, specifically focusing on the offence of criminalising the purchase of sexual services. The Report will include information as to the number of arrests and convictions arising, and an assessment of the impact of the operation of that section on the safety and wellbeing of persons who engage in sexual activity for payment.	Q1 2020	DJE
	5.10 Examine the defence of honest belief as it applies to the element of knowledge or belief in the definition of rape in light of any recommendations from the Law Reform Commission.	2018	DJE
	5.11 Through the enactment of the Victims of Crime Bill, victims will be provided with information, support and assistance across all of their interactions with criminal justice agencies; victims will be individually assessed to identify any protection measures – such as safety orders and barring orders – or special measures during an investigation or court proceedings which may be of benefit in protecting them from secondary and repeat victimisation, intimidation or retaliation. Special measures may include interviews being conducted by a specially-trained person, by the same person or by a person of the same sex, in specially-designed premises. Evidence given through live television link or through an intermediary will also be facilitated.	Q3 2017	DJE
	5.12 Enact the Domestic Violence Bill which will enhance the protections available to victims of domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence who are cohabiting with or are parents of the perpetrator will be able to apply for an emergency barring order lasting for 8 working days. Courts will be able to prohibit a perpetrator from communicating with the victim electronically. Victims can be accompanied to court by a person of their choice to provide support during the hearing. Anonymity of victim, dependants and perpetrator will be protected in criminal proceedings for breaches of orders. A new criminal offence of forced marriage will be introduced.	Q3 2017	DJE

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Increased supervision of sex offenders	5.13 Enact legislation to strengthen the supervision of sex offenders.	Q2 2018	DJE
Legislative mechanisms developed to address revenge pornography	5.14 Bring forward legislative proposals to provide for offences relating to harmful communications, including an offence to target revenge pornography. A new offence of stalking will be created and the offence of harassment will be extended to include all forms of communication including through online or other digital communications. A new offence for a once-off non-consensual intentional victim-shaming by distribution of intimate images with intent to cause harm or distress will also be created. This is sometimes referred to as "Revenge Pornography". A similar offence for posting images online, even where there is no intention to cause harm, will also be created. The offence of sending threatening or indecent messages in the Post Office (Amendment) Act 1951 will be extended to apply to all online communications.	2017	DJE
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland's international relations	5.15 Continue to prioritise protection, gender mainstreaming, and the prevention of gender-based violence across programmes, including in humanitarian situations.	2017-2020	DFAT
Addressing gender-based violence is highlighted in international relations	5.16 Support the Gender-Based Violence Consortium tracking the links between active membership of the Consortium and proposals submitted/programmes addressing gender-based violence (including support for the implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in relation to women, peace and security or female victims in conflict zones).	ongoing	DFAT



10. Objective Six: Embed Gender Equality in Decision-making

The Strategy will integrate a gender perspective into decision-making across a wide range of policies as a means of promoting women's equality and of ensuring that existing policies do not give rise to inequalities for women. The United Nations and the European Commission advocate the integration of a gender perspective in policy-making through the gender mainstreaming process as an effective means of promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is a crucial element in the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019.

The Strategy proposes that all reviews of existing policies should include a gender perspective as should all policies developed over the lifetime of the Strategy. It proposes that public bodies should assess the human rights of women and girls and any gender equality issues when complying with the public sector duty under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 which requires public bodies to have due regard to equality and human rights.

The Strategy recognises that the capacity of public sector organisations will need to be enhanced to enable them to undertake gender

mainstreaming processes effectively. An action is included to build capacity within the civil and public service on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. As effective gender mainstreaming requires data which is gender disaggregated and which enables policy-makers to see the differing outcomes for men and women, an action has been proposed to promote the collection of gender disaggregated data.

Government Departments are already committed to:

- Implementing Cabinet procedures which require policy proposals put to Government for approval to clearly indicate the impact of the proposal for gender equality.

Strategy Actions for 2017-2020 are as follows:

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Gender equality formally addressed by public bodies, in their implementation of the public sector duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and protect human rights	6.1 All public bodies will assess and identify the human rights of women and girls and the gender equality issues that are relevant to their functions and address these in their strategic planning, policies and practices, and annual reports, in line with the public sector duty under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.	Ongoing	All public bodies
	6.2 Ensure all National Cultural Institutions have gender equality plans in place.	By 2018	DAHRRGA
A public service that demonstrably values diversity, is inclusive and representative of the wider population, and promotes equality of opportunity and protects the human rights of its employees	6.3 Bearing in mind the existing public sector duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights, take measures to review gender equality outcomes in recruitment and promotion in the public service and, in line with the related actions on women and leadership (4.9 and 4.10), identify barriers to equality and evaluate and prioritise actions which could address those barriers.	2018-2020	All Depts and Public Sector bodies
	6.4 Assess the impact of unconscious bias awareness and training initiatives in the public service and consider possibilities to extend these initiatives.	2018-2020	DJE (lead), all relevant bodies
	6.5 Departments to develop in-house expertise in gender mainstreaming activities, including through interdepartmental seminars and provision of guidance and training materials.	2017-2020	DJE (lead), all Depts

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
Key strategies are gender-proofed	6.6 Consider gender impact in the development of new strategies and the review of existing strategies.	2017-2020	All Depts
	6.7 Take gender equality issues into account in the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty, which commits to ensuring that new energy policy measures developed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment are evidence-based and consider the distributional impacts of these policies.	2017-2020	DCCA
	6.8 Address gender equality across Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) programmes, including its research programmes, applying best practice from other organisations, such as Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) on how to improve gender equality in research organisations.	2017-2020	SEAI
	6.9 Take gender equality into account in the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Rural Potential.	2017-2020	DAHRRGA, DJE
Gender equality is embedded within funding programmes and service provision	6.10 Ensuring young people are part of the decision-making processes within youth services is a core principle of youth service funding; the Department of Children and Youth Affairs will ensure that a gender equality perspective is included in the implementation of this principle.	2017-2020	DCYA
	6.11 Ensure that the design and review of funding and grant schemes includes measures to ensure gender equality. Where required, initiate positive steps to eliminate sources of bias, including unconscious bias, in the design and operation of schemes.	ongoing	All relevant Depts
	6.12 Require higher education institutions to have Athena SWAN gender-equality accreditation in order to be eligible for research funding from Science Foundation Ireland, the Irish Research Council and the Health Research Board.	2019	SFI, IRC, HRB

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale	Responsible Body
The evidence base for gender proofing is further developed	6.13 Identify knowledge gaps in relation to gender inequality and use this as a base to drive improvements in the data infrastructure and analysis required to close those gaps. Ensure that evidence generated through improved data infrastructure and analysis regarding gender inequality is linked to relevant policies.	2017-2020	All Depts
Gender Budgeting advanced	6.14 Take measures to build capacity within the Civil and Public Service with regard to gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, contributing to implementing the positive duty on public bodies to promote gender equality. Continue to engage with International organisations such as the OECD to identify best practice in the budgetary processes including gender budgeting.	2017-2020	DPER (lead), DFinance
	6.15 Application of the Social Impact Assessment framework in the area of Early Years policy and programmes.	2017-2020	DPER, DCYA
Civil society is enabled to advocate on behalf of women and ensure that women's interests are mainstreamed in the work of Government	6.16 Continue to support the core funding of the National Women's Council of Ireland, which is recognised by Government as a key body which puts forward women's concerns and perspectives.	2017-2020	DJE



Appendices



Appendix I: Membership of the Strategy Committee

Membership of Strategy Committee

Minister David Stanton TD	Chair
Niamh Allen	Head of Development, National Women's Council of Ireland
Paula Barry Walsh	Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Carol Baxter	Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice and Equality
Grace Bolton	Assistant Principal, Early Years Policies and Programmes, Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Nina Brennan	Principal Officer, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
Valerie Byrne	Assistant Principal, Defence Forces Personnel Policy Branch, Department of Defence
Siona Cahill	Vice-President for Equality & Citizenship, Union of Students in Ireland
Tessa Collins	Pavee Point, representing the Community Platform
Gerard Considine	Principal Officer, Policy Team Lead on Governance, Gender Equality and Human Rights, Policy Unit, Development Cooperation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Anne Donegan	Principal Officer, Tax Division, Department of Finance
Fergal Fox	A/General Manager, Health Promotion and Improvement, Health and Wellbeing Division, Health Service Executive
Deirdre Garvey	CEO, The Wheel

Nichola Harkin	Solicitor, Ibec
Dr. Cate Hartigan	Head of Health Promotion and Improvement, Health and Wellbeing Division, Health Service Executive
John Healy	Principal Officer, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Miriam Holt	National Coordinator, National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (representing the NWCI)
Ann Howard	Defence Forces Personnel Policy Branch, Department of Defence
John Hurley	Principal Officer, Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality
Maria Hurley	Principal Officer, Cork Central Division, Department of Social Protection
Sarita Johnston	Female Entrepreneurship, Enterprise Ireland
David Joyce	Equality Officer & Global Solidarity Officer, ICTU
Paul Lemass	Assistant Secretary, Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government
Orlaith Mannion	Assistant Principal, Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation
Orla McBreen	Principal Officer, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Dr Kara McGann	Senior Labour Market Policy Executive, Ibec
Sinéad McPhillips	Principal Officer, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Rebecca Minch	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Gráinne Morrissey	Assistant Principal, Department of Education & Skills
Moira Murrell	Chief Executive of Kerry County Council, representing the City and County Management Association
Orla O'Connor	Director, National Women's Council of Ireland

Kate O'Flaherty	Principal Officer, Department of Health
Gavan O'Leary	Principal Officer, Department of Education and Skills
Karen O'Loughlin	National Campaigns and Equality Organiser, SIPTU
Geraldine O'Sullivan	Farm Family & Social Affairs Executive, Irish Farmers' Association
Kay Ryan	Principal Officer, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Eoghan Richardson	Assistant Principal, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
Marion Walsh	Executive Director, Crime and Security, Department of Justice and Equality
Olive Walsh	Assistant Principal, Policy and Governance Coordination Division, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Kathryn Whyte	Assistant Principal, Human Resources, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Appendix II: Public Consultation Questions

A public consultation was launched on 23 November 2016 by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, TD, and the Minister of State with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration & Integration, David Stanton TD, and concluded on Tuesday 31 January 2017.

Views were invited on a consultation document “Towards a new National Women’s Strategy 2017-2020”, which posed the following questions:

- a) what do you think are the issues for women and girls in Ireland that are most important to address over the next four years?
- b) do you agree with the high level objectives proposed below?
- c) what outcomes should we aim to achieve?
- d) what actions could be taken to advance those objectives?

Proposed High-level Objectives

To advance gender equality in the period to 2020, five objectives are proposed as follows:

- Advance socio-economic equality for women and girls;
- Improve women’s and girls’ physical and mental health;
- Promote women’s and girls’ equal and active citizenship;
- Advance women in leadership; and
- Embed gender equality in decision-making.

Appendix III: List of written submissions to the public consultation

Contribution received from
Audrey Mac Cready
John B Dillon
Genevieve Becker
Mary Matthews
Ruth O'Regan
Women's Aid
Sharon Hutchinson, Sportswomen.ie
AONTAS
Julie Hogan
Early Childhood Ireland
County Carlow Women's Network
Mary Courtney and group of grandmothers
Anastasia P. Kiourtzoglou
We Are Church Ireland
St. Catherine's Community Services Centre, Carlow
Anne Murray
Waterford IT Students' Union (WITSU)
Basic Income Ireland
County Wicklow Public Participation Network
Dr. Josephine Browne, IADT Dun Laoghaire

Contribution received from
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Chamber
Institute of Public Health in Ireland
Higher Education Authority
Equality Budgeting Campaign
Ibec
Patricia Conlon, International Law Federation
London Irish Abortion Rights Campaign
Cork Anti-Poverty Resource Network (CAPRN)
National Deaf Women of Ireland
Mary Farrell
Ruth Foley
Amplify Women
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Ireland
Therese O'Donohoe
Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)
30% Club Ireland
Longford Women's Link
Micheline Sheehy Skeffington
Roisin Healy

Contribution received from
Inclusion Ireland
Monica Murphy
Women in Technology and Science (WITS)
Aprille Scully, ROSA, Limerick
Louise O'Leary, St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
Age Action
Margaret Walshe
Oversight Group to Ireland's 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
Sligo Traveller Support Group
Simon Communities in Ireland
Irish Cancer Society
Women for Election
Women On Air
Cultúr Celebrating Diversity
National Traveller Women's Forum
Abortion Rights Campaign
Dr Kathryn McGarry & Dr Sharron Fitzgerald
Alliance of Older Persons Organisations (Age and Opportunity, Third Age, Active Retirement Ireland, Alone, Senior Citizens Parliament, and Age Action)
Immigrant Council of Ireland
SWAI
Limerick Chamber

Contribution received from
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)
Chambers Ireland
Focus Ireland
Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell
Women and Child Health Research Cluster in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Limerick
Stay-At-Home Parents Association of Ireland
Julie Douglas
Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)
Pavee Point
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
National Disability Authority (NDA)
Irish Family Planning Association
Irish Farmers' Association (IFA)
Community Work Ireland
Sonas
Irish Second-level Students Union (ISSU)
Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS)
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)
Union of Students in Ireland (USI)
Irish Rural Link
Dr Catherine Molyneaux
Fiona English

Contribution received from

SAFE Ireland

National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (NCCWN)

National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks, Limerick Women's Network

National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks, Clare Women's Network

Limerick Feminist Network

National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCII)

YouthRISE Students for Sensible Drug Policy and Help Not Harm

Fiona Walsh, Recovery Experts by Experience (REE)

Pro Life Campaign

Dr Katie Liston

5th Year Politics & Society Class, Laurel Hill Secondary School, Limerick

5050 North West

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)

Irish Federation of University Women

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission



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