



AONTAS Strategic plan  
2001–2003

moving forward



## foreword

AONTAS is now moving into its next strategic development phase, having completed its first Strategic Plan at the end of 2000. The new Strategic Plan entitled **MOVING FORWARD** was developed during 2000 in consultation with membership and was adopted unanimously at the Annual General Meeting on May 30th 2001. Much was gained by the adult education sector during the past three years. The most important development was the publication of the White Paper, **Learning for Life**, which was launched in August 2000 and which took on board many of the issues which AONTAS had lobbied strongly for over a long number of years. AONTAS warmly welcomed the White Paper and will now strive to ensure that its recommendations are implemented fully. This plan outlines how we propose to go about this task. The development of a comprehensive adult education service is a challenge to all of us and will require working together in partnership to realise this development. We look forward to the next three years with optimism.

**Berni Brady** *Director*

mission statement of AONTAS

AONTAS is the Irish National Association of Adult Education, a voluntary membership organisation. It exists to promote the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education which is accessible to and inclusive of all.



## core values

### **In seeking to carry out this mission AONTAS is guided by five key values**

- The members of AONTAS share a passion for lifelong learning and a commitment to the belief that learning throughout life provides a means by which people can grow and develop, and make an active contribution to the development and transformation of their own community and the wider society in which they live.
- AONTAS recognises the key political role adult and continuing education plays in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion as well as promoting democracy, creativity and economic development.
- AONTAS is committed to the development of a system of Adult Education which is accessible to and inclusive of all throughout life, particularly those who experience educational, social and/or economic disadvantage
- AONTAS recognises the importance of building partnerships at local and national level which will ensure the active involvement and empowerment of adult learners
- AONTAS is committed, through a process of action and reflection to its growth as a learning organisation, as a model of good practice and a leading centre of expertise in the field of adult learning

## strategic organisational objectives

- 1 Promote the importance and value of adult learning as a key part of Lifelong Learning
- 2 Participate in the development of adult education policy by working towards the implementation of the proposals and recommendations of national policy initiatives including the National Development Plan, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, White Paper, Learning for life, White Paper, Supporting Voluntary Activity and other initiatives as appropriate
- 3 Support and represent the membership of AONTAS to articulate the needs of adult learners and providers at local and national level
- 4 Identify and strategically respond to changing and emerging needs within adult education by promoting, piloting and lobbying for the mainstreaming of models of good practice
- 5 Build positive working relationships and partnerships with relevant organisations nationally and internationally
- 6 Build the reputation and status of AONTAS as a leading player in the field of research in adult education
- 7 Develop AONTAS as a learning organisation committed to embodying the principles underlying its core values

**objective one****Promote the importance and value of adult education as a key part of Lifelong Learning****goal 1.1**

*Promote national and local awareness of the key role of adult education in the social, economic and civil development of Irish Society through the development of a public relations strategy for the organisation and its work*

**actions**

Employ an Information and Communications Specialist

Promote the corporate image and identity of AONTAS to communicate its role, aims and achievements

Develop links with national and local media with a view to taking a proactive role in the public arena

Monitor media coverage relating to adult education and respond where appropriate

Organise public events and conferences as appropriate

Develop the AONTAS website to ensure its fullest effectiveness in disseminating information

**goal 1.2**

*Develop an information management strategy which will ensure the strongest possible links between AONTAS members and between learners and providers*

**Actions**

Establish an Information Strategy Working Group, comprising staff and executive to develop and monitor information strategy and external developments, and to support staff engaged in information work

Implement an information dissemination strategy to ensure an information flow between members, and key agencies concerned with adult education policy

Maintain and develop ongoing communication and correspondence with members through quarterly mailouts



Maintain the Membership database and directory

Continue to provide information and support to members

Develop a concise information referral pack for potential adult learners

Develop links with the emerging adult guidance pilot projects, and others engaged in giving information to learners seeking opportunities for education and training

## objective two

**Participate in the development of adult education policy by working towards the implementation of the proposals and recommendations of national policy initiatives including the NDP, PPF, Government White Papers and other initiatives as appropriate.**

### goal 2.1

*Seek to ensure the active involvement of membership in consultations on the development of adult education policy leading to key policy papers focusing on specific issues*

### actions

Organise network meetings of membership as appropriate to elicit their views on the development of adult education policy and practice

Establish mechanisms using information technology and other strategies to encourage members to articulate their needs

Organise an Annual General Meeting to establish policy directions for the organisation

Develop and disseminate policy papers

Support members at local level to lobby for implementation of White Paper proposals and recommendations

### goal 2.2

*Lobby Government Departments and key agencies to ensure the rapid implementation of policy recommendations and proposals*

**actions**

Establish relationships with key spokespeople of all political parties with a view to ensuring that they are informed and can implement policy recommendations for the development of Adult Education Service

Organise as appropriate lobbying campaigns on issues of concern to adult learners and providers

Establish relationships with Government Ministers who have responsibility for the development of Lifelong Learning

Maintain existing relationships and develop new relationships with Government Officials with responsibility for the development of Lifelong Learning

Ensure that policy papers developed by AONTAS are brought to the attention of Government Ministers, Officials and key agencies involved in the development of Lifelong Learning

**objective three**

**Support and represent the membership of AONTAS to articulate the needs of adult learners and providers at local and national level**

**goal 3.1**

*Ensure that AONTAS as a leading centre of expertise in the field of adult learning, is represented in its own right on emerging National Structures and Working Groups relating to Lifelong Learning*

**actions**

Represent AONTAS on the National Adult Learning Council and other national structures as deemed appropriate

Develop strategic links and working mechanisms with key organisations and agencies who represent relevant sectoral interests

Represent AONTAS on Taskforces or Committees established to focus on particular issues concerning the development of Lifelong Learning

**goal 3.2**

*Support members to work with key organisations and agencies to ensure full participation at local level*

**actions**

Ensure that members have the appropriate information to enable them to identify structures at local level on which they need to be represented

Support locally based member groups to access appropriate training to fulfil their local representative role

Assist local groups in establishing connections with appropriate local agencies to ensure their views are represented

Consult with Local Adult Education Organisers and the new Community Education Facilitators with a view to establishing the best way to support their work

Develop strategic links with tertiary education institutions

**objective four**

**Identify and strategically respond to changing and emerging needs within adult education by promoting, piloting and lobbying for the mainstreaming of models of good practice**

**goal 4.1**

*Mainstream support for the strengthening of the community based women's education sector through the development of a support infrastructure for Women's Networks*

**actions**

Bring together the Women's Networks regularly on a regional basis to identify issues of common concern, and develop policy recommendations and strategies to support the work of the Women's Networks as key players in addressing women's social exclusion and educational disadvantage

Provide information and training workshops at regional level with a view to developing the skills of the Women's Networks in representation and policy work

Develop links between Women's Networks and key agencies at national level which facilitate the raising of policy issues with key Government Departments

Bring key personnel in the Networks together to promote discussion and good practice including the development of accreditation and progression routes

#### goal 4.2

*Explore in collaboration with emerging groups and networks strategic ways to become involved with the promotion of education and training for marginalised men.*

#### actions

Identify in consultation with members emerging issues which need to be addressed by AONTAS

Promote and develop links with established and emerging groups whose concern is the inclusion of marginalised men, with a view to exploring how best to support them

Research models of good practice which address the needs of these groups and bring these to the attention of policy makers

### **objective five** **Build positive working relationships and partnerships with relevant organisations nationally and internationally**

#### goal 5.1

*Establish formal working relationships with identified key organisations in the external national environment*

#### actions

Explore mechanisms for working with key players in various sectors concerned with adult education ie. statutory, higher education, private business, social partner and the community and voluntary sectors

Explore mechanisms for working with groups and organisations engaged in issues related to developing civil society

Ensure that policy paper papers are disseminated to key players in the above named sectors

Organise discussion fora as appropriate with the key players in the above named sectors

#### goal 5.2

*Develop formal working relationships with identified key organisations in the international context*

#### actions

Identify key organisations and agencies in the international arena which are engaged in the promotion of a culture of life-long learning

Explore European Funding Initiatives such as Grundvig and Equal with a view to establishing working transnational partnerships

Continue AONTAS involvement in and support for the activities of the European Association for the Education of Adults

### objective six

#### **Build the reputation and status of AONTAS as a leading player in the field of research in adult education**

#### goal 6.1

*Establish a Research Working Group which would identify areas of research which would contribute to the body of knowledge of policy and practice in adult education*

#### actions

Seek funding to engage in research on an annual basis

Commission research into strategic issues which enhance the development of Lifelong Learning and Civil Society

Disseminate research with a view to stimulating debate and discussion and formulating policy recommendations

**objective seven****Develop AONTAS as a learning organisation committed to embodying the principles underlying its core values****goal 7.1**

*Strengthen and develop organisational, financial, technical and human resources in order to achieve its objectives.*

**actions**

Continue to develop membership of the Executive Committee as a learning process for its elected members by providing an induction process for its new members, adopting a process of action and reflection and encouraging maximum participation in policy formulation

Establish appropriate mechanisms for the most effective use of the expertise of the Executive Committee and the staff team

Maintain and develop the Human Resources Management Structures of AONTAS with a view to achieving maximum use of the wide range of knowledge and expertise of the staff team

Source sufficient funds and adequate premises to ensure that AONTAS fully gains from the potential of the staff team in their implementation of the Strategic Plan

Strengthen and improve administrative structures, systems and technical resources to enable the staff team to fulfil its functions to the highest level of excellence

Identify specific training needs of staff and Executive and implement provision to address those needs

Engage the services of an external consultant to monitor, reflect on and evaluate the progress and process of the Strategic Plan





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