

AONTAS -The National Adult Learning Organisation

Women, Learning and the Labour Market in Ireland

Irish country report for inclusion in the EAEA study on Gender
Aspects in Lifelong Learning

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Women, Life-long Learning and the Labour Market in Ireland

Ireland

Introduction

The most recent Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS 2006) carried out by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland states that the participation rate of women in the labour market is now at an unprecedented high of 59.6 %. This figure represents some eight hundred and seventy nine thousand women in employment giving an 83 % increase of women working since 1995 with a 67 % increase in women working full time and a trebling of the number of women working part time.

Education and training is key to the participation and advancement of women in the labour market. International thinking focuses on the importance of the dual approach to achieving economic independence for women and of fostering economic growth through increased participation of women in the labour market.¹ Economic independence enables women to overcome social exclusion and disadvantage while economic growth fosters economic well-being and reduces the chances of poverty. This dual approach is essential for women as it is not enough that more opportunities are created for women to participate in the labour market as part of the country's economic growth we also have to have initiatives that will support women's advancement in the labour market so that women do not remain in the lower end of employment. This chapter will highlight the gender differences in labour market and education participation of men and women in Ireland. It will describe the legislative framework that underpins Irish social and economic policies and will emphasise the importance of positive actions on achieving gender equality in education and training.

Context

After 15 years of successful economic growth Ireland has reached a turning point. Economic policy is no longer concerned solely with the creation of jobs. Ireland is now a country, which enjoys practically full employment a situation virtually unimaginable in the 1980s. With the Irish labour force having increased from 1.64 million in 1997 to over 2 million by the first quarter of 2006² policy makers and society in general have more ambitious goals for the Irish economy. Job growth is no longer an end in itself; rather instead the focus is now on the quality of employment rather than quantity.

Creation of a knowledgeable economy is central to this thinking.

Knowledge creation and diffusion are at the core of economic activity. Knowledge is embodied in people and it is the quality of the human resource that will determine the success or otherwise of firms and economies in the years ahead. It is people who create knowledge and it is people who disseminate, adopt and use data, insight, intuition and experience to create distinctive value (ESG 2004)

Future policy is now focused on achieving a balanced workforce that has access to education and training beyond job related skills. Policy makers realise the importance of taking a lifelong learning approach that recognises the economic and societal values that accrue from education and training interventions at all levels. International research shows that greater

¹ National Women's Strategy 2007

² EGFSN 2007,p18

educational attainment is linked to better health, lower risks of unemployment and poverty and increases in social cohesion such as reduced crime and greater political participation.³

The competitiveness of the Irish economy depends on a well functioning labour market. In line with the Lisbon Agenda the main policy objective is the development of our economy into one that is knowledge based and inclusive. Labour market and education policies will play a significant role in achieving this goal.

Ireland has moved from being a country dominated by emigration and unemployment, in 1986 the unemployment rate was over 17 % and almost 45,000 people emigrated.⁴ Today our unemployment rate stands at 4.4 %.

To ensure the continued growth in our economy labour force developmental policy will focus on two key areas

- 1) Ensuring an adequate supply of labour to meet the needs of the economy and to sustain economic growth. Labour will be supplied through a number of sources, which include increased female participation rates.
- 2) Ensuring the development of a high skilled, adaptable workforce through continued emphasis on lifelong learning and training.

Lifelong learning is the guiding principle for education and training in the context of the Lisbon Agenda. The Lisbon Agenda provides a framework for the EU and member states to work together in support of sustainable economic growth, more and better jobs, greater social cohesion and respect for the environment. The EU Commission emphasises that investment in lifelong learning is critical for economic success, social cohesion and personal fulfilment. It is within this policy framework that Ireland will develop its socio-economic policies for future growth. This thinking reflects the key aims of the Irish social partnership agreement –Towards 2016, and the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

1. The Context for Lifelong Learning for Men and Women

1.1 The Legislative and policy framework for education and training in Ireland

Legislation is important in respect of education and training and is the responsibility of the Irish Government. Legislation is carried out through the creation of publicly funded organisations to manage, advise on and deliver education and training; through providing a policy framework for public expenditure; through funding systems and regulation and certification systems.

In respect of vocational training and adult education the most important piece of legislation is the Vocational Education Act 1930 and its amendments.

The Education Act 1998 makes specific provision for the promotion of opportunities for adults, in particular adults who as children did not benefit from education in schools.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 set up structures for a national framework of qualifications. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) were set up under the provisions of the Act. This gives a ten level framework of qualifications for learners covering all aspects of education and training.

A range of policy documents drives the policy framework:

The White Paper on Adult Education-Learning for Life, published in 2000

The report by the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning published in 2002

Reports from the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

Social Partnership Agreement-Towards 2016

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

³ Johnson, G. (2004), *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise?* New Zealand Treasury Working Paper

⁴ NDP 2007, p191

The National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2006-2008

The National Women's Strategy 2007-2016

These frameworks are delivered through a range of initiatives in Ireland that support men and women's participation in education and training.

Other national legislation some specific to the position of women in Ireland, some more general and applying to all people include:

The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004

The Equal Status Act 2000-2004

The Maternity Protection Acts 1994 and 2004

The Protection of Employees (Part time Work) Act 2001

The Protection of Employees (Fixed-term Work) Act 2003

The National Minimum Wage Act 2000

This body of legislation in particular has facilitated the increase in female labour market participation over the recent years. The introduction of the equality legislation has been significant in the achievement of gender equality in Ireland. The enactment of this legislation has established new rights, created the institutional supports for accessing those rights and has enabled an approach to tackling inequalities in an integrated way.⁵

1.2 European Union Policy Influences

The Lisbon and Barcelona Council meetings in 2000 and 2001 agreed new policy guidelines and targets for women's participation in the labour market. The Lisbon Strategy for employment and social policy included specific targets in relation to female employment. The Barcelona Strategy also made advances in the effort to increase and improve the position of women in the labour market. Indicators set by the EU Stockholm Council in 2001 are used as measures for monitoring education and labour market developments.

2. Men and Women in the Labour Market

The European Council in 2000 in Lisbon agreed to a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. The Lisbon Council set the employment target of 60 % of women in the age group 15-64 to be employed by 2010.

2.1 The Growth in Female Labour Market Participation

In 1971, there were 275,600 women in employment in Ireland, of whom 38,300(14%) were married. By 1995, the number of women in employment had risen to 482,900 with about a fifth working part-time. Over the next eleven years, the numbers have increased significantly with almost 400,000 additional women or 879,800 women active in the work force.⁶ This represents an increase of 83 % in the number of women working over an eleven-year period with an increase of 67 % in the number of women working full-time and a trebling of the number of women working part-time. As a result, the employment rate for women in Ireland aged between 15 to 64 years is now at 59 % and has surpassed the EU 25 average of 57.3 % as set out by the EU Stockholm Council for 2005. Men's employment rate in 2006 was 77.3 % which is also well above the average EU rate of 71.3 % as in table 1.

⁵ www.equality.ie

⁶ National Women's Strategy 2007

Table 1. Ireland and EU: Employment rate, 1996-2006

% of population aged 15-64

Year	Ireland		EU 25	
	men	women	men	women
1996	67.5	43.2	:	:
1997	69.1	45.9	70.2	51.1
1998	71.1	48.1	70.6	51.8
1999	73.6	51.2	71.0	52.9
2000	75.7	53.2	71.2	53.6
2001	76.2	54.0	71.3	54.3
2002	75.0	55.2	71.0	54.7
2003	74.7	55.3	70.8	55.0
2004	75.2	55.8	70.9	55.7
2005	76.2	58.0	71.3	57.3
2006	77.3	58.8	:	:

Source: CSO, 2006

The unemployment rate for women has fallen from 10.7 % in 1997 to 3.8 % in 2006. The Stockholm Council also set employment rate targets of 50 % for men and women in the 55-64 year age group in 2010. Ireland already exceeds the male target with 68.4 % but is considerably below the female target with 40.8 %.⁷

Table 2. WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE – SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

	MALE	FEMALE
Employment Rate 1994	65.9%	40.1%
Employment Rate 2006 (Q4) (ILO Definition)	77%	59%
	WOMEN	
	1995	2006 (Q4)
Number of women in employment	454,000	879,800
Number of women in employment who work full time	365,600	606,700
Number of women in employment who work part time	88,400	273,100

(NWS 2007)

Looking at the economic growth in Ireland over the past decade shows that the growth has been achieved partially through the huge increase in women's labour market participation. In turn this economic growth has supported the development of a range of social inclusion and policy issues, which have enhanced the lives of those who had been excluded from the labour market by providing opportunities for education and training. Many women have benefited from increased resources to local education and training initiatives, which have supported their transition to work. This trend in female labour market participation has been the result of many developments including improved childcare, more flexible working hours and also our high cost of living which forces women to work rather than engage in full-time child rearing. However there is still a lot to be done to foster the contribution of women and to address the social inequalities, which are still experienced by women in our society especially lone

⁷ CSO, (2006) *Women and Men in Ireland*, Central Statistics Office, Dublin

parents, mothers of larger families, older and Traveller women. Women are a large group amongst those marginalised from the labour market. The employment participation rate among older women is lower than for men, largely due to past family responsibilities. The main focus of new policies is to remove disincentives to employment in social protection⁸ and other systems and to provide necessary supports such as childcare, general care and education and training.

Migrant workers make up 8% of the Irish workforce, one of the highest in the EU. However the gender perspective applies to migrants similarly to the way it applies to other groups. While female migrant workers share issues with their male counterparts, it is important to acknowledge that a double disadvantage is faced by minority ethnic women and that their situations are shaped by both racism and sexism. Women migrant workers enter a workforce already characterised by gender inequalities. Job segregation where women are the majority in low paid and low skilled jobs has huge implications for female migrant workers.

3. Participation of men and women in Education and Training

The education field is another in which women are excelling. Females are out-performing their male counterparts in all areas of education, second level, third level and most particularly adult and community education.

Table 3 below shows two important measures: the percentage of girls and boys in a number of age groups, who are still in education and the highest level of educational attainment of men and women who are in the labour market in Ireland.

TABLE 3 - EDUCATION FOR WOMEN –SOME HEADLINE STATISTICS

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

(Source: NWS 2007)

Young men are at a higher risk of early school leaving than women. In 2003, 65.1% of the 52,200 early school leavers aged 18-24 years were men. In comparison, 12% of all women in this age group were early school leavers⁹. However it must be noted that the negative impact of early school leaving is more significant for women. Almost three quarters of male early school leavers were employed, compared to over one third of their female counterparts.

The Department of Education and Science put in place a number of measures to address the disadvantages experienced by girls and women in the education system in the 1980s. Areas such as gender stereotyping in relation to subject provision and choice in Irish second-level schools was one area focused on. These measures were further strengthened by the adoption by the EU of a resolution on Equal Opportunities for Boys and Girls in education in 1985.

⁸ National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008

⁹ *ibid*

Other developments at this time included the expansion of provision in the further and adult education service with particular developments in the women's community education sector. The late 1980s and 1990s saw a growth in locally based women's community education groups addressing the education and personal development needs of marginalized women in disadvantaged communities.

Today in adult and community education women comprise of over 70 % of the participants in programmes. Many education initiatives developed in adult and community education over the past ten years have been focused on improving the education attainment levels of adults, not just women. However it is mainly women who have taken up these opportunities. It is widely documented that women's increasing participation in education both formal and non-formal stems from the growth of women's community education groups as providers over the past two decades. The provision of part time, flexible, learner-centred provision encouraged many women to take up locally based learning opportunities. Literature shows that men are less likely to participate in or form such groups, with men more likely to study vocational or technical subjects.¹⁰ One of the reasons for this is often the negative relationship with learning which many men have developed over the course of their lives. For the majority of men they find that they are only motivated to improve their education and skills when it is necessary such as in a work related area.

This trend in participation levels is not unusual and such imbalances are reflected across other European countries. At present, 76 % of participants in adult education in Finland are women with similar situations in Austria and Germany.

3.1 Gender Mainstreaming in Education

Under the Equal Opportunities Promotion and Monitoring Measure of the National Development Plan 2000-2006, a dedicated Gender Equality Unit was set up in the Department of Education and Science in 2001. The remit of this unit is to promote, co-ordinate and monitor the process of gender mainstreaming in the education system.

This unit along with the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform have been co-funded by the European Social Fund. These two units have produced major bodies of research, which has informed discussion and policy formation.

The challenge for the future is to develop an operational structure in all departments of the government that will ensure policies are gender mainstreamed. For women the main impetus for gender mainstreaming is the National Women's Strategy (NSW) 2007-2016.

3.2. National Programmes as examples of good practice for the inclusion of women and men in education and training

Positive action has been successful in the past in targeting excluded groups in education and training opportunities. During the 1990s the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) initiatives led to massive developments in the areas of women's work, childcare and community education. Many of the outcomes from this ESF initiative are evident today such as community childcare centres and a range of community education groups across the country.

At present Ireland has some gender specific actions for education and training along with more general actions for the inclusion of men and women.

¹⁰ AONTAS, (2004), *Community Education*. AONTAS Policy Series, Dublin

Models of good practice

FAS-the national training agency in Ireland has developed two programmes, which have been instrumental in supporting a lifelong learning agenda, one of which is specifically aimed at women.

1. Expanding the Workforce – Women Returning to Work

The Expanding the Workforce programme (ETW) aims to improve women's access to, and participation in the labour market. The primary focus of the programme is to progress women or returnees into employment as quickly as possible. The process also aims to influence and support employers in examining and improving their work practices.

The target group for this programme are women who have been out of the workforce for a period of 1 year or more and have an interest in returning to work. The ETW programme assists in overcoming the barriers faced by women when considering a return to working life.

The benefits for women engaging in this programme include

- Meeting with FAS to individually explore development needs for accessing work, to identify training needs and to implement an individual training plan
- Personal development, career planning and assertiveness training
- Specific skills training provided on a flexible basis to suit women's needs
- On the job training as required
- On going support and mentoring once in employment

Expanding the Workforce is funded in part by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform under the EU initiative – Equality for Women Measure (EWM)¹¹

2. One Step Up programme

This programme began in 2005 in response to the Enterprise Strategy Group's report on the changing nature of employment in Ireland. Through a variety of training programmes, One Step Up aims to develop employee's competency levels and skills. The focus is to provide employees with portable and transferable skills that will help promote them in the workplace. One Step Up works in partnership with employers and the programme is part of a system of lifelong learning initiatives in the employment sector.

3. Equality for Women Measure (EWM)

The EWM supports work that is specifically focused on improving opportunities for women in Ireland. The measure is funded by the Irish Government and part-financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund (ESF).

There are eight key strands to the measure of which Strand A specifically focuses on access to employment, education and training with a particular emphasis on retraining and up skilling of women.

The EWM is designed to tackle the barriers to equality for women and works to specific objectives including expanding opportunities within the workplace and in business and supporting women's access to the labour market. Projects are funded under this measure and delivered by a range of agencies, third level institutes and community and voluntary groups. Seventy projects were supported in the first phase between 2001 and 2004 with a total allocation of Euro14.1 million. (www.ewm.ie)

4. Community education groups

These are voluntary community education groups based at local level who plan and deliver learner centred education programmes for mainly women. These programmes are based on personal development and confidence building as well as providing basic education and computer skills. The programmes cover both formal and non-formal learning. These groups have been recognised as the first point of entry to learning for many marginalized women and

¹¹ www.fas.ie

there are over 1000 groups in existence in Ireland today. The groups are supported to deliver their programmes by a range of government departments and agencies and have abroad remit that includes equality, social inclusion and active citizenship.¹² The processes and methodologies used are learner-centred, based on experiences of people, and participative. This type of education has been successful in up-skilling and developing women's knowledge because of the holistic approach it takes to learning and the supports that are needed for some women.

5. The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)

The BTEI is a major contributor to building the capacity of the education sector to meet the changing needs of individuals, communities and society. The overall aim of the BTEI is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of flexible learning opportunities. These learning opportunities are carried out by a range of statutory agencies and community groups who work in partnership at local level. Supports such as childcare are a core element of BTEI. The BTEI is guided by the following principles:

- Learner Centredness
- Equality
- Accessibility and Inclusiveness
- Recognising and Accommodating Diversity
- Quality Assurance
- Local Consultation and an Area-based Approach
- Innovation

The BTEI has been part funded by the European Social Fund during 2000-2006.

This initiative provides opportunities for access, participation and attainment in lifelong learning in line with the Government's policy objectives. These objectives are set out in the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the National Partnership agreement, *Towards 2016* and in the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs report, *Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy*. This group recommended that 93 % of the Irish labour force should have qualifications at, or above higher second level by 2020. This initiative is particularly supportive for women with low educational attainment levels and who are in part-time work. In 2006, 25,000 people participated in programmes under the BTEI of which 75 % were women.¹³ Presently the Department in conjunction with AONTAS, the National Association of Adult Education is developing guidelines for the inclusion of hard to reach groups of men in BTEI as a step towards addressing the gender imbalance.

These examples are all transferable to other European countries as part of socio-economic policies.

3.3 Gender Mainstreaming in Ireland

Gender mainstreaming became prominent in Ireland in 1999, when the Government decided that most measures under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 would be gender mainstreamed. The decision went further than the requirement laid down by the European Union, which required only that, the EU co-funded employment and training measures be gender mainstreamed. This decision was underpinned by the establishment of the Gender Equality Unit within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and of the Education Equality Unit within the Department of Education and Science. Both units were co-funded by the European Social Fund. From the work of these units, gender mainstreaming has become central to the formation of our key policy documents such as the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

¹² AONTAS, (2004), Community Education. AONTAS Policy Series, Dublin

¹³ Department of Education and Science, (2006) *BTEI Discussion Document*, Unpublished

The challenge now is to ensure that all future policies are gender mainstreamed and that the National Women’s Strategy 2007-2016 is fully implemented. Under this strategy the Gender Equality Division within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, together with a small expert team in the Gender Equality Unit will play a central role in encouraging the ongoing development of policies on gender equality and gender mainstreaming; monitoring progress towards real gender equality; identifying and replicating as appropriate good practice from elsewhere; providing guidance to other Departments and agencies; and fostering gender awareness and full gender mainstreaming in other Government Departments.¹⁴

This approach is recommended by the European Commission and endorsed in the Gender Equality Pact adopted at the EU Council in spring 2006.

Gender budgeting is suggested in the NWS as a mechanism to be considered by the Department of Finance as a tool in formulating the estimates for Public Expenditure. However international evidence shows that for gender budgeting to work gender disaggregated data and specialist staff will be required.

3.4 Issues to be addressed

Despite the considerable progress that has been made in women’s participation in the labour market and in education, inequalities still exist. The employment rate for women is still far lower than for men. In particular women with low education attainment levels have significantly lower labour market participation rates in comparison to men.

Table 4. Central Statistics Office 2006

Lower Second level education	%
Females in the labour Market	50%
Males in the Labour Market	90%

The Irish social welfare system is based on a male bread winner model that hinders the economic independence of women. The system reinforces the idea of women being adult dependants. It does not recognise the unpaid care work of women and the impact this has on women’s labour market participation.

Access to pension rights is essential for women particularly older women. Due to policies such as the marriage bar that prevented married women from working in the civil service¹⁵ and other gender roles for married women, it is women who left employment to take up caring roles in the family who now have the least rights to pensions. Many women today who are involved in unpaid care work still do not earn contributions towards a pension. The National Women’s Council of Ireland commissioned a study to develop a model of social welfare reform that would advance women’s equality in this area¹⁶.

There is evidence, which shows that women experience difficulty in progressing in the workplace. Employment and training policies have been inclined to focus on ensuring people access the labour market with less emphasis on education and training for progression within. Inadequate training has been identified in the National Women’s Strategy 2007 as a major factor, which impacts on the advancement of women. The Forum on the Workplace of the Future 2005 found from a survey done with 8000 workers that

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

¹⁴ NWS 2007, p113

¹⁵ The marriage bar required women to resign from employment on marriage and married women could not be appointed to jobs in the public sector.

¹⁶ Murphy, M, (2003) *A Woman’s Model of Social Welfare Reform*, NWCI, Dublin

Recent analysis by the OECD in Education at a Glance 2005, shows that some 40% of the labour force in several OECD states such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland and United States take part in non-formal job related education and training each year, compared to just 14 % in Ireland. Ireland ranks 8th in the EU 25 for participation in work related education and training.

The pay gap also represents a major issue for women's employment. The pay gap between men and women stands at approximately 15 % in Ireland today. It is widely considered that the single biggest factor behind this gender pay gap is women's child bearing and caring roles, which remove them from the labour market at times in their working lives.

Childcare continues to dominate as a barrier to education, training and employment for women in Irish society. The Barcelona Council agreed targets of childcare provision for at least 90 % of children between 3 years of age and the mandatory school-going age (six years in Ireland) by 2010. They also agreed a target of childcare for at least 33 % of children under the age of 3 years by 2010. Progress in this area cannot be measured at present due to a lack of Irish data.

Data from our QNHS gives an indication of the effect that having young children in the family has on female employment rates.

In 2006, the employment rate for women aged 20-44 years was 64.6 %. This rate varied from 88.3 % for women with no children to 53.5 % for women whose youngest child was aged between 4 and 5 years of age (see table 5 below)

Table 5. Employment rates of persons aged 20-44 by family status

% of 20-44 age group		
Family Status	men	women
No children	94.5	88.3
Youngest child aged 0-3	93	58
Youngest child aged 4-5	91	53.5
Youngest child aged 6 or over	92.9	62.6
Total	93.2	64.6

(Source: CSO 2006)

4. Summary and Conclusion

The overall position of women in education and the labour market in Ireland is a story of high participation and success. Both in and out of the workplace, the specific needs of women in relation to lifelong learning have been identified. For women not in employment, the role of community based education provision has been documented together with the need for pre-training, support and progression. However particular attention must be paid to older women, mothers of large families, lone parents and female migrant workers. Future policies must provide positive action for these vulnerable target groups.

Women in the workforce and particularly those on low paid, low skilled and often part-time employment are disadvantaged not just by their lack of education and skill, but also by the very limited opportunities afforded to them. For this group, the provision of lifelong learning opportunities must accommodate both their work within the labour market and their responsibilities outside. Initiatives such as the BTEI, One Step up and the programmes run by the community education groups have the most potential to reach this group. It is essential that the lessons and recommendations from these models of good practice are put in place in mainstream initiatives.

Women returning to the workforce are among the major contributors to labour supply over the past decade. However research conducted by the Equality for Women Measure¹⁷ has highlighted the specific difficulties these women face. Many women returnees find

¹⁷ www.ewm.ie

themselves being forced into positions of lower socio-economic status than those in full-time caring work. The research found that many women take up work in the catering, cleaning or childcare areas, as well as the retail and services industry. It is known that the greater the period of time a woman spends out of the workforce; the lower is the likelihood of a successful transition back into employment. Government policies on building up the supply to the labour market must take care not to reinforce this situation. The labour supply needs of the economy will not be met without meeting the socio-economic needs of women.

The examples of good practice given previously play a valuable role in increasing women's access to the labour market. It is important that the emphasis is kept on the needs of women to access high quality skills training and programmes that will increase their educational attainment levels.

Other main areas to be concerned with in the future are the advancement of women within work and the need to provide targeted opportunities for women to access education and training within the workplace and outside. Women such as lone parents and older women need particular supports across a range of areas to ensure they have the opportunity to engage with education and work. One of the stated national priorities under our NDP 2007-2013 is "*focusing on education and training, including lifelong learning to develop a high-skilled innovative and adaptable workforce for the knowledge economy*". This can only be done by ensuring that there are flexible, learner centred education and training opportunities at the entry stage of the workplace and during people's workforce participation. Recognition must be paid to women's needs as potential workers and as workers; positive action must be the main pillar for policies aimed at attracting women in and progression for women in the workforce.

More attention needs to be paid to the transition from non-formal and in formal learning to the labour market especially for women. This will entail new strategies that recognise the skills, knowledge and competences that women have learned from their life experiences and the learning gained in the community groups. Employers and training agencies must recognise these sites as lifelong learning sites and include them in collaborative training initiatives. This way of working was proposed in P2000 Report on Women's Access to the Labour Market as far back as 2000.

State support to address training for women is included among the positive action measures for the achievement of gender equality in the context of the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 suggests that this can be achieved through a number of actions such as publicity campaigns to encourage women to avail of training and education opportunities, incentives to employers to encourage them to provide focused training for female employees and incentives for the women themselves to avail of opportunities. (see Appendix)

The models of good practice that support women's access to lifelong learning and the labour market have been underpinned by the equality legislation in Ireland. However without European Social Fund support the gender specific nature of these initiatives would not be in place.

Ireland's equality legislation covers nine grounds of which gender is one. Without the support of the ESF gender specific initiatives would be given a low priority over the other grounds.

As stated in the NESF report *Creating a more inclusive Labour Market 2006*, the combination of labour market and social inclusion measures are the only way forward for us to achieve equality in the lifelong learning and labour market arenas. Mainstreaming good practice has to be incorporated into our national policies and resources put in place to ensure policy is truly converted into practice.

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Appendix B.

National Women's Strategy for Ireland 2007-2016

Theme One: Equalising Socio-Economic Opportunity for Women

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

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

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

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

	11. Consider the establishment of a voluntary “quality mark” to show commitment on the part of the employer to equality issues, including gender equality	
Objective 2 To promote the advancement of women in the labour force	12. Expand the range of apprenticeships and, where appropriate, transformation of traineeships into apprenticeships	
	13. Develop guidance materials for the preparation of comprehensive gender equality policies in the workplace	
	14. Develop initiatives to open debate on, and engage with, planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality	
	15. Introduce new projects with business networks and trade unions to develop supports for their members on workplace equality	
	16. Introduce cross-functional training programmes for female management trainees to avoid the “glass walls” phenomenon	
	17. Continue to foster the “Leadership Initiative” developed under the Equality for Women Measure of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan	
	18. Develop positive action measures to support in-house training for the advancement of female workers	
	19. Consider the need for publicity campaigns to encourage women to avail of training opportunities at the level of the enterprise	
Objective 3 To support more women as entrepreneurs	20. Ensure that training and development programmes meet the particular needs of and are accessed by female entrepreneurs	
	21. Promote entrepreneurship amongst women, through initiatives such as “Start your own Business” courses, award schemes, promotion of appropriate role models, etc.	
	22. Ensure that girls are actively participating in schools’ entrepreneurship programmes	
	23. Further develop the support networks in place for female entrepreneurs	
	24. Foster the availability of childcare to support persons who might be working atypical hours as start up entrepreneurs	
Objective 4 To seek to ensure that girls and women achieve their full potential in the education system	25. Complete the Report of the Science, Education and Technology Committee and present it to the Minister for Education and Science in 2007	
	26. Continue to support Teenage Parenting Projects through School Completion Programme	
	27. Complete development of guidelines on gender mainstreaming for second level schools	
	28. Include gender mainstreaming in subject evaluations and in individual Whole School Evaluations	
	29. Provide training on gender mainstreaming to all new and serving school inspectors	
	30. Continue to provide supports through further and adult education programmes for “hard-to-reach” groups of adults, including those who left school without qualifications and who need second-chance educational opportunities	
	31. Foster increase in FETAC accreditation for women in further education	
	32. Deliver “Women into Educational Management” Courses as required nationally.	
	33. Provide funding for research projects on gender issues within education	
	34. Work towards a quality standard for childcare services, taking account of developments across the spectrum of early childhood development and care	
	35. Develop and implement the National Training Strategy for childcare	
Objective 5-A To ensure that childcare services are optimised to meet the needs of parents and children alike	36. Implement and achieve the targets set for childcare places under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) and any successor programme(s)	
	37. Implement the EOCP, NCIP and any successor programme(s) in a way which focuses on poverty and disadvantage	
	38. Implement and achieve the targets set under the NCIP and “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS)	
	39. Monitor whether the implementation of the NCIP is impacting positively on working mothers in terms of their continued participation in the labour force	
	40. Monitor increasing female labour market participation	
	Objective 5-B To ensure that the care infrastructure supports women’s socio-economic	41. Ensure that payments and supports to carers are efficient and effective, recognising their needs and adequately addressing poverty and social exclusion and are adaptable to the needs of carers in a changing environment (i.e. care sharing arrangements)

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

Theme 2: Ensuring the Well-being of Women

A sense of personal well-being is usually achieved through a combination of good physical and mental health; access to health and social services, where required; a sense of fulfilment, through employment, family and relationships and usually

enhanced by a good work-life balance; well-being for some is also underpinned by a sense of security and protection. In order to reflect the importance of the social environment, the Government has adopted the WHO definition of health, which relies on the social model:

Health is a state of complete, physical, mental and social well-being.

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

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

THEME 2 ENSURING THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN	
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 7 To enhance the work/life balance for women	65. Continue to support work of National Framework Committee on Work/Life Balance
	66. Encourage employers to adopt a wide range of options to enhance the work/life balance of their staff
	67. Review the DSFA Unemployment Benefit and Assistance Schemes with particular reference to the treatment of part-time and atypical workers
	68. Continue to keep under review the treatment of part-time and other atypical workers in the Social Welfare system
Objective 8-A To improve the health status of women in Ireland through gender focused policies	69. Incorporate a gender dimension into health policy planning at the earliest possible stage of development, e.g. the Cardiovascular Strategy
	70. Ensure that the ongoing redevelopment of the health services structures includes representation of women at all decision-making levels
	71. Update women’s health structures in light of recent health reform in collaboration with the Health Service Executive and the Women’s Health Council target
	72. Put in place health policies and services that allow women full access (e.g. transport, childcare/ eldercare, privacy)
	73. Put in place health policies and services to support carers (respite, counselling, information, financial security)
Objective 8-B To improve the physical health status of women in Ireland	74. Extend Breast Check screening programme nationally
	75. Extend the Cervical screening programme nationally
	76. Treat women with breast cancer at specialist breast centres
	77. The Women’s Health Council and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland to conduct a study on older women and cancer in Ireland
	78. Put measures in place to increase awareness about the incidence of cardiovascular disease among women, for both women themselves and for their health care providers
	79. Make women and their health care providers aware of the different manifestations of cardiovascular disease among women
	80. Introduce appropriate gender sensitive diagnostic measures of cardiovascular disease

	81. Use proven methods of treatment for cardiovascular disease to their full extent among women where appropriate
	82. Increase access to cardiac rehabilitation programmes among women
Objective 8-C To improve the reproductive and sexual health status of women in Ireland	83. Ensure that all women have access to information on fertility; contraception and sexual health matters
	84. Develop framework to ensure geographical equity of access to contraceptive services for women
	85. Offer screening programmes for sexually transmitted infections regularly
	86. Provide increased information on sexual and reproductive well-being through the SPHE programme in schools
	87. Ensure that ante-natal care, maternity services and post-natal care are woman-centred
	88. Ensure that information and counselling services are available in cases of crisis pregnancy
	89. Ensure that information is available to all women on health, well-being and other relevant advice in relation to menopause
Objective 8 - D To improve the mental health status of women in Ireland	90. Expand information on mental health in the SPHE programme in schools
	91. Institute a regular community survey to monitor progress on mental health development
	92. Provide counselling services through primary care referrals
	93. Consider the introduction of awareness campaigns relating to mental health among women in the peri-natal period
Objective 8-E To promote healthy life styles for the women in Ireland	94. Emphasise the importance of exercise in life-skills programmes
	95. Tailor and promote physical recreation initiatives specifically for women as a healthy lifestyle option, especially for teenage girls
	96. Promote positive messages about eating more fruit/ vegetables/ fish
	97. Encourage greater participation of women in sports activities at local level and in mass participation events such as mini-marathons through facilitation of year-round training groups
	98. Encourage women in the older age groups to engage in low impact exercise programmes including walking, yoga and pilates to ensure sustained fitness into old age and to diminish the risk of osteoporosis
	99. Increase access to healthier food choices, targeting in particular less well off women and women in the workplace
	100. Introduce media campaigns to reduce smoking and drinking specifically targeting young women
	101. Continue smoking cessation programmes
Objective 9 To increase the number of women participating in Sport and Physical Activity in Ireland	102. Undertake research on mass participation events such as Women's Mini-Marathon
	103. Implement recommendations based on findings of this research
	104. Encourage more women to take up volunteer positions in National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in sport
	105. Hold two "Women in Sport" networking/information-sharing sessions per year
	106. Develop a resource for use in NGBs to encourage women to take up senior positions
	107. Develop "Women in Sport" coaching projects to advanced coaching levels
	108. Provide targeted funding to NGBs for special initiatives to attract/retain women's involvement in sport
	109. Inform women about their possible participation in mass participation events
	110. Inform women about local sports structures and opportunities to participate in their areas
	111. Increase capacity of organisations to deliver programmes to women and girls
	112. Develop awareness of the "Women in Sport" brand associated with projects under the initiative
	113. Promote participation of "Women in Sport" by highlighting opportunities and good practice on Irish Sports Council Website and in mass media.

Objective 10 To ensure the health and safety of pregnant and breast feeding women at work	114. Where risks to pregnant and breast feeding women occur, ensure that all employers include an assessment of these risks as an element of the Safety Statement	
	115. Continue to create awareness of potential hazards to pregnant and breast feeding mothers within the work place	
Objective 11 To protect women from bullying and harassment in the workplace	116. Preparation of a revised Code of Practice for employers and employees in the prevention and resolution of bullying at work	
	117. Media campaigns to promote awareness of bullying	
	118. Further consideration of bullying and harassment under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005	
	119. Identify and gather better statistics and indicators in relation to the incidence of bullying	
Objective 12 To combat violence against women through improved services for victims together with effective prevention and prosecution	120. Establish an Executive Office under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide a well co-ordinated “whole of Government” response to violence against women and domestic violence	
	121. Augment the research team in the National Crime Council to enable it to provide dedicated research to support the Government response to Violence against Women	
	122. Ensure that the voluntary and statutory frontline services address the needs of victims of domestic violence and dependent family members	
	123. Ensure that essential supports are available to all recent victims of sexual violence on a 24-hour basis	
	124. Personnel of all health services to be trained to fully understand the impact of sexual, emotional and physical abuse	
	125. Provide emergency accommodation for women forced to leave their homes because of domestic violence	
	126. Implement the recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSCVaW) subgroup on treatment services for victims of rape and sexual assault.	
	127. Promote effective criminal justice responses, including any necessary legislative responses.	
	128. Implement the findings of the 2005 review of Garda policy on domestic violence	
	129. Provide funding for the development, operation and ongoing monitoring of effective intervention programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence	
	130. Develop and expand Sex Offender Treatment Programmes	
	131. Develop appropriate media and other strategies which ensure that victims of Violence against Women (VaW) are aware of the services available in their area	
	132. Provide funding to the NSCVaW and to local and regional groups to undertake awareness raising initiatives	
	133. Develop targeted campaigns to raise awareness of VaW amongst a wide audience, including the general public, service providers and all agencies within the criminal justice system	
	Objective 13 To address the issue of trafficking of women and children	134. Continue to take a proactive approach to the prevention and detection of human trafficking and prosecution of offenders
		135. Deprive perpetrators of trafficking of the proceeds of their criminal activities
136. Foster collaboration between Garda Síochána and NGOs in relation to “intelligence” on trafficking		
137. Bring forward legislation to comply with EU Framework decision on combating trafficking in human beings		
138. Put in place appropriate support mechanisms for victims of trafficking to enable them to re-establish their lives		
139. Undertake media campaigns to promote awareness of trafficking in human beings and its linkages with the “sex industry”		

Theme 3: Engaging as Equal and Active Citizens

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

THEME THREE ENGAGING AS EQUAL AND ACTIVE CITIZENS	
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
Objective 14 To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland	140. Political parties should develop action plans to increase number of female candidates in General Elections
	141. Political parties should publish gender disaggregated statistics on participation and representation
	142. Government/Ministers will appoint members to State Boards in line with the gender targets set by Government
	143. Other nominating bodies will nominate male and female representatives to State Boards to enable Government/Ministers to make selection to ensure gender balance on Boards
	144. Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to State Boards
	145. Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of State Boards
	146. Develop a database of women who might be considered for appointment to the boards of private sector companies
	147. Develop training programmes to prepare suitably qualified women to participate in the work of private sector boards
	148. Review Civil Service Gender Equality Policy
	149. Develop new Civil Service Gender Equality Strategy based on Review
	150. Develop Gender Equality Strategy for the Public Service modelled on Civil Service Strategy through establishment of working group
	151. Continue to monitor target of 33.3 per cent for female Assistant Principal Officers within Civil Service
	152. Set target of 27 per cent for female Principal Officers within Civil Service by Government decision and incorporate target in Departmental Strategy Statements and Annual Reports to reflect these commitments
	Objective 15 To increase the number of women involved in the arts in Ireland
154. Establish a forum for women working in the arts which will explore common issues facing them and develop a working agenda to address these issues	
155. Publish guidelines on equality specific to the arts	
156. Offer leadership in the area of equality, through the publication of policy and resource documents	
157. Provide advice and leadership in the area of equality and the arts	
158. Arts Council will undertake comprehensive survey including people's experiences of the arts in 2006 and 2007	
159. Arts Council survey will include measurement of women's active participation in the arts	
160. Collect data regarding the number of women currently studying to become arts practitioners or facilitators	
161. Provide advice to women who participate, or would like to participate, in the arts.	
162. Examine the current physical infrastructure for the arts and ascertain the level of usage by women	
Objective 16 To use media proactively to support gender equality and the advancement of women	163. Develop voluntary regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women in the media
	164. Establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct concerning women in the media
	165. Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the impact of gender stereotyping on the role of women within society
	166. Promote women's participation in the media at all levels

	167. Ensure that professionals working in media are aware of the contribution they can make to the achievement of true gender equality through their portrayal of women
	168. Make support available for the development of awareness raising on the issue of gender stereotyping and the positive portrayal of women
	169. Increase the number of media programmes made for and by women
Objective 17 - A To foster the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals through Irish Aid	170. Mainstream gender considerations in all development co-operation activities
	171. Undertake specific actions to improve the position and status of women
	172. Increase funding to women's organisations to ensure that women's needs and interests remain on the development and human rights agenda
	173. Promote economic empowerment of women, create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, ensure greater access to quality education for both boys and girls and support community-based health programmes that enable women's access to reproductive and other health services
	174. Work against gender based violence with national and international partners (See Objective 17 - C)
	175. Support legislative changes that increase women's right to property and other resources
	176. Encourage investment in infrastructure that reduces women's unpaid work burden and thereby enables greater access for women to economic opportunity and decision-making
	177. Continue investment in primary education with emphasis on girls' education and eliminate gender disparity in primary education
	178. Ensure that HIV remains on the agenda through development of new gender specific HIV/AIDS policy and strategy based on 2005 evaluation
	179. Ensure that gender specific HIV/AIDS programming is resourced and improve gender specific HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services
	180. Advocate for further investment in microbicides internationally and maintain or increase current annual investment in the development of microbicides at €3 million
Objective 17 - B To use multi-lateral aid and development policy to promote the role of women and gender equality in developing countries	181. Promote gender equality proposals in European Union external relations fora
	182. Ensure that input into trade agreements takes into consideration the differential impact of trade policy on women and men
	183. Promote the provision of untied aid by other Member States
	184. Promote actions in multi-lateral development aid which foster the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those which impact upon women
	185. Strengthen analytical capacity at Partner Government level to mainstream gender effectively across government policy and programmes
Objective 17 – C To enhance the capacity of Irish Aid and Development Partners to respond effectively to Gender Based Violence in conflict, post-conflict and developing environments	186. Support policies and operational programmes of EU, UN and Council of Europe on Gender Based Violence
	187. Support the ongoing activity of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence
	188. Continue to advocate internationally for greater attention and resources to be devoted to the prevention of gender-based violence
	189. Pursue the inclusion of gender-related measures in the mandates of peacekeeping operations; provision of resources for gender advisers / units in peacekeeping operations; and awareness and enforcement of codes of conduct for peacekeepers
	190. Work to ensure that women are involved at every stage of peace negotiations in the planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels
	191. Press for an increased number of women sent by troop-contributing countries to UN peace missions, and for women to hold 50% of the UNSG Special Representative and Special Envoy positions
	192. Pursue the inclusion of gender-based violence in the statutes of any future ad hoc international tribunals established by the Security Council
	193. Support the exclusion of impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, including gender-based crimes, from post-conflict amnesty provisions
Objective 17 – D To ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all parts of the United Nations System	194. Support for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the United Nations

