

**RAISING THE VOICE AND  
PROFILE OF COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION:  
ENGAGING AND INFLUENCING  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



# Outline

- About the NWCI, women in Ireland and our work
- The what and how of local government?
- Policy context – local government reform
- Opportunities and Challenges
- Next steps/what can you do?

# National Womens Council of Ireland

Ireland's leading national women's membership organisation (1973)

180 Group members and a growing number of individual members

We seek full equality between men and women.

## **Strategic plan 2016 - 2020 – four priorities**

1. Women realise their right to health and bodily integrity, including reproductive rights.
2. Women have economic independence.
3. Women's care roles are recognised and valued.
4. Women lead and are represented on and can meaningfully participate in all decision-making spaces that affect their lives.

# National Womens Council of Ireland

**We work with our members to influence government policy through:**

- ❖ Research
- ❖ Lobbying and advocacy – the ‘go-to’ organisation on women’s equality and gender mainstreaming
- ❖ Campaigns (including online)
- ❖ Media work (including social media)
- ❖ We provide our members with regular updates, policy briefs and networking opportunities and support their campaigns

# Picture of life for women in Ireland today

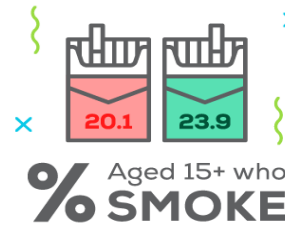
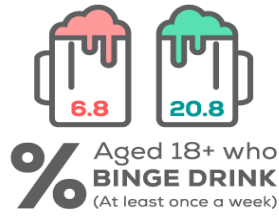
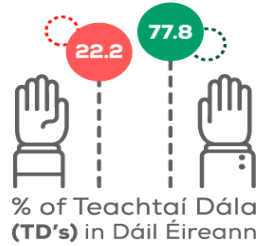
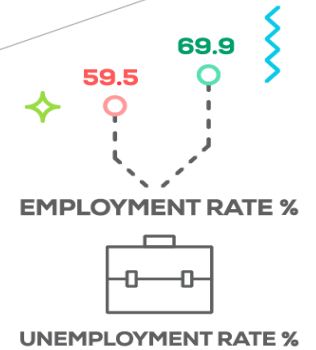
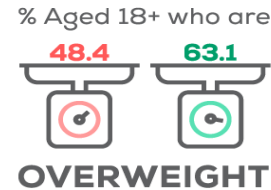
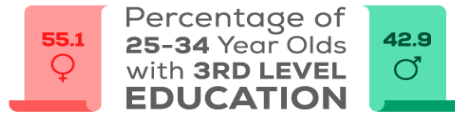
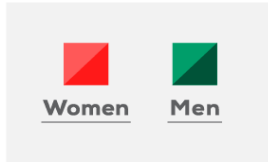
- ❖ Lone parent households (86.4% of **lone parents** are women) had a **deprivation rate in 2015 at 57.9%** and a consistent poverty rate at 26.2%.
- ❖ **Childcare costs** in Ireland are the **second highest** in the OECD for couples and the highest in the OECD for lone parents.
- ❖ The **gender pension gap is 37%**. This is the fifth highest pension gap in the EU.
- ❖ Women carry out **70% of family care work** in Ireland.
- ❖ On over **4,831 occasions in 2014**, women's domestic violence services were unable to accommodate women and their children because the **refuge was full** or there was no refuge in their area.
- ❖ **Underrepresentation** of women in civil and political life. **22% of TDs** are women. **21% of Councillors** are women.

# CSO: MEN AND WOMEN IN IRELAND 2016



An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh  
Central Statistics Office

## Women & Men in Ireland 2016



# Aim of this work

- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Mainstreaming
- ❖ community development approach
- ❖ women in local communities
- ❖ Working with our members and other organisations

## STRUCTURES MATTER

*Once you change who  
decides the policy, you  
change the policy itself*

- Slovenian NGO



# Revitalising Rural Ireland



Minister Michael Ring was in jovial form in Longford this morning as he approved €21.6 million in funding to revitalise rural Ireland.



The Minister for Rural and Community Development, who was in Granard for the official opening of the refurbished Buttermarket, announced that 281 rural towns and villages across the country are set to benefit from over €21 million in funding under the 2017 Town and Villages Renewal Scheme. The scheme is a key part of the Government's



**Decrease in local crime**

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## Most Popular Stories

1



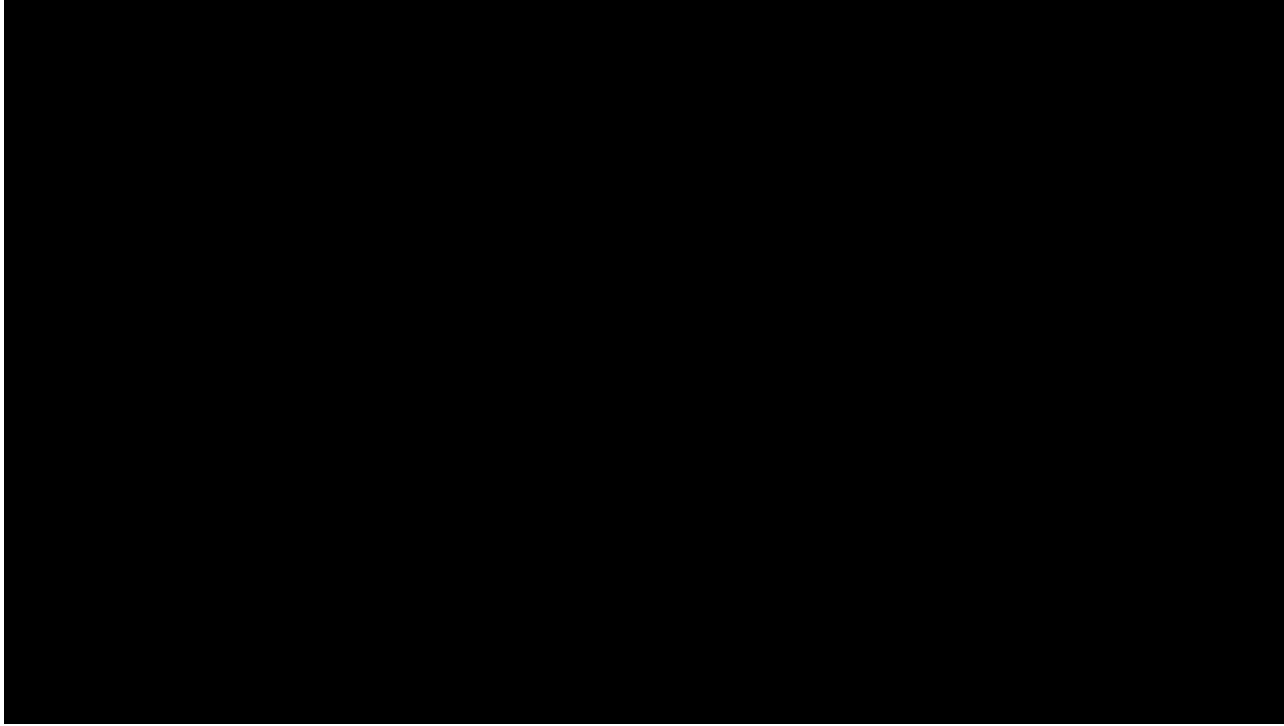
Westmeath man charged with murdering the

2



Claims Longford is suffering from rise in on

# VIDEO FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (WWW.LGMA.IE)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fmr5d4lpz7Q&feature=youtu.be>

# Local Government: areas of responsibility

- HOUSING AND BUILDING
- ROAD TRANSPORT AND SAFETY
- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- RECREATION AND AMENITIES
- DEVELOPMENT AND INCENTIVE CONTROLS
- CITIZENS/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INVOLVING ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES
- WELLBEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE
- MAKING CRITICAL DECISIONS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITIES

# Local Government: facts and figures

1. Local Authorities revenue and budgets in 2015 was €3.8billion
2. Huge cutbacks and rationalisation since 2008 - "doing more with less"
3. Staff numbers fell by over 8,300 or 24 per cent – end of 2016: 26,862
4. the number of local authorities has been reduced from 114 to 31;
5. the number of elected members has reduced from 1,627 to 949;
6. 80 town councils have been dissolved;
7. 95 municipal districts have been established;
8. 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies have been replaced by 3 regional assemblies;  
and,
9. the number of regional members has been reduced from 290 to 83.
10. 21% of all local councillors are women and in total only eight women have served as CEO's of local authorities. Rural/Urban Divide- 8%(Donegal) and 43%(DLR)

# Local Government Reform

Irish Times editorial (3 March 2015) where it was stated that

“The small financial savings that may have been secured by this local government reform is more than offset by the social losses that have resulted. Small communities are less well represented and local democracy is weakened rather than strengthened by the change ... Ireland is already a highly centralised state, and the further elimination of local representation reinforces that position... now some within the coalition [notably the Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform – Brendan Howlin] recognise that [aspects of this reform] was a mistake.”

# Local Government

Over **17,000** non-emergency issues reported to local councils via Fix Your Street



Fire services mobilised to over **36,000** incidents

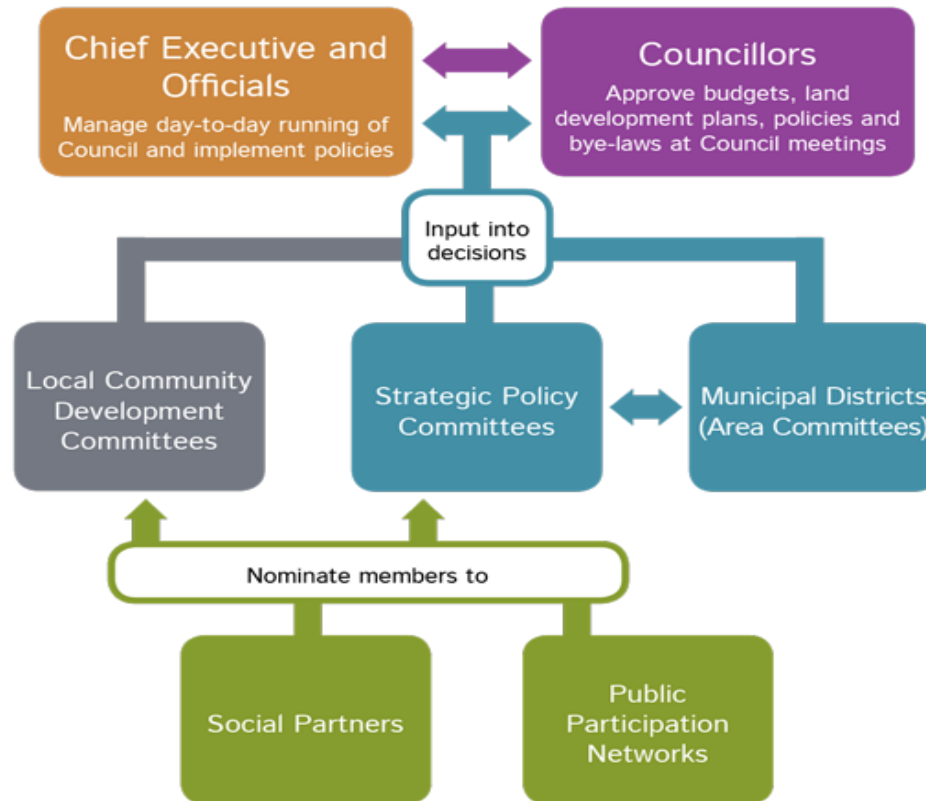


Over **17 million** visits to libraries



**19,000** homes delivered across all social housing programmes

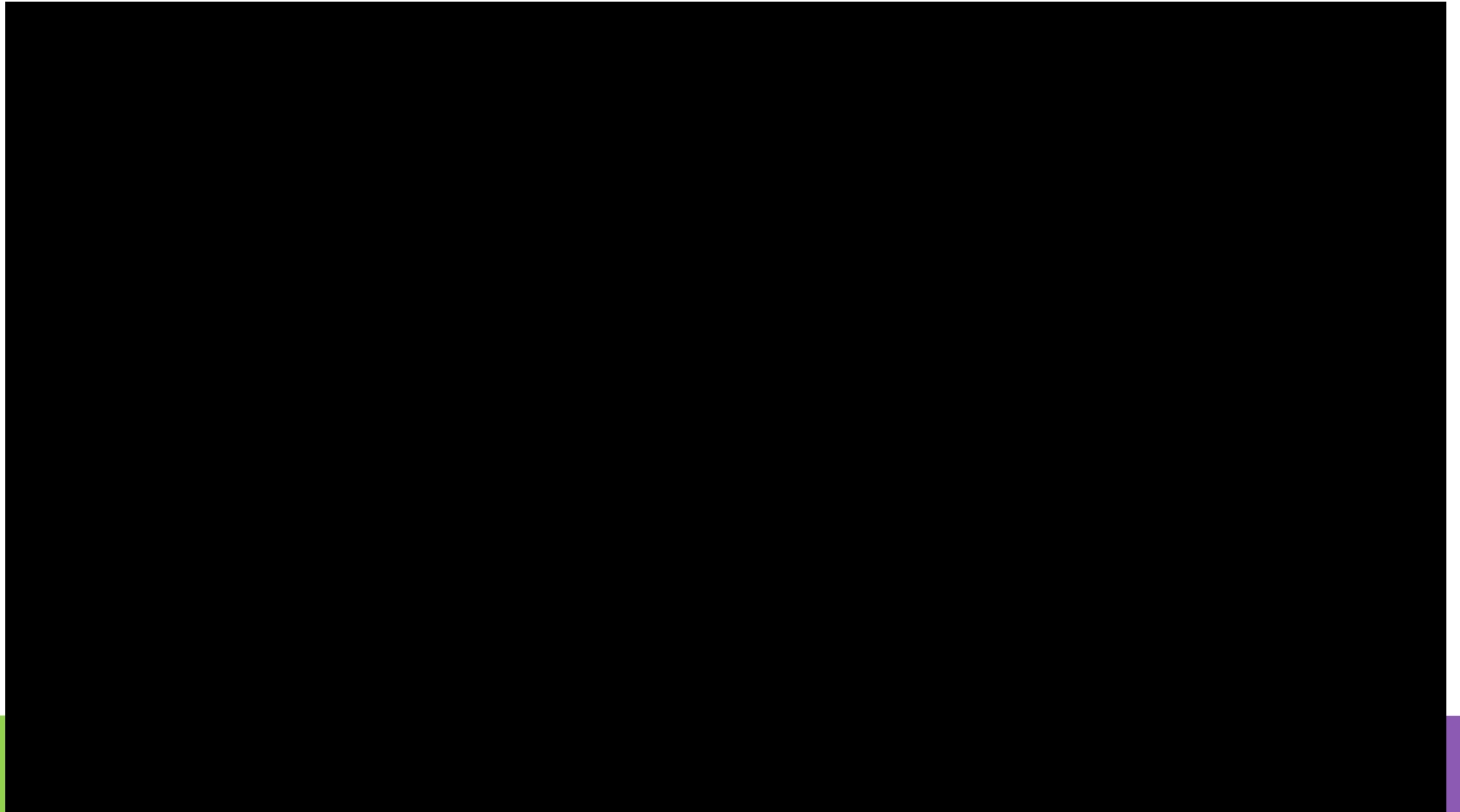
## How Councils Formally Make Decisions



Courtesy of Tasc

**KILKENNY PPN**

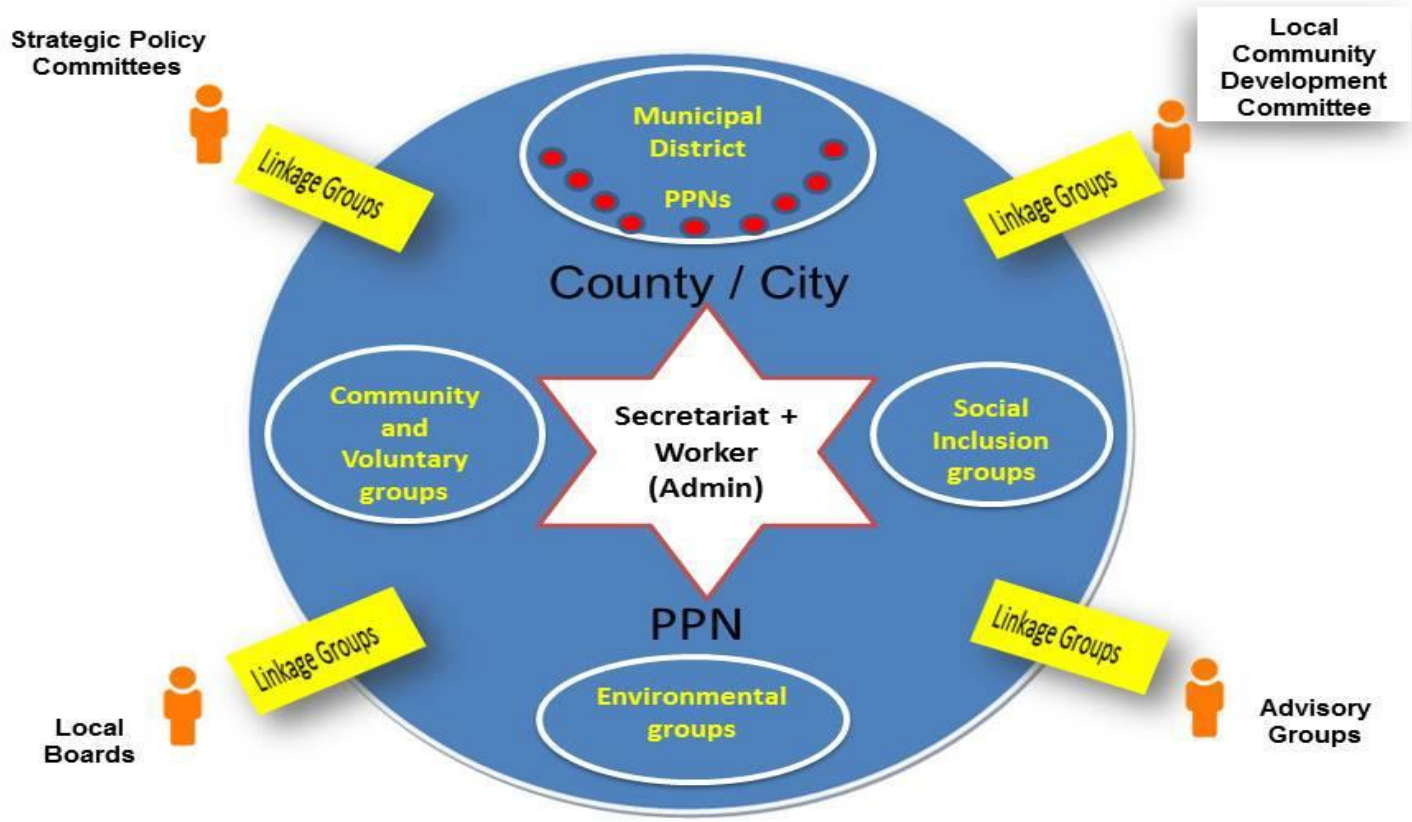
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiNowh2wY1g>



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

This is a body through which the Council communicates with the community





# Principles and Values of PPN



# Case Studies: PPN

## Features of Galway City Community Network(PPN)

- Independence of structure and worker
- Have asked for longer meetings for more meaningful discussions
- Importance of linkage groups
- Has developed policies and positions
- Pre meetings – prepare agenda and shared goals
- Engaged secretariat
- 41% of groups registered are in the Social Inclusion Pillar

# Local Community Development Committees

- a committee of the local authority
- responsible for coordinating, planning and overseeing local and community development funds in that area(SICAP, LEADER, Healthy Ireland)
- responsible for public funded, community focused programmes which seek to develop the wellbeing of our communities(LEADER, SICAP, Healthy Ireland)
- bring better coordination to the delivery of local and community development
- Membership drawn from mix of public and private reps
- Develop the Local Economic and Community plan

# Local Economic and Community Plans

- The Local Economic and Community Plan, a six year plan, which provides an integrated approach to economic, community and local development.
- identifies how to tackle the main areas of concern for your community
- Required to carry out consultations and equality proofing
- Monitoring and implementation
- Wellbeing and quality of life

# Case Study: Meath

- ETB represented on LCDC
- Extensive process undertaken to develop LECP – 8 workshops, external consultants
- Importance of data – socio economic profile, "what gets measured gets managed"
- Proofing
- actions named under implementation plan to address educational disadvantage(Travellers, migrants and women
- Consultmeath.ie

Donegal  
Galway  
Clare

# Opportunities

- Local authorities want to be seen as up to date, modern, in line with international best practise eg age friendly
- Closest to communities
- More substantive participative deliberative democracy - create supportive and inclusive spaces
- Public perception is important
- Disrupt the well - established circles of power
- Pipeline & Springboard
- Public Sector Duty
- Participatory Budgeting – SDCC and Open Government Partnership

# Challenges

- **New structures do not challenge power imbalance**
- **Local authorities directing local development and gatekeeping community participation**
- **Need for independent civil society and community sector to organise and govern itself around its own agenda**
- **Dilution of social inclusion agenda**
- **Structures are suited to those used to well-established ways of doing things, confident in procedures, official language, gender stereotyping etc.**

# Challenges

- **Burden on already over stretched unpaid and paid community workers**
- **Does representation mean influence? Need for collective strength & critical mass**
- **Limitations on the responsibilities of Local Authorities in comparison to EU counterparts eg health, social work**
- **Lack of social inclusion or gender equality expertise, need to build capacity**
- **Funding cuts to local authorities**
- **Need time, resources, support**

# Why bother? What specific impact can you make?

- We have a right to be have our voices heard
- Change policy/practice/funding/priorities?
- Principles and values of community education
- We know the issues and the solutions
- Influence decisions further up the chain?
- Access officials?
- Accountability
- Opportunity to develop new skills
- Inclusive decision making

# How to get involved?

- Join your local PPN - <http://drcd.gov.ie/list-of-ppn-website/>
- Get a copy of your Local Economic and Community Plan
- Ask for a meeting with the chief officer or chair of the LCDC
- Attend a committee meeting, check are they online?
- Take part in consultations, make a submission, attend follow up meetings
- Become an individual or group member of the NWCI
- Are ETB reps networked?
- Reflect and ask questions – are those affected involved? How will it impact individuals and groups?

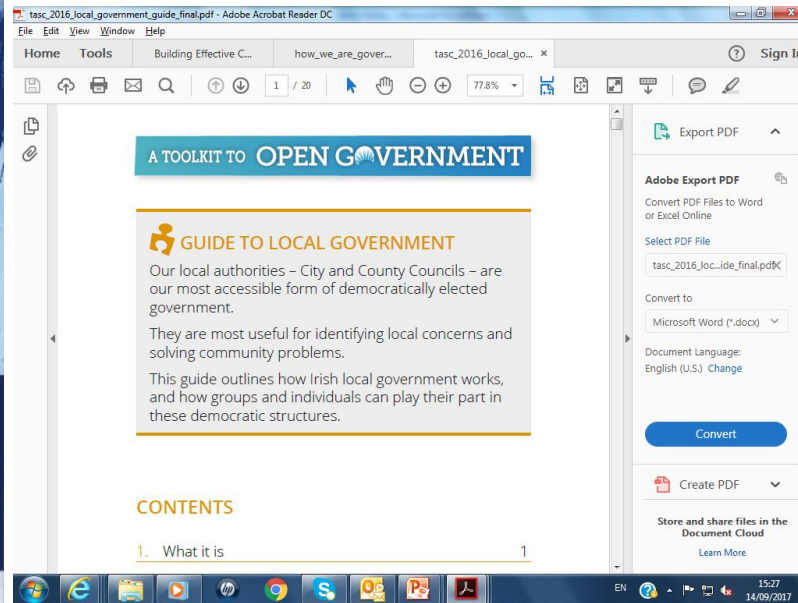
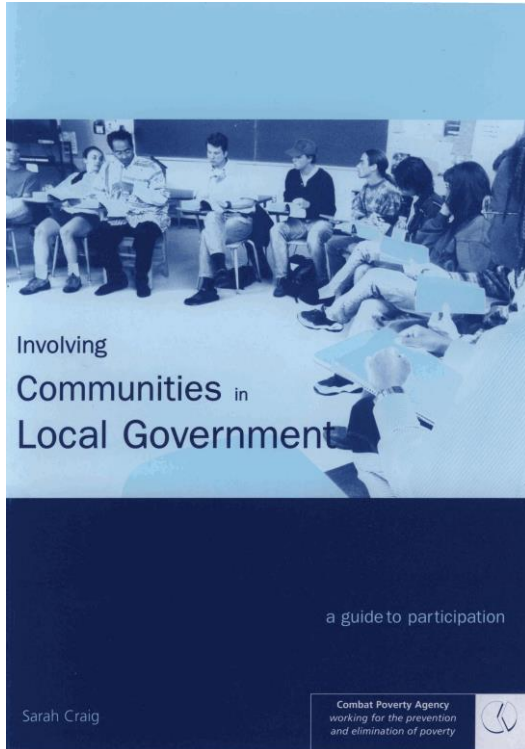
# RESOURCES

<https://www.vote.ie/government/local-government.html>

<https://www.tasc.ie/activecitizen>

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/local-government>

NWCI Roadmap  
for change:  
Handbook for  
women's groups  
working equality



# Policies

Open Government Partnership - <http://www.ogpireland.ie/>

Public Sector Duty – <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

Policy on consultation - <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/consultation-guidelines/>

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020 – [www.genderequality.ie](http://www.genderequality.ie)

Framework Policy for Local and Community Development - [www.drccd.gov.ie](http://www.drccd.gov.ie)

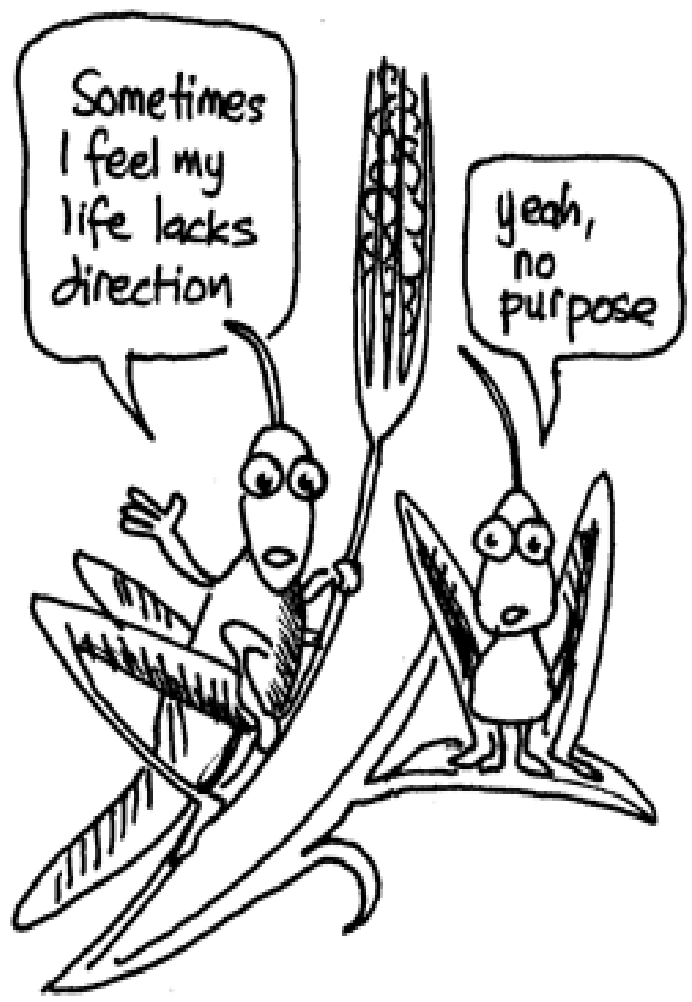
Department of Rural and Community Development - [www.drccd.gov.ie](http://www.drccd.gov.ie)

Europe 2020 Targets

Putting people first: Local Government Reform

# Group Discussion: Making it work and worthwhile

- 1. What impact would having more women and underrepresented groups involved in our local authorities have ?**
- 2. How could we support each other to be more effective, hold the structures and institutions to account?**



**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING**



# Contact Details

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