



ADULT LEARNERS' FESTIVAL NATIONAL POLICY DAY, 8TH MARCH 2019

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON
THE LIVES OF WOMEN

CALLING FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Introduction

The Aim:

The purpose of this pre-event paper is to set the policy context and note the policy ask for the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival National Policy Day on 8th March, 2019. The focus of this day is to acknowledge the impact of community education on the lives of women as the 8th March is recognised globally as International Women's Day. The event will highlight the purpose and value of community education for learners and wider society, culminating in a recognition for the need of long-term policy and funding frameworks for community education provision that are built upon an all-of-government, and not individual Departmental approach.

As the Policy Day is being held on International Women's Day we are using the *National Women's Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020*¹ as a framework to demonstrate why an all-of-government approach is needed to fulfil the potential of community education as a policy tool for including the hardest to reach people in Irish society.

What We Are Seeking:

This policy day will be the first step in appealing for this Policy Day is the development and implementation of a National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025. Ireland needs a National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025 in order to effectively evaluate, implement, and fund and implement community education provision across the country in a way that efficiently reaches and impacts includes the largest number of the most educationally disadvantaged excluded and marginalised people in our society in the most efficient ways.

Through research in 2011² and 2017³, as well as ongoing work with the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN), AONTAS has been able to develop and articulate the complex and ineffective funding system that hinders the potential of community education. In order to have a long-term policy and funding framework for community education, a *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025* is needed so that the country can understand and support the implementation of community education on a macro-level through all-of-government collaboration.

¹ Department of Justice. *National Women's Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020*. http://justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf/Files/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf

² AONTAS. *Position paper on creating an effective funding mechanism for community education*. <https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Policy/Position%20Paper%20-%20Effective%20Funding%20for%20Community%20Education%20Feb%202011.pdf>

³ Fitzsimons, Camilla and Magrath, Conor. *FinALE "Where to Invest" Funding Adult Education*. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FinALE-Where-to-invest-Final.pdf>

Focus of the Day:

The focus of this day is to bring together policy makers from across different Government Departments so that they have the chance to listen first-hand to providers of community education, and the women learners they reach. As the event is being held on International Women's Day we will highlight the wide ranging benefits of community education on women's lives and offer a space where we can hear from organisation's directly regarding their funding and programme challenges.

Policy makers in attendance will be given the opportunity to participate in the discussion sessions in a listening capacity in order to hear the experience of community education providers and learners from across the country. If they choose, policy makers will have the opportunity near the end of the session to respond to those in attendance with their reflections.

Background Information

What is Community Education?

Community education is locally based education provision that can be accredited or non-accredited. Community education addresses socio-economic inequalities and barriers to social inclusion as it supports people who are often early school-leavers or otherwise marginalised and excluded from wider social participation.

Why is Community Education important?

Community education addresses educational and social inequality, particularly for women, and in doing so meets a multitude of national policy priorities; including but not limited to increasing lifelong learning participation rates, improving qualifications and skills for employability amongst the most underqualified members of society, improving social inclusion, and improving mental health and well-being.

Following the 2018 National Policy Day, in May 2018 AONTAS developed six one-page documents on the wider-benefits of education which highlight the benefits of appropriately funding adult and community education in Ireland.⁴

Why is Community Education successful in addressing educational inequality?

Community education is learner centred, supporting people to build their confidence and learning to learn skills, so that they can participate in non-accredited programmes, and accredited programmes across the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Amongst members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN), accredited education is

⁴ AONTAS. *Lifelong Learning for All* policy paper series, published May 2018 and available on the AONTAS website publications page. <https://www.aontas.com/knowledge/publications/?t=policies>

available across the country at most levels on the NFQ depending on the needs of the community.

Community education enables access to education by overcoming barriers to participation including but not limited to location and cost. Community education also offers a range of local needs-driven supports that depending on community needs may include mental health and/or addictions counselling, domestic violence support, and childcare. These supports are particularly important for the participation of women learners who often face barriers to education due to family responsibilities as evidenced in the *Adult Education Survey 2017*⁵.

Where does Community Education happen?

Community education is run by not-for-profit community organisations and charities in communities across Ireland. While the AONTAS CEN is only a single subset of all community education taking place in Ireland, the size and reach of its membership is evidence of the significant impact of community education across the country. The AONTAS CEN has over 110 member organisations across 24 counties. Depending on their size, these organisations connect individually with anywhere from 20 to 400 learners every year.

Current Challenges for Adult Learning Policy Implementation and Success

Understanding who participates in adult education

The *Adult Education Survey 2017*, which was published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in August 2018, clearly outlines inequalities that are pervasive in the Irish adult education system. The survey findings provide evidence about the stark differences which exist in people's ability to participate in education, depending on their gender, age, level of education, family circumstances and where they live on our island. The following points from the survey are worth noting:

- **People with a high level of qualifications engage in lifelong learning the most.** People who have not completed the Leaving Certificate are seven times less likely to participate in formal education (2%) than those who have a third level qualification (14%);
- **Location is a barrier to access in parts of the country.** The ability to get to a training location was six times more likely to be an issue for people in border regions, than for people living in Dublin;
- **People need a range of supports to enable access, including health support.** 25% of people who left education after primary school (and 16% of people who left school after the Junior or Inter Certificate) cited health and age as a reason they could not participate in lifelong learning. Whereas only 4% of those with third level qualifications cited health and age as a barrier to participation in lifelong learning;
- **Non-formal education (eg non-accredited community education) is the most popular choice** for 23% of people who were early school leavers.

⁵ Central Statistics Office. *Adult Education Survey 2017*.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/aes/adulteducationsurvey2017/>

Why is non-accredited community education a common option for early school-leavers?

Adult learners tell AONTAS that a wide range of learning options are needed. The options are met by community education. Education is available not only through specific vocationally-orientated courses but also through non-accredited courses where learners can build confidence, develop learning to learn skills, and take time to decide on which area of learning they wish to invest their future efforts.

Key factors for access and retention are quality and readily available learner supports (e.g. childcare, transport, academic funding and guidance), learning methodology (dialogical, respectful, and supportive) and collegiality (peer support and peer learning).

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020

The *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* was presented by Government in April 2017 as a policy framework to achieve progress under three overarching themes: Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women; Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and Engaging as equal and active citizens. To achieve progress under these themes the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* has put in place an ambitious but practical series of strategy actions that reach across all government departments and into every sector of Irish life.

Included in these actions are several actions that have a direct link to the provision of community education as a tool for creating a more equal Ireland and which are meant to influence at least one of the three strategic themes.

All six of the objectives outlined within the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* are being addressed on numerous fronts and at grassroots level nationwide by community education organisations. Implementing these objectives requires a response 'to women's needs across a diversity of identities and situations' (p. 3) and focusing 'on the needs of working women by proposing to continue to increase investment in childcare; to take action to tackle the gender pay gap; to improve the conditions of women in precarious employment; and to provide additional help to women entrepreneurs' (ibid).

Community education has a long and proven track record of responding to these same needs identified in the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* including:

- advancing socio-economic equality for women and girls;
- advancing the physical and mental health and wellbeing of women and girls;
- ensuring the visibility in society of women and girls, and their equal and active citizenship;
- advancing women in leadership at all levels;
- combating violence against women; and
- embedding gender equality in decision-making.

These are all goals which lie at the very heart of community education values and practice. Empowering women within their local communities through education is understood as both a means and end in itself for achieving the aims of the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020*.

Included as an Appendix to this document is a table of actions identified in the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* which are directly affected by the work of community education providers around Ireland. This table shows how support for community education can help to achieve policy goals necessary for effective implementation of the strategy.

Funding to Create Policy Action

Through the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* we see that community education helps to address many policy priorities across Government Departments. If we want to see meaningful policy change toward inclusion of women in society as the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* states then we need to effectively invest in community education through long-term sustainable policies and funding as established in a new *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025*.

Like the commitment made to women and girls in the *National Strategies for Women and Girls 2017-2020* Ireland needs a new commitment to a proven form of education that creates more inclusive and prosperous communities. From our work at AONTAS, and from the work of our members, policy makers know the value of community education intrinsically, but due to the siloed nature of Government and a necessity to measure policy outcomes through quantitative single indicator measures, we as a country have limited our ability to appropriately fund education that makes a difference to people and communities.

Why an all-of-government policy and effective funding mechanism is needed

Community education is already funded across Departments, yet there is no national strategy for cohesively and sustainably prioritising and directing this funding. For Government and civil society to be confident that public funds are being spent in an effective and efficient way a new *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025* is the answer.

Who currently funds Community Education?

An immediate challenge for community education providers and learners is the historic, consistent lack of sustainable funding for community education. Grassroots level research

has been completed in 2011⁶ and 2017⁷ amongst members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) that demonstrates the range of Government Departments and non-government funding sources who are involved in funding community education across the country. This assortment of funding providers, each providing funds for specific purposes, had led to a confusing funding system built upon an unstable foundation of funding.

What we do know about which Government Departments fund Community Education?

In 2011, AONTAS published a position paper about creating an effective funding mechanism for community education. From n40 organisations, a key finding of this 2011 research was that 10 Government Departments were providing funding for these AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) members. These Departments were primarily the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The same study also identified other funding sources, namely charities, businesses, and EU funding.

Looking at members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) in 2017, the Erasmus+ funded FinALE research “*Where to Invest*” *Funding Adult Education* again explored how CEN members (n45)⁸ self-declared the origin of their operating funds. Similar to the research in 2011, the FinALE research found that organisations receive their primary and secondary funding from a multitude of Department and agency sources, as well as from philanthropy, learner fees, religious organisations, and community grants. Half of these 45 organisations relied on more than one source of funding, with a list of the Government Departments, agencies, and other primary and secondary funding sources identified as primary and secondary funders during the research noted in the graphic overleaf.

The recent OECD report (2019) cited the FinALE research and stated:

‘project-based funding is temporary by nature which can undermine the financial sustainability of adult learning system; and procedures for accessing external funds can be complex and time-consuming, which can result in gaps in adult learning provision and can absorb a significant amount of human and financial resources which could otherwise be available for training’ (OECD, 2019, p.94).

⁶ AONTAS. *Position paper on creating an effective funding mechanism for community education*. <https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Policy/Position%20Paper%20-%20Effective%20Funding%20for%20Community%20Education%20Feb%202011.pdf>

⁷ Fitzsimons, Camilla and Magrath, Conor. *FinALE “Where to Invest” Funding Adult Education*. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FinALE-Where-to-invest-Final.pdf>

⁸ The FinALE research looked at 56 members of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). Forty-five of these organisations provided information about funding by Government Department (principal and secondary funders).

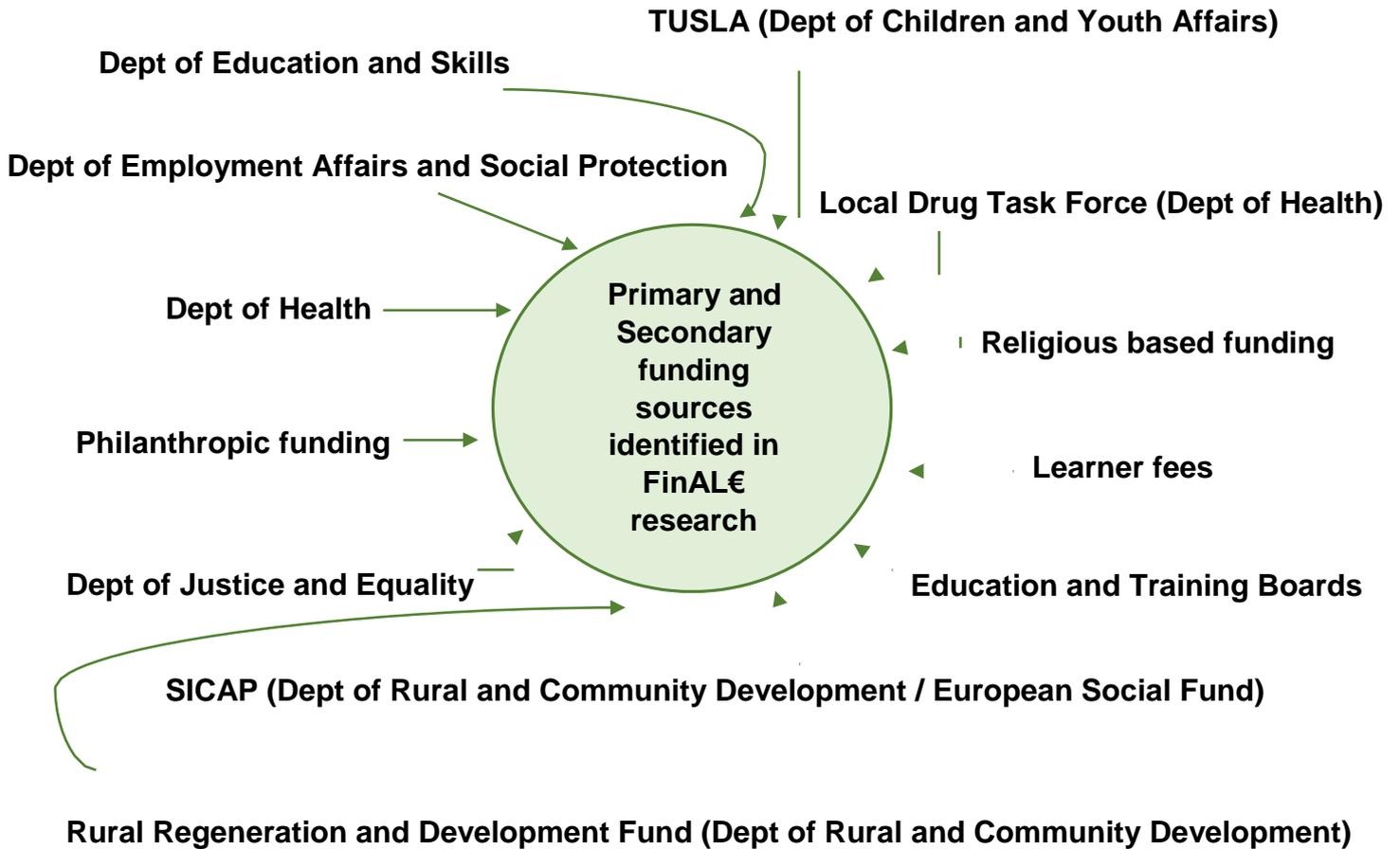


Fig 1. Outline of funding for 45 organisations of the AONTAS Community Education Network (2017)

What this 2011 and 2017 research shows is the high variance in different funding sources that exist within community education provision. This variance highlights the need for an all-of-government approach to community education policy and funding that will enable sustainable community education provision so more time can be spent on supporting learners rather than on completing multiple funding applications all with different templates; followed by compliance with different administrative, financial and data recording and reporting processes.

What Kind of Funding Model is Needed?

In order to meet the needs of learners and communities, a new sustainable, multi-annual funding model for community education is needed. To be successful the funding model needs to fulfil the following requirements.

- ✓ A new funding model for community education must be a needs-based, multi-annual funding process that responds to community-based needs assessments.⁹
- ✓ A new funding model must cover the true cost of community education provision including overhead costs, administration, and provision. Too frequently funding only covers provision, neglecting to account for overhead and administrative costs that allow programs to be provided.
- ✓ A new funding model must measure the outcomes of community education by including the ‘distance travelled’¹⁰ of the learner. The ‘distance travelled’ by each learner varies depending on their life experiences and the time passed since they were last in education. Quantitative assessments of lifelong learning participation that are based on metrics such as completion of a single award mask the life experience of a learner, offering no insight into the people participating and the challenges that education helps them overcome. Each learner has a unique experience and success means many things; from overcoming fears of education by taking a step into adult learning, to receiving a minor QQI award, to being able to help their children complete homework, thereby developing intergenerational as well as immediate social benefits.
- ✓ A new funding model must move to a ‘capabilities’ rather than ‘outcomes’-based model of measuring public policy success. “...different people need different amounts and different kinds of goods to reach the same levels of well-being or advantage.” (Robeyns, 2005.)

⁹Three principles underpin this need-based approach 1) inclusionary philosophies and approaches 2) a commitment to self-assessment 3) assuring a range of outcomes depending on community needs. Fitzsimons, Camilla and Magrath, Conor. *FinALE “Where to Invest” Funding Adult Education*. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FinALE-Where-to-invest-Final.pdf>

¹⁰The recent (2018) ESRI evaluation of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) programme highlighted the necessity to capture intensive work carried out by community development programmes with vulnerable groups more accurately. The report highlighted use of measuring a person’s ‘distance travelled’ as a tool for capturing this intensive work.

Next Steps:

For 50 years AONTAS has actively worked to make adult and community education a positive force in the lives of the most marginalised members of our society. This has involved advocating for equal access to education and equity of outcomes for those who actively participate. The starting point to achieve improved outcomes is to:

- 1) bring about a more complete understanding of community education across our society;
- 2) identify the policy achievements of community education through qualitative and quantitative measures; and
- 3) note how community education may be harnessed by policy makers and community educators to better identify, prevent, treat, and ultimately remedy many of the policy challenges facing Government and the citizens they serve.

Following from the Policy Day on 8th March 2019, AONTAS will be making a new *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025* our primary ask in working with Government. The needs of socially and economically excluded members of our society are too important to ignore, and the contribution made by community education to creating a more socially and economically inclusive society are too great to disregard.

To make this happen AONTAS and our partners in civil society will push for Government to designate a single Department to lead on this new strategy, in the same way that the Department of Justice has been leading on the implementation of the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020*.

In advancing a *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025*, we in AONTAS look forward to building new positive relationships across Government. Within today's global climate of economic instability and political unpredictability Ireland is experiencing a level of economic recovery. Now is the time to seize the opportunity to develop educational systems that can fully meet the current and future learning needs of Ireland's diverse communities to ensure that recovery remains stable and sustainable.

Resources:

AONTAS. *Position paper on creating an effective funding mechanism for community education*. <https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Policy/Position%20Paper%20-%20Effective%20Funding%20for%20Community%20Education%20Feb%202011.pdf> [Accessed 27 February 2019]

AONTAS. *Lifelong Learning for All* policy paper series, published May 2018 and available on the AONTAS website publications page. <https://www.aontas.com/knowledge/publications/?t=policies> [Accessed 27 February 2019]

Central Statistics Office. *Adult Education Survey 2017*. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/aes/adulteducationsurvey2017/> [Accessed 27 February 2019]

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Department of Justice. *National Women's Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020*. [http://justice.ie/en/JELR/National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 - 2020.pdf/Files/National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 - 2020.pdf](http://justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Strategy%20for%20Women%20and%20Girls%202017%20-%202020.pdf/Files/National%20Strategy%20for%20Women%20and%20Girls%202017%20-%202020.pdf) [Accessed 27 February 2019]

Fitzsimons, Camilla and Magrath, Conor. *FinALE "Where to Invest" Funding Adult Education*. <https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FinALE-Where-to-invest-Final.pdf> [Accessed 27 February 2019]

OECD. *Getting Skills Right: Future Ready Adult Learning Systems*. OECD Publishing, Paris. 2019. <http://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311756-en>. [Accessed 27 February 2019]

Robeyns, Ingrid. *The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey*. *Journal of Human Development* Vol. 6, No. 1, March 2005. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b99a/d40597c7f2396eeb7128b> [Accessed 28 February 2019]

Appendix

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 and the Impact of Community Education

The following table contains 22 actions from within the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* which are impacted by the provision of community education across Ireland. The purpose of presenting this table is to highlight the wide scope of policy actions presented in the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* that would be supported in implementation if community education across Ireland were effectively supported through a sustainable all-of-government funding and policy approach. As stated throughout this paper we believe this all-of-government funding and policy approach can be achieved through the development of a *National Strategy for Community Education 2020-2025*.

How community education supports *The National Women’s Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* actions

Objective 1: Advance Socio-Economic Equality for Women and Girls			
Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Improved supports for working parents	1.1 Provide a platform of parenting supports for families and working parents.	2020 DCYA	Community education has at its core an ethos of supporting learners to participate in education, lifelong learning, and their communities. To do this many providers across Ireland ensure that they are able to provide free or low-cost childcare. Additional funding to groups would help Government achieve multiple goals of upskilling the national work force in communities across Ireland, while supporting working parents struggling to afford quality childcare.

Information gathered to support Government investment in childcare	1.6 Conduct and publish an independent review of the cost of providing quality childcare in private and community settings, consistent with the principle of ongoing professionalization of the sector.	2018 DCYA	<p>Community education organisations understand and actively overcome barriers facing women where childcare is a cost that prohibits (re-)entering education and training. In local communities crèches are a built-in feature of the education programme delivered.</p> <p>Organisations providing these services gather a wealth of data that would be valuable for informing the DCYA’s research and decision-making around investment in childcare.</p>
Increased access to training opportunities for women	1.7 Fund the provision of locally delivered courses for women, comprising a series of training opportunities on self-development and work related skills, to assist a return to the labour market and promote entrepreneurship.	2017-2020 DJE	<p>Community education is often the first step back to the labour market for many women, particularly in rural communities where there is poor access to educational opportunity. Organisations such as Longford Women’s Link provide access learning up to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications within a non-threatening, local community setting. Access to education for women who have been outside of education and the labour market for long periods of time ensures a positive experience of returning to education, thereby increasing the likelihood of retention and success.</p>
Increased female participation in apprenticeships	1.11 Commission a review on pathways to participation in apprenticeship and implement recommendations thereafter. The review will examine patterns of participation by diverse groups in apprenticeship, including female participation, and will identify any barriers existing and will make recommendations for the future.	2018 SOLAS, DES	<p>Community education organisations understand the complexity of the challenges faced by people who have been outside of education and the labour market for long periods of time. Some community education providers offer apprenticeship training in a manner which addresses the needs of women. In November 2018 A learner from An Cosán was featured in the Irish Times for her participation in an apprenticeship as a stockbroker.</p>

<p>Increased number of women returners to the labour market</p>	<p>1.12 Publicise the eligibility of homemakers to apply for Springboard+ courses⁶ from June 2017 and monitor take up by gender. from June 2017 DES, HEA</p>	<p>from June 2017 DES, HEA</p>	<p>Community education organisations are often the first port of call for people wishing to take the first step to education, training or employment. Community education providers, when resourced to do so, provide information on eligibility for relevant programmes. Staff of community education organisations provide the support and encouragement needed for people who lack confidence to access programmes for which they are eligible.</p>
<p>The employment rate of women is brought closer to 69-71% to meet the Europe 2020 target for Ireland</p>	<p>1.13 Consider an action specifically directed at increasing the employment rate of women, having regard to the different needs of different groups (e.g. lone parents).</p>	<p>2017-2020 DJE, relevant Departments and agencies</p>	<p>Many community education providers are registered providers of courses leading to awards on the NFAQ. These organisations offer courses such as Healthcare, Childcare, Hairdressing and other industry focused courses. Having access to accredited courses in a local community setting can ensure that those who would be least likely to engage in education and training in a formal setting may do so in the non-threatening environment of their local community centre; thereby widening access to employment by those who are most socially excluded.</p>
<p>Socially excluded women, particularly those living in poverty, are supported to access education, training and employment opportunities</p>	<p>1.19 Support and resource women's community development, as a means to provide services and support for socially excluded women. Support community organisations, such as the National Collective of Community-based Women's Groups, who engage with women who experience disadvantage in order to build capacity and increase participation in existing community-based socio-economic programmes</p>	<p>2017-2020 DJE (lead) and relevant Departments</p>	<p>Community education operates from the same principles as community development, including equality, inclusion, and social justice. Community education takes a collective approach to education whereby courses are developed in response to local community needs.</p> <p>A number of AONTAS CEN members are members of the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN) including Access 2000 Wexford (who are represented on the CEN steering group), and Women's Community Projects, Mullingar who worked with AONTAS in the production of a QQI Reengagement resource for community education providers.</p>

Improved access to education, training and employment opportunities for Traveller and Roma women	1.20 Include actions in the forthcoming National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2020) to support initiatives in relation to Traveller and Roma women's education and employment, including by provision of community-based supports for retention of Traveller and Roma children in the education system	2017-2020 DJE (lead)	<p>Page 4 of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017 – 2020) states a commitment to <i>“investment by the State in community-based support mechanisms to ensure greater retention of Traveller and Roma children and youths in the education system”</i>.</p> <p>Community education providers focused on these populations have built up trust with Traveller and Roma communities by working from principles of equality and inclusion.</p>
Increased numbers of women engaged in entrepreneurship	1.29 Provide funding for female entrepreneurship.	2017-2020 DJE	<p>Community education providers provide educational opportunities to women according to their local social and economic needs.</p> <p>Many leaders within these community organisations are themselves entrepreneurs, and provide education opportunities that allow for the development of newly innovative female business leaders.</p>
Poverty reduction of female-headed households, including lone parent families	1.32 Reduce the gap in poverty rates between female-headed households and male-headed households. Measures to be undertaken to include programmes to assist return to the labour market and encourage entrepreneurship.	2017-2020 DSP (lead), SOLAS, ETBs	<p>Community education provision is gender-equality based and made available according to the needs of local communities that often experience high levels of exclusion from the labour market. Therefore the education available is provided in order to fill local community and employment needs gaps.</p> <p>Time and again international research, including UNESCO's 3rd GRALE report identify the benefits of adult education to the reduction of poverty in communities around the world.</p>
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland's international relations	1.43 Support national and sub-national education strategies that focus on improving access to quality education and skills training to enhance employment opportunities for women and girls.	2017-2020 DFAT	Community education helps provide skills training where people live and work in Ireland. Organisations such as HACE and D8CEC support the integration of immigrant women through non-threatening course provision in local community centres which promotes inclusion and a breaking down of barriers between communities.

			The Women's Integration Skills and Employment (<u>WISE</u>) project has supported over 150 women since May 2017, resulting in socially isolated rural women returning to employment, self-employment and education.
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Objective 2: Advance the Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing of Women and Girls			
Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Improved physical and mental health & wellbeing of women and girls	2.1 Improved physical and mental health & wellbeing of women and girls	2017-2020 Department of Health, HSE, NWCI	<p>Community education is first and foremost about ensuring that learners have the social supports they need to meaningfully participate in education.</p> <p>Providers across the country such as Transformative Recovery College in Mullingar, and Bray Area Partnership focus on ensuring that learners receive the mental health and wellbeing support they need to actively participate in education and their communities.</p>
Improved healthcare support for women and girls from an intercultural perspective	2.7 The second HSE National Intercultural Strategy will include a specific section directed to the care and support of women and girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds.	Q4 2017 HSE	<p>For individuals and families within Irish society who have recently become citizens or residents, community education provides a safe and empowering space to build confidence and be yourself while learning.</p> <p>CRAIC NI in Belfast and Warrenmount Community Education Centre in Dublin are two great examples of community education providers who reach out into their communities and provide a safe and welcome space to women of diverse ethnic backgrounds.</p>
Drug services meet needs of pregnant women and mothers of young children	2.24 The new Drug Strategy will aim to increase the range of wrap-around services to meet the needs of women who are using drugs and/or alcohol in a harmful manner, including those with children and those who are pregnant.	2017 Department of Health	<p>As stated previously, community education is first and foremost about supporting people in all aspects of their well-being as they learn and so they can learn.</p> <p>The SAOL Project, Soilse, and RADE, are powerful examples of community educators who put the recovery and addiction support of their learners at the forefront of their efforts. Before learners can ever think about stable employment or wider participation in their communities, they first need to know they are supported by the community around them.</p>

Objective 3: Ensure the Visibility in Society of Women and Girls, and their Equal and Active Citizenship			
Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Greater levels of participation by Traveller and Roma women in public life	3.11 The forthcoming <i>National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2020)</i> includes commitments to facilitate participation in public life by Traveller and Roma women, including by continuing to fund and support the National Traveller Women’s Forum, Mincéirs Whiden, and relevant local community Traveller and Roma projects.	2017-2020 DJE (lead)	<p>Traveller and Roma communities are among the most educationally disadvantaged and socio-economically marginalised communities in Ireland.</p> <p>As community education provides education according to the needs of communities, community organisations across Ireland are the best placed to reach out to Traveller and Roma communities and begin to engage them in lifelong learning.</p> <p>The research about the intergenerational socio-economic benefits of engaging these groups in and through education clearly demonstrates the direct and local, as well as the wider and long term positive impact.</p>
The gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted in Ireland’s international relations	3.16 Support programmes which focus on empowering women, and on strengthening their decision-making role at all levels.	2017-2020 DFAT	<p>Community education programs with a primary or sole focus on education of women are found across the country and actively participate in the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN).</p> <p>A primary goal of these groups is to build the confidence of women learners so that they can become leaders within their communities. At national level Minister Katherine Zappone helped to launch An Cosán, and Senator Lynn Ruane is a direct beneficiary of that organisation’s work.</p>

Objective 4: Advance Women in Leadership at All Levels			
Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Greater focus on women's participation and on gender issues at community level	4.6 In the context of supporting a greater focus on women's participation and on gender issues at community level, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) will provide key supports to those most in need in our communities, including disadvantaged women, Traveller and Roma women and women with disabilities, in all Local Authority areas throughout the country. Programme Implementers (PIs) will also ensure gender equality is reflected in their own internal practices regarding their employees and relationships with sub-contractors and suppliers, etc. This will depend on PIs reflecting on their human resources processes to tackle unconscious gender bias and to create a workplace where both women and men can advance into leadership position.	2017-2020 DHPCLG	<p>Community education programs that focus on empowering women to fully participate in decision-making mechanisms at local community level can be found in nearly every county with dozens contributing to the work of the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN). These programmes set women up to succeed as leaders within their own communities.</p> <p>Groups such as the Roscommon Women's Network, Access 2000 Wexford, Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association Ltd, and others are all examples of groups that set an example for both outreach to women for the provision of education, and also inclusion of women in the governance and operations of their organisations.</p>
Greater visibility and voices of socially excluded women represented in policy and decision-making fora	4.14 Support women's community organisations to identify relevant local structures for participation, and support the participation and progression of women within these structures locally, regionally and nationally.	2017-2020 Relevant Departments	<p>Women's based and focused community education exists for the purpose of empowering women to participate and lead in their communities, both in the public and private sector.</p> <p>Women-centred community education providers are very well represented within the AONTAS CEN membership. Projects such as Longford Women's Link, through their Women's Manifesto Group support women's engagement in</p>

			local government, and organisations such as Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN) encourage engagement with local government representatives through World Café and other regional events. Through the work of these organisations women learners have positioned themselves within various policy and decision-making fora as social, political and entrepreneurial leaders.
Greater participation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions	4.15 Undertake initiatives to promote the participation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions, including in the community and voluntary sector.	2017-2020 DJE	Traveller and Roma communities are among the most marginalised communities in Ireland. As community education provides education according to the needs of communities, community organisations across Ireland are well placed to reach out to Traveller and Roma communities. Through a focus on education and community and personal empowerment, community education has the potential to promote future leadership of women Traveller and Roma communities.

Objective 5: Combat Violence Against Women

Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Increased awareness of domestic and sexual violence	5.3 Implement the national, multi-annual awareness raising campaign - #whatwouldyoudo – to increase the awareness of domestic and sexual violence, and to bring about a change in long-established societal behaviours and attitudes by activating bystanders. It is intended that 2016-2018 will focus on domestic violence and 2019- 2021 will focus on sexual violence, with elements of each featuring	Ongoing Cosc	Domestic violence support centres provide community education-based training and information courses. This provision covers a range of areas from increasing the awareness of members of local communities about the impact of gender-based abuse, to training frontline support workers at the frontline of domestic and sexual violence.

	in each phase of the campaign.		
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Objective 6: Embed Gender Equality in Decision-making			
Outcome	Actions	Time Scale and Responsible Agency	How community education funding supports these outcomes
Key strategies are gender-proofed	6.9 Take gender equality into account in the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Rural Potential.	2017-2020 DAHRRGA, DJE	Community education organisations are found and funded in all communities across the country with unique achievements in regional and rural communities. These education providers work to ensure that women across Ireland have access to education in the communities where they live and can access services like flexible blended learning and childcare that makes their learning possible.
The evidence base for gender proofing is further developed	6.13 Identify knowledge gaps in relation to gender inequality and use this as a base to drive improvements in the data infrastructure and analysis required to close those gaps. Ensure that evidence generated through improved data infrastructure and analysis regarding gender inequality is linked to relevant policies.	2017-2020 All Depts	Community education providers are on the frontlines of combating gender inequality. Working collaboratively, community providers have a wealth of knowledge, experience, and information that would make an invaluable contribution to all-of-government in order to ensure that the everyday lived realities of gender-inequality are linked to cross-departmental policy development.

AONTAS A50

Celebrating Fifty Years



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