

AONTAS

*Annual Report &
Financial Statements*

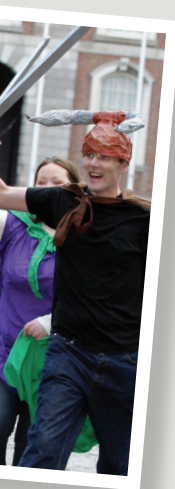
2009





Mission Statement

The mission of AONTAS is to ensure that every adult in Ireland has access to appropriate and affordable learning opportunities throughout their lives, thus enabling them to contribute to and participate in the economic, social, civic and cultural development of Irish society.



AONTAS Core Values

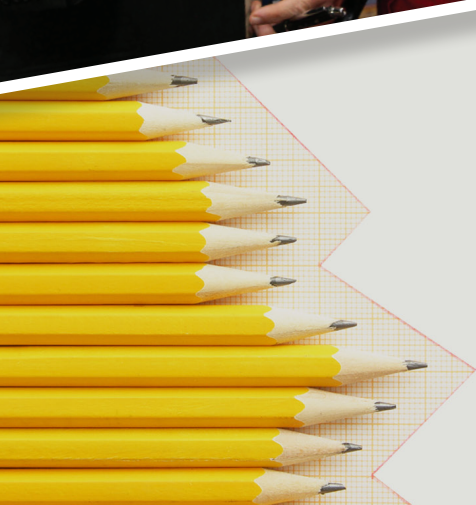
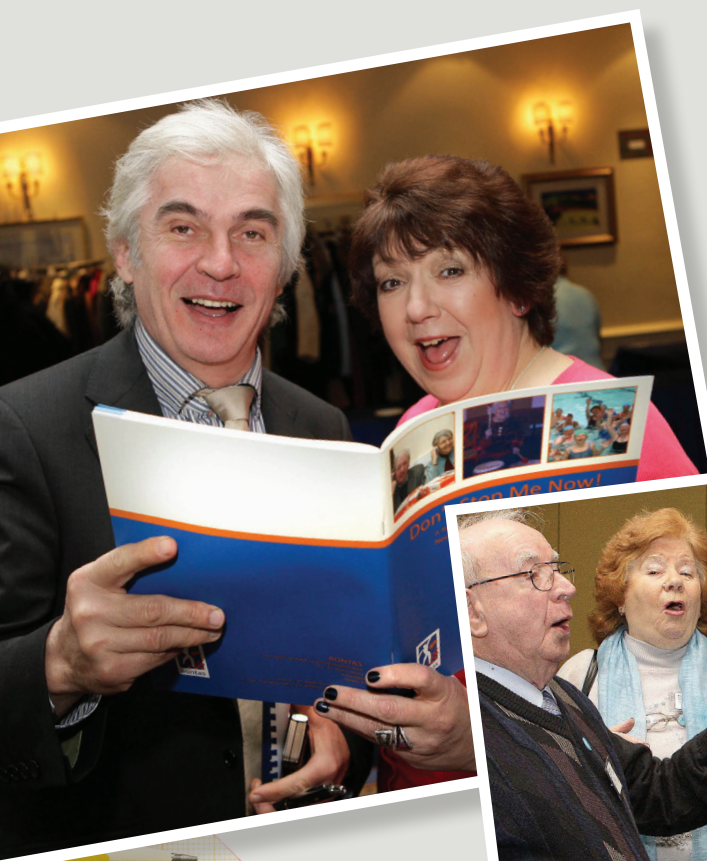
- AONTAS is committed to the concept of lifelong learning and its role in enabling people to participate in the human, social, economic and cultural development of Irish society.
- AONTAS affirms and supports the key role of adult and community education in combating poverty and social exclusion and ensuring that everyone benefits from, and contributes to sustainable economic development.
- AONTAS is committed to the concept of equality of access, participation and outcomes in adult and community education.
- AONTAS affirms and supports the key role of adult and community education in promoting democracy and active citizenship.
- AONTAS is committed, through a process of action and reflection, to its growth as a learning organisation, a model of best practice and a leading centre of expertise in the field of adult learning.



AONTAS

Annual Report

2009





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Foreword

Support for the Adult & Community Education sector is now more vital than ever if we are to rebuild and sustain our economy in this time of recession. The provision of funding for this sector must continue to be highlighted and kept to the forefront of all political debate. For our society to regain strength and vitality, its citizens must have the opportunity to access education and training, whether for its own sake or for the creation of further education or employment opportunities. As an organisation, AONTAS has adapted to the changing focus and demands of its membership in the current economic climate. The organisation continues to work tirelessly to highlight and promote the work of the sector. Adults returning to education must be afforded the right choices. Therefore it is vital that they have access to clear communication and information.

AONTAS occupies a pivotal role in promoting adult education as a positive force for the betterment of society. It provides a voice for adult learners across the country through its lobbying activities. The excellent reputation enjoyed by the organisation ensures the promotion of this voice to the highest level of influence at national level.

The number of adults who are now seeking to redirect their personal, social and civic lives as well as those who are upskilling and retraining for the labour market has increased enormously in the last year. Greater numbers are now experiencing the pain of disadvantage through the change in their personal and social circumstances. Involvement in adult and community education provides a pivotal focus, now more than ever, as people seek to find alternative ways to fulfil potential in a world and society which appears to have lost clear definition.

While adult and community education is clearly facing greater demands with the ongoing threat of decreasing resources, it is a highly resourceful sector, peopled by those who are capable of regrouping and focussing clearly and strategically on the issues as they present. This is a time for strategic thinking and planning and for ensuring that the most marginalised in our society are assured of the second chances they deserve. AONTAS has worked very hard in the past year to ensure the visibility of the adult learner and of the Adult Education sector as a whole and will continue to do so into 2010.

Marian Duffy,
President AONTAS





Overview

2009 started as a year full of uncertainties for AONTAS and the adult and community education sector as a whole. The sudden and devastating collapse of the Irish economy came as a shock to all of us and the budgetary measures introduced by the government in October 2008 and again in April 2009 meant reductions in resources across the board. Cuts of 3% to its core funding and 5% to its supplementary funding meant that AONTAS had to review its position at the beginning of the year and as a result we re-identified our key priorities and focussed our work much more tightly than ever before.

Despite the adverse weather conditions we opened the year in February with our third Adult Learners' Festival with its emphasis on the importance of investing in adult learners particularly during the current recession. The Festival got off to a lively start with the STAR Awards ceremony in Dublin Castle, opened by the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Mr. Sean Haughey and hosted by RTÉ broadcaster, Mary Kennedy. 152 projects competed for the fourteen STAR awards demonstrating a fascinating range of activities across the country. The week included a very lively meeting of the Senior Learners' Network and ended with a Lobby for Learning day which provided an opportunity for political party education spokespeople to listen to the stories of three adult learners who had participated in a piece of research exploring the benefits of investing in adult learning. Throughout the week more than 250 events were organised across the country.

As usual the high level of publicity attending the Festival week meant a surge in the numbers of adults contacting AONTAS for information. During the Festival week over 1000 learners contacted the Information Referral Service and 1257 Information Booklets were distributed to callers. The trend, started during the Festival, continued throughout the year with the numbers of people using the Information Referral Service reaching an all time high as the recession began to bite. The Service responded to almost 7000 queries with the majority coming from newly unemployed people. All contacts to the Service were recorded by the Information/Research Officer and an analysis was made of trends in the demand for adult education and training.

Some interesting trends emerged during the year. For example for the first time in the history of the delivery of the service two thirds of the callers were men, many of whom were looking for basic education. Of the numbers who reported themselves to be newly unemployed a very high percentage (81%) indicated that they hadn't engaged in any education or training activity for over ten years and 52% of this cohort had been out of education and training for twenty years. Many of these callers had been employed in the construction industry and the trend confirms that workers in low skilled jobs are unlikely to take up education and training opportunities while they are in employment. This has major implications for the upskilling of unemployed people and also for the investment in workplace learning.

The experience of the AONTAS Information Referral Service was replicated throughout the country with member organisations particularly the VEC guidance services reporting a high demand for education and training places, putting pressure on the adult education providers who are struggling to meet that demand with less resources. Lobbying for sustained resources to the adult and community education sector was a key priority for AONTAS and we used the opportunity presented by the local and European elections to highlight the important role of adult and community education in up and re-skilling as well as supporting people who had lost their jobs. AONTAS organised a lobby campaign and produced a Campaign Toolkit to assist members in lobbying their local candidates. Included

in the Toolkit was a policy position paper responding to the changes made in the April Budget. Also included was a card outlining the issues of main concern to members. Entitled "Many Happy Returns" the card also marked the fortieth anniversary of AONTAS which was celebrated by the membership at the Annual General Meeting in May. To also mark the occasion a small booklet was produced highlighting the historic moments of the life of AONTAS complete with pictures from the archives.

Later in the year AONTAS embarked on a series of regional meetings with the aim of finding out how the sector was faring in the context of reduced resources. In particular AONTAS was anxious to engage with its statutory members and to see how they could be supported to continue to provide a quality service. Partnered by VEC members AONTAS held meetings in six venues across the country and recorded the issues raised by members in a position paper entitled "Better Together" which was presented to the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Mr. Sean Haughey at the general meeting in November. Among the key challenges identified by members were:-

- Responding to the increasing demand for adult education and training.
- Delivering a quality service in the context of diminished resources and the moratorium on public service recruitment.
- Lack of visibility.
- Lack of coherent structures in the system.

The meeting was also addressed by Mr. Micheal Moriarty, General Secretary of the IVEA and Ms Fiona Maloney, Adult Education Officer of Cavan VEC who presented the Cavan Learning Bus, a very exciting collaborative approach used by her VEC to reach out to people in the rural county. The Learning Bus is used to provide access to adult learning activities and information across the County.

Throughout the year AONTAS kept a close eye on political developments using the Media and Oireachtas Monitoring system. AONTAS met with the Minister and the Principal Officer of the Further Education Section in July to present the Budget Submission for 2010. At this meeting we made a strong case for preserving the core work of the adult and community education sector through the recession and we acknowledge the work done by the Minister and his officials in making sure that the sector did not fare too badly in the severity of the cutbacks.

AONTAS reviewed its work midway through the year and at the year end. This short overview is a but a snapshot and the full extent of our work can be seen on the AONTAS website. 2009 proved to be one of the busiest years we have ever had and the clear prioritisation of our work proved to be a key factor in its successful outcomes.

Berni Brady,
Director AONTAS

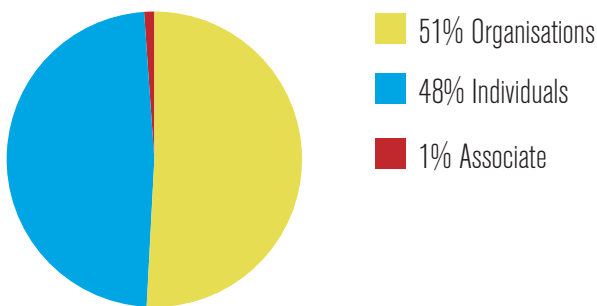


Organisational Development

AONTAS Membership

As of 31st December the AONTAS membership comprised 582 members. The breakdown of membership illustrated in the pie chart below, now comprises 297 organisations, 280 individuals and 5 associate members.

AONTAS Membership as of December 2009



In percentage terms membership type can be broken down as follows: 51% organisations, 48% individuals and 1% associate. Thirteen per cent of the current members joined in 2009, 77 in total comprising 55 individual and 22 organisational members. There was a drop in the number of associate and individual members, mainly due to the lapsing of non-paid up members. However the actual number of organisational members has increased and is now the largest portion of members. The changing proportions may be, in part, due the cost of membership for a small organisation being equal to individual membership.

A full list of AONTAS members is available online at www.aontas.com/membership/

General Membership Meetings

Minister Sean Haughey TD officially opened the AONTAS Annual General Meeting, held on 6th May, which celebrated the 40th birthday of the organisation. One hundred practitioners and learners from the adult and community education sector had the opportunity to observe the 40 year timeline which documented the work of the organisation, over four decades.

A copy of the timeline is available for download at the AONTAS website: http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/aontas_40th_birthday_brochure.pdf

New members of the AONTAS Executive Committee were welcomed at the event including Linda Greene, Clondalkin Women's Network, Deborah Brock, Tallaght/Dodder Valley Partnership and Liz Waters, An Cosan. The Executive

Committee met five times during the year with the first of those meetings dedicated to key policy concerns for the year.

A full list of Executive Committee members is available online at: <http://www.aontas.com/about/executive.html>


Regional Meetings

During autumn, AONTAS organised a series of regional meetings across the country in order to support the sector, strengthen its capacity to organise and lobby, and demonstrate the importance, value and innovation of the work done by adult and community education providers. Since VEC members are key providers, AONTAS asked them to partner it in hosting the meetings which served as a platform for highlighting the excellent collaborative work delivered locally, and creating a vital space for discussion on the current challenges facing the sector. A total of six meetings were held at the following locations: Carlow, Cork, Cavan, Galway, Donegal and Dublin. The outcomes of the meetings were captured in a position paper entitled "Better Together" and presented to the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Mr. Sean Haughey at the Dublin meeting and have now formed the basis of our lobbying strategy.

Community Education Network (CEN)

The Community Education Network is a political platform of independent community education groups within the AONTAS membership and serves under the organisational development objective of the AONTAS Strategic Plan. The Network comprises 134 organisations some of which are networks themselves, therefore the reach is extensive allowing small groups to benefit from participation through their respective network. With regard to nationwide representation eighteen of the Irish Republic's counties are represented in the Network.

The main work of the Network which is guided by a Steering Group involves actively participating in the development of immediate and long term strategies aimed at securing a distinct funding stream for community education through actions based on the three themes of: **resources**, **recognition** and **raising profile**. This is the only network dedicated to independent community education groups at national level and it constantly works to ensure that it operates effectively through engaging in ongoing evaluation and critical reflection.



The Network is in existence for over two years and has met on seven occasions. A report and details of all meetings are available from the AONTAS website.

<http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>

CEN work in 2009

2009 was a significant year for the Network as work undertaken focused primarily on developing the capacity of members to lobby effectively in advance of the European and local elections. Activities included creating a manifesto for the Network, specific lobbying training for participants and Network meetings with politicians. Furthermore, the Network balanced maintaining its development and responding quickly to policy issues with concentrating on its long term goal. During 2009 the CEN held seven Steering Group meetings, five training sessions and three general CEN meetings which were attended by a total of ninety three participants. The year's work ended with an evaluation of its current status at the final meeting.

CEN Strategic Work Plan

A strategic work plan for the Network outlines the aims and objectives of the Community Education Network which are divided into three themes: **Resource** community education, **Recognition** for the value and distinctive nature of community education and **Raise Profile** of community education and lobby for its needs.

Further information is available on the AONTAS website:

<http://www.aontas.com/commed/network.html>

Outcomes

- Increased the CEN's capacity to meet the objectives of the workplan through three action-focused meetings. All reports available online: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen/resourcscen.html>
- Updated and revamped CEN section of the AONTAS website – <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>
- Completed a consultation exercise with the CEN in order to create a plan for further development of the network. This work was carried out with independent consultant, Natasha Bailey as part of the October meeting. It aims to create a strong network that is effective in its work and impact.
- Completed a yearly evaluation of CEN meetings with views from Network members.
- Completed an evaluation of the work of the CEN 2007-2008.

Both reports are available online:

<http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen/resourcscen.html>

Training links Programme

Completed training links programme May 2009: Thirty nine individuals trained from eleven organisations. Final training day included other members of the network; twenty individuals benefitted from the final day.

Outcomes

- Training manual available.
- Increased capacity of Network to lobby effectively.
- Community Education Network Manifestos created.
- Greater links created with politicians.

DCTV/AONTAS Project

Dublin Community Television (DCTV) and AONTAS joint venture to create television programmes on community education through the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound and Vision Fund.

Outcomes

- Completed initial filming phase with a number of community education network groups.
- Developed the CEN's knowledge of filming.
- Increased the involvement of CEN members with AONTAS: new and existing links strengthened.
- Programmes will be completed early 2010.

Community Education Research

A small-scale piece of research on the funding streams of forty groups within the community education network was carried out which included questionnaire, interviews and case studies.

Outcomes

- Supported the creation of the Community Education Network manifestos.
- Research used as a basis for a position paper regarding the funding of community education.

Development of the Community Education Network Steering Group

Outcomes

- Expansion of Steering Group to seven members in order to reflect diversity and groups outside Dublin.
- Increased involvement of Steering Group members in the development of ideas and direction of the CEN.

Online Discussion Forum for the Community Education Network established

Outcomes

- The Community Education Network online forum was launched in 2009 (<http://groups.google.ie/group/aontas-community-education-network>).
- Greater awareness of the work of the CEN.
- Greater interaction between CEN members and AONTAS.

Learner Networks

Learner Networks were first created in 2006 and due to their success were identified as a specific area for work in the AONTAS Strategic Plan 2007-2010. A framework for developing Networks was produced in order to create effective spaces for learners to come together and share experience, identify their needs and to work collectively to create better conditions and opportunities for learning. The Learner Network Steering Group continued to work during 2009, mainly concentrating on the AONTAS Senior Learner Network. AONTAS also maintained strategic alliances with other organisations with the aim of using collaborative work that responds to the needs of learners.

Outcomes

- Seven Steering Group meetings held.
- Increased involvement of the Learner Network Steering Group in the work of the meetings (inputs, ideas, facilitation).
- Representation of members of Steering Group at CONFINTEA VI learner conference; CONFINTEA VI section.
- Creation of an online discussion forum for all adult learners <http://groups.google.ie/group/aontas-learner-networks>
- Promoted to international learner forums.
- Researched the establishment of an Irish National Learner Forum which will link into global adult learner forum.
- Increased connections with other learner forums, sharing of ideas and contacts.

Senior Learner Network

The AONTAS Senior Learner Network began in 2009 with a high profile event during the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival in February. The main outcome of the meeting was the creation of the Senior Learner Network Manifesto which identified five specific areas that must be addressed in order to ensure effective and supportive adult learning opportunities for older people. This manifesto acted as a lobbying tool for senior learners in the run up to the local and European elections. It is available for download from the AONTAS website:

<http://www.aontas.com/pubsandlinks/publications/manifesto-for-senior-learners/>

A follow up meeting entitled 'It's Your Network. Don't Stop Now' was held during Positive Ageing Week, in September. It sought to review the manifesto and to identify how the Network and AONTAS can move forward on the five themes given the current economic climate. A submission regarding the Positive Ageing Strategy was submitted to the Minister of State for with responsibility for Older People and Health Promotion, Áine Brady, who in turn launched the September meeting.

For more information please see

<http://www.aontas.com/membership/learnernetworks.html>

Outcomes

- Meetings held during AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival and Positive Ageing Week, February and September respectively.
- Creation of the Senior Learner Network Manifesto in advance of the local and European elections.
- Increased capacity of Senior Learner Network to lobby using the Manifesto.
- The Senior Learner Network has increased and is now composed of three hundred and seventy learners from approximately seventy seven organisations.
- Increased communication and collaboration with NGOs in the sector through additional partnership activities e.g. AONTAS submission to the National Positive Ageing Strategy in consultation with other NGOs.
- Increased involvement of other NGOs in the work of the Senior Learner Network meetings (inputs and facilitation at national meetings).
- Promotion of the Senior Learner Network by other NGOs and the sharing of resources (e.g. mailouts).

Policy & Research

AONTAS plays a key role in influencing and responding to policy development in the area of adult and community education. This work is underpinned by its information resources and by continuous feedback from members and other stakeholders. It brings these issues to the attention of government, media and to the other forums where AONTAS represents the voice of adult learners. In 2009 the rapid changes brought about by the collapse of the Irish economy challenged us to keep abreast of and respond to developments. Our decision to combine the skills, knowledge and experience of the staff engaged in information, research and communications meant that we worked much more effectively in ensuring the issues of concern to the sector were constantly kept live. AONTAS produced a number of submissions and policy positions and used the analysis of calls to the Information Referral Service as a key instrument in feeding policy development.

Submissions

AONTAS made a number of submissions relating to issues facing adult and community education to government and other relevant bodies during 2009. These included:

1. Submission to the National Strategy on Higher Education in which we identified:

- The need for more flexible learning opportunities for adult learners taking into account their work and caring responsibilities.
- The need for a change in the culture and attitude of higher education institutions to ensure the distinct needs of adult learners are met.
- The need for better financial supports for adult learners in higher education including revising the eligibility for maintenance grants for part time mature students.

2. Submission to the National Positive Ageing Strategy in which we identified lifelong learning under the 5 UN Principles for Older People:

- Independence: Older persons should have access to appropriate educational and training.
- Participation: Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.

- Self-fulfillment: Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential. Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

3. Submission to the Lord Mayor of Dublin's Commission on Employment: Working Group 2: Education, Skills, Training Volunteering & Social Economy

- The submission outlined the role and potential contribution of adult and community education to the economic development of Dublin city.

4. Budget Submission to the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science.

- The submission made a case for sustaining the core activities of AONTAS.

Local and European Elections Campaign 2009

The AGM 2009 and AONTAS's fortieth birthday also marked the beginning of the AONTAS Local and European Elections Campaign and was preceded by the Supplementary Budget 2009 which outlined a joint activation measure between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Campaign messages were identified in consultation with the sector and a number of campaign resources developed. These resources included:

- A birthday card, outlining a clear rationale for the maintenance of existing adult education infrastructure, and a number of questions to ask candidates on the doorstep.
- A position paper outlining AONTAS key policy concerns.
- An online campaign diary, with details of local public meetings.
- Templates for letters and emails for correspondence with local and European candidates.

Messages acknowledged the increased demand on the sector in line with rising unemployment, and emphasised the need for maintaining the current adult education infrastructure. The provision of accurate and up to date information was highlighted, as well as the need for greater collaboration at departmental level in the delivery of a more integrated service to adults. Campaign resources were circulated amongst the AONTAS membership, as well as other NGOs.

Outcomes

- 3000 copies of the birthday card disseminated at 19 public meetings in advance of the elections.
- Policy Position Paper sent to the Minister and Education Spokespeople from all political parties and the Minister for Social and Family Affairs.
- Follow up meetings secured and conducted with Minister Sean Haughey, Brian Hayes TD, Fine Gael and Minister Mary Hanafin.
- Extensive coverage in local media throughout the campaign, as well as an Irish Times opinion piece by Dr Tom Collins.
- Manifestos produced by the Senior Learner Network and the Community Education Network were also promoted and disseminated, particularly at local level.
- AONTAS engaged directly with MEPs elected and compiled profiles of each for Explore magazine.

AONTAS also began to document examples of collaborative practice in the sector at local level with a view to promoting collaboration between stakeholders at regional meetings and through the Adult Learners' Festival 2010. The regional meetings resulted in a policy position paper entitled "Better Together" which is posted on the website.

Oireachtas & Media Monitoring

AONTAS maintains an Oireachtas and Media Monitoring system enabling it to respond quickly to relevant policy issues as they arise through news releases, letters to newspapers and Parliamentary Questions. Examples of news releases in 2009 included the following:

- **Retraining measures must lead to progression, says Adult Learning Organisation**
10 December 2009
- **New report shows adult education services stretched to meet the needs of newly unemployed**
18 November 2009
- **Give adult learning some credit! Nominate your local adult learning project for an AONTAS STAR Award**
15 October 2009
- **Adult Learning : A 'Sense of Direction' and 'New Possibilities'**
29 September 2009
- **The Leaving Certificate – A Second Chance for Adult Learners**
12 August 2009
- **Information trends yield interesting insights about demand for adult education**
28 July 2009
- **Make Lifelong Learning an Election Issue**
29 May 2009

- **Study makes a case for a lifelong learning approach**
13 May 2009
- **'Many Happy Returns'– AONTAS reels in the years and launches Local and European Elections Campaign 2009**
6 May 2009
- **Re-appointment of Junior Minister for Lifelong Learning 'a wise decision'**
22 April 2009
- **Adult Learning Organisation gives a cautious welcome to new retraining initiatives**
8 April 2009
- **Adult Learning Organisation urges government to retain Minister for Lifelong Learning**
7 April 2009
- **Adult Learning Organisation reports increased interest in education options.**
24 March 2009
- **Explore your local Options – the Adult Learners' Festival**
23 February 2009
- **Investment in Adult Learning yields Long Term Dividends**
9 February 2009
- **Learning our way out of the Recession**
5 February 2009
- **Retain Minister at all Costs, say Older Learners**
4 February 2009
- **Older people make the best use out of their Grey Matter**
4 February 2009
- **Adult Learners go the distance and reach for the STARS**
2 February 2009

Information Referral Service

AONTAS continues to deliver an Information Referral Service which provides both direct and referral information on adult education issues to individuals and groups. The success of the three previous years' Adult Learners' Festivals coupled with increased media coverage and a stark increase in unemployment has led to a continued increase in queries. Over the past twelve months AONTAS has responded to 6538 calls from prospective learners seeking information on courses, entitlements and grants. An analysis of queries to the service over the past eleven months yields interesting insights on the current challenges for the adult and community education service and lifelong learning as a whole.

Increased demand

- Analysis of the queries shows that there were several peak periods for the Service; January, June, July and August. This is in contrast to previous years when summer months were generally quieter.
- 621 learners contacting the Service over the last four months indicated that there is a need for courses to be delivered during the summer months, so that people can continue to up-skill and stay motivated.
- From the figures for August and September 342 individuals stated they were on the waiting list for adult education courses.
- Individuals contacting the service continue to voice their concerns about the lack of courses available and the decreasing resources available at local level.
- A quarter of unemployed people contacting the AONTAS Information Referral Service stated that the courses available don't suit their needs.
- A third of all people contacting the service over the last three months of the year feel that there needs to be greater choice and diversification at local level and a quarter of all individuals contacting the service in 2009 have stated that there is no progression routes available for them from ad-hoc short courses being delivered at local level.
- The demographic of learners seeking courses has changed significantly with, most notably, the increase in unemployed young men with poor literacy levels. Approximately two thirds of queries this year were from men.

Unemployment and education

- The majority of people contacting the Service are considering returning to education having recently become unemployed. To date 3297 individuals stated they were unemployed, 2961 of these indicated they were newly unemployed and had lost their jobs in the past twelve months.
- 4% of individuals contacting the service stated that they had been out of education for 5 years or less. However there continues to be an increase in individuals contacting the service who have been out of education for significantly longer periods of time.
- 81% of unemployed individuals contacting the service stated it has been more than ten years since they have been in education. 52% of these individuals have stated they had been out of education for more than twenty years with a further 4% of these have stated it has been more than 30 years since they were in education.
- Many of these individuals comment on suffering from low self-esteem and lack of confidence.

Priority issues for Adult Learners

- Feedback from the Referral Service suggests that accessing information continues to be a significant barrier for many adult learners.
- In 2009 71% of learners contacting the service have stated there is a need for clear, concise, accurate and accessible up to date information from front line services.
- Finance and childcare continue to be a barrier for unwaged and unemployed individuals wishing to return to education this year. Many people recently unemployed seeking to up-skill or retrain have identified funding for courses and meeting childcare costs as their main concerns.
- In 2009 4921 of all individuals contacting the service also requested information on course options and funding available to them.

Information Booklet

The AONTAS Information Booklet which was introduced in November 2007 is constantly updated and is an essential resource to any learner considering returning to education.

Outcomes

- In 2009 the Information & Research Officer disseminated 5261 copies of the Information Booklet. Learners can also access the booklet online.
- In response to an increased demand for the booklet AONTAS decided to continue to promote the text-line facility to adult learners during the Festival period from the end of January until late February 2009.
- A total of 1257 Information Booklets were requested by learners/ organisations during Festival week.
- In 2009 AONTAS quickly responded to the changes announced in the Supplementary Budget by updating the Financial Support section of the booklet and by developing an insert on training/upskilling, grants, social welfare entitlements and supports.
- In 2009 the Information/Research Officer worked closely with the NQAI to develop the adult learner section of the Qualifax system. She also worked with the HEA Access Office in the development of their information website for third level students.

Research Projects

Quality Assurance Framework for Women's Community Education

The direct training work of the QAF project was brought to a successful conclusion with the production of the Guide to Good practice in Women's Community education. Entitled "Flower Power" in recognition of the training template, the guide was distributed to the AONTAS Women's Community Education group members. Follow up work aimed at introducing the guide to a wider range of community education groups is planned for 2010.

Outcomes

- Flower Power-QAF guidebook for women's community education groups completed and printed.
- Dissemination strategy for the guidebook agreed.
- Consultation organised with women's groups in the AONTAS membership to review the QAF project.
- Questionnaire distributed to forty women's group to find out what kind of support they needed to cope with the current funding changes and the knock on effect on their work.
- Follow up training using the guidebook agreed between AONTAS and National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (NCCWN).

Community Education Research

The Community Education research is well underway. Its aim is to determine the individual, collective and societal outcomes of Department of Education and Science (DES) funded community education and its potential to contribute to a fairer, just and more prosperous Republic of Ireland.

Outcomes

- Advisory Group established.
- Questionnaires developed and piloted.
- Questionnaires to VEC personnel ongoing.
- Questionnaires to learners ongoing.
- Literature review completed.
- Questionnaire analysis ongoing.
- Research report: to be ready by mid 2010.

Development Education Research in collaboration with Irish Aid

Outcomes

- Report with recommendations published by AONTAS in early 2009.
- Report disseminated: PDF published on website and copy of the report sent to all the stakeholders involved.
- Researcher presented case studies from the report at an Irish Conference on Sustainable and Global Development in October.
- Researcher submitted an article to the journal, *Policy and Practice: a Development Education Review*, to be published in 2010.

IRAACE

The Irish Research Association for Adult and Community Education was an ad-hoc network established in 2007 and supported jointly by AONTAS and NALA. In 2009 a networking event was held on 24th April in National College of Ireland. This event provided an opportunity for anyone interested in research in the areas of adult and community education to discuss their work and meet others currently researching, or wishing to commence research.

Dr. Ian Martin – an Honorary Fellow in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Edinburgh gave a keynote address. His input focused on addressing the gaps that exist in carrying out research in Adult and Community Education. A facilitated workshop was organized to consult with participants about the future direction of the network. Most participants indicated that networking and sharing of information were the two main reasons for attending IRAACE events.

The IRAACE development committee subsequently met and agreed that the work of IRAACE should be absorbed into the general strategic work of both AONTAS and NALA. While AONTAS is committed to research in the area of adult and community education it does not have the capacity at this point in time to support the development of a separate organisation.

Promotion

During 2009 AONTAS continued to raise the profile of adult learning and the adult and community education sector. AONTAS utilises a number of strategies to promote adult learning in the media agenda; these strategies have a strong policy focus, and the organisation makes use of peak times in the adult and community education calendar to engage with media and capitalise on coverage for the organisation and adult learning in general. The AONTAS media strategy is required to be both proactive and responsive.

Key themes emerging last year included the role of adult and community education in upskilling and retraining people who are unemployed as well as the challenges faced by service providers. AONTAS provides both commentary and analysis to the media by contributing to current debate on adult and community education and lifelong learning, but also acts as an important source of information about adult learning to journalists and the general public. This was of particular importance last year given changes introduced in the Supplementary Budget.

AONTAS communication strategy also makes best use of internal resources – namely trends and statistics gathered from the Information Referral Service. Press releases regularly highlight the trends in the service and the issues raised, and provide a valuable insight into the experiences and challenges faced by adults seeking to return to education. Increased engagement with AONTAS membership provided additional examples of practice and case studies, as well as identifying key policy concerns and challenges for providers. The promotional strategy within the organisation is underpinned by policy concerns, with a view to increasing recognition for the work of the sector, and working towards greater access to learning initiatives at all stages of the lifecycle for adults.

Adult Learners' Festival 2009

The Adult Learners' Festival has gone from strength to strength since AONTAS initiated it in January 2007. The third Adult Learners' Festival which took place from 2 – 6 February 2009 was a resounding success with over 250 events taking place throughout the country.

The objectives of the Adult Learners' Festival 2009 were:

- Celebrating adult learning and the achievements of adult learners.
- Showcasing the work of adult education providers.
- Promoting the work of AONTAS and the adult education sector.
- Ensuring that adult education is placed firmly on the political agenda.

Outcomes

- Supported and encouraged AONTAS members and adult learning initiatives to hold events and activities during the Adult Learners' Festival. Over 250 events took place nationwide during the Adult Learners' Festival 2010. AONTAS provided a number of resources and supports for Event Organisers including Local Links, Festival Information Day, an Event in a Bag, www.adultlearnersfestival.com and advice from AONTAS staff members.
- Festival Themed Days. AONTAS promoted a different adult learning theme each day during the Adult Learners' Festival 2009. Monday, 2 February 2009 was themed 'Celebrate Learning!' Tuesday, 3 February 2009 was themed 'Learn in your Community'. Wednesday, 4 February 2009 was themed 'Never too Old to Learn'. Thursday, 5 February 2009 was themed 'Learn @ Work'. Friday, 6 February 2009 was themed 'Lobby for Learning'.
- The STAR Awards for Adult Learning Projects. AONTAS received an unprecedented 152 STAR Awards nominations for the 2009 STAR Awards. The range of projects submitted demonstrated the diversity, versatility and above all the active participation of adults in their own learning activities. RTE broadcaster, Mary Kennedy presented the STAR Awards to winning and highly commended STARs across 14 categories in Dublin Castle on Monday, 2 February 2009.
- The Senior Learner Network Meeting. Over 120 senior learners from across the country attended the Senior Learner Network meeting in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin on Wednesday 4th February. The meeting took place during The Adult Learners' Festival 'Never too Old to Learn Day'. The aim of the network meeting was to launch the AONTAS Research Report 'Don't Stop Me Now' and to create and facilitate a space for senior learners to express and communicate their views in order to bring about the changes needed to enhance the provision of continuing educational opportunities for 21st century senior learners.
- I'm an Adult Learner – Invest in Me Policy Event. AONTAS conducted snapshot research into the learning paths of three different adult learners to reveal the real benefits of returning to learning. Findings of the research were presented at the closing event of the Adult Learners' Festival which took place on Friday, 6 February at the National Library on Kildare Street. The event was themed 'I'm an Adult Learner, Invest in Me'. In addition to the speakers on the day, well known figures from Irish public life made their case for investment in adult learning through video clips.

- **National & Local Public Relations & Advertising Campaign.** AONTAS undertook a full public relations and advertising campaign in advance of and during the week of the festival. E-mail and online resources were used extensively as well as traditional advertising like radio and print. Broadcaster, Mary Kennedy recorded a 20 second radio advertisement, recorded for free by RTE and distributed by AONTAS to national, local and community radio stations.
- **Partnerships with other organisations.** AONTAS worked in partnership with a number of organisations including the Department of Education & Science, the IVEA, FAS, IBEC, the NCCP, Active Retirement Ireland, the NQAI, NUI Maynooth, ESB, TUI, ICTU, FETAC, SFA, Dublin Employment Pact, The Library Council and NALA as well as adult learning initiatives nationwide. The Festival was financially supported by the Department of Education and Science and other sponsors included the ESB, TUI, FETAC and ICTU which greatly contributed to the overall success of the Festival.

Media Strategy

Some of the strategies which AONTAS used to engage with the media in 2009 included:

- 19 press releases – issued to a range of local and national media.
- Targeted contact with national media at key times of the year, i.e. Adult Learners' Festival and Returning to Education Supplements.
- The Adult Learners' Festival, a week of events in local communities throughout the country to promote adult learning.
- A campaign run in advance of the local and European elections 2009.
- Media training and capacity building for members – through the provision of training, and participation in a community television project funded by the BAI Sound and Vision Fund.
- Greater use of online media, including social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as maintenance of two websites, www.aontas.com and www.adultlearnersfestival.com

During the week of the Festival, five press releases were issued to national and local media. In advance of the Festival, quotes were sourced from Mary Kennedy and Minister for Lifelong Learning Sean Haughey to prepare a press release to tie into local media deadlines and for the use of those organising events. The Festival received extensive broadcast and print media coverage including:

- Nationwide on RTE produced a feature about adult learners and VTOS. The feature was broadcast on 18th March.
- INN sent a reporter to the "I'm an Adult Learner, Invest in Me" event for a news piece – INN provides news reports to almost every local station in the country, as well as FM 104 and 98fm.

- Irish Times Magazine, January 31st (Highlighted Festival and workplace learning, website).
- Information Referral Service for Adult Learners. AONTAS ran a text line during the Festival for members of the public who wanted more information about returning to learning. During the Adult Learner's Festival 1571 people contacted the Information Referral Service and 1257 people received a copy of the AONTAS Information Booklet.

Supplements

August and September are the traditional months associated with returning to school and third level education and for adult learners this is no different. These months constitute an important period of the year for media coverage for AONTAS beginning with the Leaving Certificate in mid August and running right through to mid September as course enrolments take place.

In 2009 AONTAS was successful in attracting extensive coverage at that time and featured in the following print media:

- Irish Independent
- Irish Times
- Examiner
- Sunday Tribune
- Sunday Business Post
- Sunday Independent
- Metro/Herald

In addition, for the first time, AONTAS took part in the annual Which Course Exhibition organised by Learning Ireland. The exhibition ran for two days at the RDS with over 3,000 attending and over 30 exhibitors participating. AONTAS, together with ICTU Union Skills Network, and the INOU, distributed information on adult learning opportunities to adults who attended the event. During this event AONTAS disseminated a large number of Information Booklets, networked with providers and promoted the free Guidance service offered by CDVEC.

Outcomes

- **Statistics and trends produced through the Information Referral Service were covered widely in mainstream media.**
- **Extensive media coverage had a knock on effect on the number of queries taken by the organisation, which increased during this time.**
- **AONTAS developed a higher profile in mainstream media, and continued to develop relationships with education correspondents.**

AONTAS Regional Meetings

The regional meetings reported on earlier in this report included an input about the Adult Learners' Festival, and explored the issue of promotion with participating organisations during smaller workshops. The issue of the lack of visibility for the sector emerged as a strong concern for those attending, and will inform the development of the promotional strategy at AONTAS in the short and longer term.

The General Meeting

The General Meeting held in Dublin at the end of November provided the platform for discussing a series of challenges faced by providers in the statutory sector. A brief report of these challenges was prepared for the meeting and a media briefing issued. The event was covered throughout the country on a number of local radio stations, as well as RTE and the Examiner at national level.

Communications Resources

Explore Magazine

Explore magazine is now a well established resource for the sector. The magazine is now larger, with four additional pages, with each issue reflecting a particular theme of relevance to the sector.

- Issue 12 focused on the Adult Learners' Festival, documenting experiences and perspectives of those involved, as well as highlighting the national events co-ordinated by AONTAS.
- Issue 13 focused on campaigning to coincide with the Local and European Elections 2009.
- Issue 14 which went into production before Christmas 2009 is intended as a toolkit for organisations wanting to get involved in the Adult Learners' Festival 2010. Articles contain a mix of policy, and practice and the magazine regularly invites contributions from the sector.

Online Media

AONTAS uses a range of online opportunities to communicate information and provide useful resources to members and other interested parties. New opportunities through social media complement and add to existing media work and enable AONTAS to reach new audiences. Online media currently used by AONTAS include:

- The AONTAS Update is a new weekly e mail resource designed to keep members informed about current lifelong learning issues as well as what's happening in AONTAS. It replaces the monthly E-bulletin.
- Two websites, www.aontas.com and www.adultlearnersfestival.com which are updated regularly with information about adult learning as well as events and resources for the Adult Learners Festival.

- Social Networking tools Facebook and Twitter, which AONTAS uses to interact with members and people interested in adult education, as well as promoting events and issues.
- Video platforms Vimeo and You-Tube are also used to distribute video content via the website and email.

Media Training/Capacity Building

Where possible, AONTAS runs tailored media training workshops for members. This is one of the supports that AONTAS offers to members, and is part of a wider strategy of capacity building within the sector. Training delivered in 2009 included:-

- One day workshop with Longford Women's' Link on their media strategy as well as a practical media skills workshop.
- One day workshop with the Domestic Workers Action Group from the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, on practical skills for engaging with the media.

DCTV/AONTAS Project

AONTAS embarked on the production of an ambitious television series with Dublin Community Television, to begin to tell the story of how community education emerged in Dublin, and to document examples of practice within the community education sector, from the perspective of practitioners and learners. The series which was funded through the BAI (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland) Sound and Vision Fund will be launched at the Adult Learners' Festival 2010.

General Publications

AONTAS now has developed the capacity through staff training to design a number of its publications and resources internally thus making savings in the current funding climate. During 2009 these included:

- Adult Learners' Festival Resources
- Community Education Learners' Survey
- Community Education Network Manifesto
- Community Education Network Newsletter
- Creating Intercultural Communities Conference Report
- Development Education Report
- Many Happy Returns Booklet
- Regional Meeting Materials
- Senior Learners' Manifesto

Representation

AONTAS plays an important representational role as the lead organisation specifically dedicated to adult and community education. It performs this role in a number of ways at local, regional, national and international levels. Staff members, Executive members and general membership play an important part in networking, promoting adult and community education and advocating for adult learning. Of particular importance are adult learners who are key ambassadors for the sector.

During 2009 the Information & Research Officer attended and delivered presentations to various organisations at several events on behalf of AONTAS.

These included:-

- The Western Quebec Education Board
- Komvux, Gotland – Swedish Vocational School Boards
- Saint John of God's Hospital
- Crosscare
- Ronanstown CDP
- Union of Students in Ireland
- IRAACE seminar
- INOU
- AHEAD – Better Options Fair
- Which Course Fair
- Higher Education Authority
- Arklow Preparing for the Turnaround
- IOT Bluebrick Launch
- ACCORD

AONTAS Director, Berni Brady and Jennifer Gunning also represented AONTAS on the following groups in 2009.

- IRAACE
- AEGI Steering Group
- Access to Higher Education Advisory Group
- NQAI consultation Group
- Adult Learner Editorial Board

INFONET

INFONET is a Grundtvig 4 project which supports a network of adult education journals across Europe. It also provides an information system for adult education and lifelong learning. Now in its second phase it involves a network of correspondents from twelve countries across Europe of which Ireland is one. INFONET provides an ideal opportunity for those working and writing in the adult education sector from various European countries, to share articles and information about their adult education systems and to share their experiences, with other EU colleagues. AONTAS represents Ireland and Berni Brady acts as correspondent producing a minimum of six articles for the network per year.

Articles can be accessed through the website at www.infonet-ae.net.

Milestone Conference

In November 2009 AONTAS hosted the INFONET Annual Milestone Conference in Dublin. Held in the Marino Institute for Education it was attended by over thirty delegates who worked in practical workshops to progress the work of the network. The group was hosted on arrival by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Emer Costello and the Conference was opened by the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Mr. Sean Haughey. Dr. Ted Fleming of NUI/Maynooth and Berni Brady gave keynote presentations. The conference finished with a very enjoyable social event hosted by AONTAS.

A report of the conference will be made available through the Infonet website.

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

AONTAS is an active member of the EAEA and in 2009 participated in The General Assembly which was held in Bonn.

A report of the work of the Assembly is available on the EAEA website at www.eaea.org

CONFINTEA VI

The initial proposed UNESCO's Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) was postponed from May to December 2009. Building on the work carried out over the past 2 years AONTAS dedicated its preparation process for this conference to ensuring that the voice of AONTAS members was represented. CONFINTEA is held once in a decade and through submissions, focus groups meetings and participation in preparatory conference AONTAS positioned itself to effectively influence the final conference document – The Belem Framework.

Information is available on the website: <http://www.aontas.com/international/>

AONTAS was part of the Irish Government delegation to the CONFINTEA in December. The delegation was led by Mary Kett of the Further Education Development Unit representing the Ministry of Education and Science while AONTAS was represented by Berni Brady and Niamh O'Reilly. Una Buckley who is a member of the AONTAS Executive Committee represented adult learners and attended the ICAE Social Forum with Niamh O'Reilly prior to the main conference. A report is currently being prepared and will be available in 2010.

Outcomes

- Convened a CONFINTEA VI focus group representing the non-governmental, University and public sector for advocacy preparation at CONFINTEA VI (3 meetings carried out throughout the year).
- Participation in The Scottish Adult Learning Partnership 'A Time for Learning' conference which sought to increase the capacity of learners to influence the outcome of CONFINTEA VI.
- AONTAS representation at The International Civil Society Forum (FISC), a major NGO event prior to CONFINTEA VI which influenced the civil society position document (Brazil, 28th – 30th November). For further information please see:

<http://fisc2009english.wordpress.com/2009/12/02/civil-society-caucus-proposals-to-strengthen-the-belem-declaration/>

- AONTAS representation at, and preparatory position paper created for, CONFINTEA VI in Brazil (1st – 4th December).

For further information please see:

<http://www.unesco.org/en/confinteavi/>

EU Regional Meeting on Action Plan for Adult Learning, Berlin October 7-9 2009

This was the first of a series of regional meetings to review progress under the European Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning. There were approximately 35 delegates from the following countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, United Kingdom. Representatives from the European Commission and the EAEA also attended.

Ireland was represented by the Department of Education and Science, the Irish Vocational Educational Association, AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation and the National Adult Literacy Agency.

The meeting reviewed the five priority actions identified by the Action Plan:

- The effects of reforms in other educational sectors on adult learning.
- The need to improve the quality of provision.
- The need to increase opportunities to move 'one step up'.
- The need to speed up the process of assessing and recognising non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups.
- The need to improve the monitoring of the sector.

A full report of the outcomes of all the regional meetings is being finalised by the Commission and will be available in 2010.



AONTAS

Financial Statements

2009





AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

Registration Number 80958

Charity Number 6719



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

Company Information

Directors	Ms. Marian Duffy (President) Ms. Maria Gorman (Hon. Treasurer) Ms. Ruth Smith (Hon. Secretary) Ms. Una Buckley Ms. Jillian Harrison Ms. Loretta Needham Ms. Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha Ms. Elva O'Callaghan Mr. Lorne Patterson Mr. John Ryan Ms. Mary Sweeney Ms. Liz Waters Ms. Linda Greene Ms. Deborah Brock
Secretary	Ms. Ruth Smith
Auditors	Anne Brady McQuillans DFK Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors Iveagh Court Harcourt Road Dublin 2
Business Address	83-87 Main Street Ranelagh Dublin 6
Bankers	Bank of Ireland Lower Baggot Street Dublin 2
Solicitors	P.J. Walsh & Company Solicitors 12 Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2
Registered Office	83-87 Main Street Ranelagh Dublin 6



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

The directors' present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2009.

Principal Activities, Business Review and Future Developments

The principal activity of the organisation is to ensure that every adult in Ireland has access to appropriate and affordable learning opportunities throughout their lives, thus enabling them to contribute to and participate in the economic, social and cultural development of Irish society. The company is limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Both the level of activity and the year end financial position were satisfactory and the directors' expect that the present level of activity will be sustained for the foreseeable future.

Results

The surplus for the year after providing for depreciation and taxation amounted to €4,687 (2008 - €4,962).

Going Concern

The trust is dependant on income provided from semi state and government funders. As with many government funded charities, the trust is affected by both the budgetary constraints implemented by the national government and the deteriorating external economic restraints. The trustees have reviewed all relevant information and are confident that the trust has adequate financial resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Consequently, the trustees consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Directors

The liability of members is limited. Every member of the Association undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Association in the event of its being wound up while they are members or within one year thereafter for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the Association contracted before they ceased to be members and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves such amount as may be required, not exceeding €6.35.



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

The Executive Committee constitutes the Board of Directors' of the organisation under the terms of Article 28 of the Articles of Association of the organisation:

Ms. Marian Duffy (President)
Vacant (Vice-President)
Ms. Maria Gorman (Hon. Treasurer)
Ms. Ruth Smith (Hon. Secretary)
Ms. Una Buckley
Ms. Jillian Harrison
Ms. Loretta Needham
Ms. Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha
Ms. Elva O'Callaghan
Mr. Lorne Patterson
Mr. John Ryan
Ms. Mary Sweeney
Ms. Liz Waters
Ms. Linda Greene
Ms. Deborah Brock

There were no changes in members between 31st December 2009 and the date of signing the financial statements.

Books of Account

The measures taken by the directors' to ensure compliance with the requirements of Section 202, Companies Act, 1990, regarding proper books of account are the implementation of necessary policies and procedures for recording transactions, the employment of competent accounting personnel with appropriate expertise and the provision of adequate resources to the financial function. The books of account of the company are maintained at the business address.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The directors' have assessed the risks and have taken measures to manage these risks in AONTAS as follows:

Market Risk

In common with many government funded charities, the company is affected by both the budgetary constraints implemented by the national government and the deteriorating external economic conditions.

Fraud Risk

This risk is mitigated by maintaining segregation of duties for receipt of funds and the payment of creditors. The directors have put processes and controls in place to ensure that detailed checking is carried out at all stages to ensure the accuracy and validity of all transactions.



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

Auditors

The auditors, Anne Brady McQuillans DFK, have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 160(2) of the Companies Act, 1963.

Section 40(1) Companies Act, 1983

Section 40(1) of the Companies (Amendment) Act 1983 does not apply as the company is limited by guarantee.

Events after the Balance Sheet date

There have been no circumstances or events subsequent to the year end, which require adjustment to or disclosure in the financial statements or in the notes thereto.

On behalf of the Board

Ms. Marian Duffy

President

Date: 17th April 2010

Ms. Maria Gorman

Hon. Treasurer



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Statement of Directors' Responsibilities

The directors are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable Irish law and Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland including the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. Irish Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period.

In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in Ireland and with Irish statute comprising the Companies Acts, 1963 to 2009.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence, for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

On behalf of the Board

Ms. Marian Duffy

President

Date: 17th April 2010

Ms. Maria Gorman

Hon. Treasurer



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS

We have audited the financial statements of AONTAS for the year ended 31st December 2009 which comprises the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

Respective Responsibilities of Directors and Auditors

As described in the Statement of Directors' Responsibilities the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice in Ireland including the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland).

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 193 of the Companies Act, 1990. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinion we have formed.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Acts 1963 to 2009. We also report to you whether in our opinion: proper books of account have been kept by the Company and whether the information given in the Directors' Report is consistent with the financial statements. In addition, we state whether we have obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of our audit, and whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

We report to the members if, in our opinion, any information specified by law regarding directors' remuneration or directors' transactions is not disclosed and, where practicable, include such information in our report.

We read the directors' report and consider implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements within it.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS

Basis of Audit Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland), issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors' in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

We have undertaken the audit in accordance with the requirements of the APB Ethical Standards including the APB Ethical Standard, Provisions Available for Small Entities.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the company's affairs as at the 31st December 2009 and of its net incoming resources and cashflows for the year then ended: and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Acts, 1963 to 2009.

We have obtained all the information and explanations we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit. In our opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the company. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

In our opinion, the information given in the directors' report is consistent with the financial statements.

Section 40(1) of the Companies (Amendment) Act 1983 does not apply as the company is limited by guarantee.

Anne Brady McQuillans DFK
Chartered Accountants
& Registered Auditors
Iveagh Court
Harcourt Road
Dublin 2

Date: 17th April, 2010

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	€	€
Income			
Restricted and unrestricted funds	2	1,089,284	1,304,444
Resources Expended			
Administration			
Salary costs		178,382	192,195
Pension scheme		27,686	27,746
Staff training and expenses		10,956	15,433
Postage and courier services		20,221	22,370
Stationery		10,898	10,506
Telephone		7,702	8,369
Travel and subsistence		8,625	10,302
Executive and general committee expenses		8,932	20,751
Legal fees		624	63
Audit and accountancy fees		8,359	7,550
Bank interest and charges		824	718
Representation and affiliation		16,888	17,663
Miscellaneous		(438)	63
Rent of venues and equipment		1,000	1,285
Computer costs		938	979
Research and projects apportionments		(12,707)	(24,355)
		288,890	311,638

AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	€	€
Premises			
Light and heat		3,841	3,233
Rent and rates		83,028	91,993
Repairs and maintenance		18,602	24,619
Leasing charges		8,829	8,870
Insurance		7,339	7,743
Cleaning		3,634	3,073
Depreciation of computers and office equipment		10,297	12,220
		135,570	151,751

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	€	€
Development			
Salaries		317,991	361,245
Pension scheme		40,807	39,926
Consultants and contract staff		650	25,753
Travel and subsistence		3,094	20,845
Printing and publications		47,430	60,802
Conferences / seminars / membership meetings		54,522	86,057
Public relations strategy		6,434	8,418
Adult Learners' Festival		84,449	106,005
Information resources		3,069	3,088
Childcare		255	240
Research and Project Apportionment		(33,130)	(67,546)
		525,571	644,833
Research and Projects			
Research		51,088	78,396
Quality Assurance Framework		41,196	63,870
Development Education Project		-	44,474
BTEI men's participation research		12,056	-
Wheel training links project		11,870	4,520
InfoNet Milestone Conference		18,356	-
		134,566	191,260

AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	€	€
Income			
Total incoming resources	2	1,089,284	1,304,444
Resources Expended			
Total resources expended		(1,084,597)	(1,299,482)
Net surplus resources for year	10	4,687	4,962

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 36 – 43 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 17th April, 2010 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy

President

Date: 17th April 2010

Ms. Maria Gorman

Hon. Treasurer

AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2009

	Notes	2009		2008	
		€	€	€	€
Fixed Assets					
Tangible Assets	7		22,126		32,423
Current Assets					
Debtors	8	29,511		25,129	
Cash at bank and in hand		231,176		296,408	
		260,687		321,537	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	9	(239,995)		(315,829)	
Net Current Assets			20,692		5,708
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities			42,818		38,131
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted Income Funds	13		42,818		38,131
Total Funds			42,818		38,131

The notes on pages 36 - 43 form part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 17th April, 2010 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31st December 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	€	€
Reconciliation of surplus to net cash outflow from operating activities			
Net incoming resources (before interest)		4,575	1,709
Depreciation		10,297	12,220
(Increase) / decrease in debtors		(4,382)	7,624
(Decrease) / increase in creditors		(75,834)	104,717
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(65,344)	126,270
Cash Flow Statement			
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities		(65,344)	126,270
Returns on investments and servicing of finance	11	112	3,253
Capital expenditure	11	-	(7,654)
(Decrease)/Increase in cash in the year		(65,232)	121,869
Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net funds (Note 12)			
Decrease in cash in the year		(65,232)	121,869
Net funds at 1st January 2009	12	296,408	174,539
Net funds at 31st December 2009		231,176	296,408

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

1. Accounting Policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the company's financial statements.

1.1. Accounting Convention

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and with reference to the recommendations of the revised Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) Accounting and Reporting by Charities issued by the Charity Commissioners in 2005.

1.2. Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All tangible fixed assets are initially recorded at historic cost.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation, less residual value, of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment – 20% Straight Line
Computer Equipment – 20% Straight Line
Office Equipment – 20% Straight line

1.3. Leasing Commitments

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged against income on a straight line basis over the lease term.

1.4. Income Resources

Grant income receivable from the Department of Education and Science in respect of the CEF Training and Support programme, the Womens CE Quality Framework and grant income receivable from the Wheel Organisation, TUI, ASTI, ICTU, and FETAC are treated as being restricted as the incomes are applied for particular purposes. All other income receivable is treated as being unrestricted.

Voluntary income including donations, gifts and legacies and grants that provide core funding or are of general nature are recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability. Such income is only deferred when:

- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

1.5. Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised when a liability is incurred. Contractual arrangements and performance related grants are recognised as goods or services are supplied. Other grant payments are recognised when a constructive obligation arises that result in the payment being unavoidable.

- Costs of generating funds are those costs incurred in attracting voluntary income, and those incurred in trading activities that raise funds.
- Charitable activities include expenditure associated with the educational programmes include both the direct costs and support costs relating to this activity.

1.6. Pensions

AONTAS operates a defined contribution scheme and pension benefits are funded over the employees' period of service by way of contributions from the organisation and employees. Contributions are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

2. Sources of Income

	2009	2008
	€	€
Restricted Funds		
Department of Foreign Affairs - Irish Aid Research Grant	470	44,465
Department of Education & Science Grants:		
CEF Training and Support programme	-	59,319
Adult Learners' Festival (Deferred Income)	-	30,000
BTEI Research	12,055	-
Research	51,100	78,384
Information Pack	-	-
Quality Assurance Framework Project	41,197	63,870
FETAC Festival Sponsorship	17,000	-
ESB Festival Sponsorship	-	2,000
TUI Festival Sponsorship	-	1,000
ICTU Festival Sponsorship	4,500	-
ASTI Festival Sponsorship	500	-
Age and Opportunity Research Grant	-	18,200
The Wheel Training Links Grant	7,000	4,520
InfoNet Milestone Conference	18,356	-
	152,178	301,758
Unrestricted Funds		
Department of Education & Science:		
Grant in Aid (Core Funding)	477,000	517,000
S.P.I.D.A.S. supplement	438,500	421,500
Members' subscriptions	22,430	27,696
Training / Consultancy	-	12,143
National conference	(2,306)	17,369
Bank interest received	112	3,253
Miscellaneous	1,370	3,725
	937,106	1,002,686
Total Income	1,089,284	1,304,444

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

3. Net Incoming Resources for the year

	2009	2008
	€	€
Net Incoming Resources for the year is stated after charging:		
Depreciation of tangible assets	10,297	12,220
Operating lease rentals - Plant and Machinery	8,829	8,870
Auditors' remuneration	6,840	7,550

4. Employees

	2009	2008
Number of employees		
The average monthly numbers of employees during the year were:	9	11
Employment costs	2009	2008
	€	€
Wages and salaries	496,373	553,440
Other pension costs	68,493	67,672
	564,866	621,112

5. Pension costs

The organisation operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions are made by both the employee and the employer. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the organisation in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by AONTAS to the fund and amount to €68,493 (2008: €67,672).

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

6. Taxation

No charge to current or deferred taxation arises as the organisation has been granted exemption by the Revenue authorities in Ireland.

7. Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment	Office equipment	Fixtures, fittings, and equipment	Totals
	€	€	€	€
Cost				
At 1st January 2009	64,306	33,100	49,519	146,925
Additions	-	-	-	-
At 31st December 2009	64,306	33,100	49,519	146,925
Depreciation				
At 1st January 2009	40,217	24,766	49,519	114,502
Charge for the year	8,029	2,268	-	10,297
At 31st December 2009	48,246	27,034	49,519	124,799
Net book value				
At 31st December 2009	16,060	6,066	-	22,126
At 31st December 2008	24,089	8,334	-	32,423

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

8. Debtors

	2009	2008
	€	€
Other debtors	29,511	16,206
Prepayments	-	8,923
	29,511	25,129

9. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2009	2008
	€	€
Trade creditors	9,052	9,055
Other creditors	222,751	298,759
Accruals	8,192	8,015
	239,995	315,829

10. Reserves

	Statement of Financial Activities	Total
	€	€
Fund balance at beginning of year	38,131	38,131
Net movement in funds	4,687	4687
Fund balance at end of year	42,818	42,818

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2009

11. Gross Cash Flows

	2009	2008
	€	€
Returns on investments and servicing of finance		
Interest received	112	3,253
Capital expenditure		
Payments to acquire tangible assets	-	7,654

12. Analysis of changes in net funds

	Opening Balance	Cash Flows	Closing Balance
	€	€	€
Cash at bank and in hand	296,408	(65,232)	231,176
Net funds	296,408	(65,232)	231,176

13. Reserves

	Balance at beginning of year	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€	€
Specific Funds:				
Restricted grants	-	152,178	152,178	-
Unrestricted grants	38,131	937,106	932,419	42,818
	38,131	1,089,284	1,084,597	42,818



AONTAS (A company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

14. Non-Audit Services Provided by Auditors

In common with many other businesses of our size and nature we use our auditors to prepare and submit the financial statements.

15. Status

The liability of the members is limited.

Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while they are members or within one year thereafter for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before they ceased to be members and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves such amount as may be required, not exceeding €6.35.

16. Approval of Financial Statements

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 17th April, 2010 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer



AONTAS Staff 2009

Berni Brady	<i>Director</i>
Jacinta Cuthbert	<i>Head of Organisational Development</i>
Niamh O'Reilly	<i>Head of Membership Services</i>
Niamh Farren	<i>Communications Officer</i>
Jennifer Gunning	<i>Information/Research Officer</i>
Kathryn Laing	<i>Clerical Officer/Receptionist</i>
Dympna Larkin	<i>Membership Liaison Officer</i>
Giara Murphy	<i>Resource & Communications Officer</i>
Eleonora Peruffo	<i>Clerical Officer</i>

AONTAS Executive 2009

OFFICERS

Ms. Marian Duffy	<i>President, Co. Carlow VEC</i>
Cllr. Maria Gorman	<i>Hon. Treasurer, Kerry Education Services</i>
Ms. Ruth Smith	<i>Hon. Secretary, Tipperary Women's Network</i>

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERS

Ms. Loretta Needham	<i>Tuam Community Development Resource Centre</i>
Mr. Lorne Patterson	<i>Longford Women's Link</i>
Ms. Mary Sweeney	<i>Co. Laois VEC</i>
Mr. John Ryan	<i>City of Limerick VEC</i>
Ms. Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha	<i>Adult Education Officers' Association</i>
Ms. Elva O'Callaghan	<i>National Collective of Community Based Womens' Networks</i>
Ms. Deborah Brock	<i>Tallaght/Dodder Valley Partnership</i>
Ms. Linda Greene	<i>Clondalkin Womens' Network</i>
Ms. Liz Waters	<i>An Cosán</i>
Mr. Stephen Flitton	<i>Warrenmount Community Education Development Centre (term completed May 2009)</i>
Ms. Jan Lewis	<i>Second Chance Education Project for Women (term completed May 2009)</i>
Mr. Morgan Dunne	<i>Co. Wexford VEC (term completed May 2009)</i>

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Ms. Una Buckley
Ms. Jillian Harrison



AONTAS

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