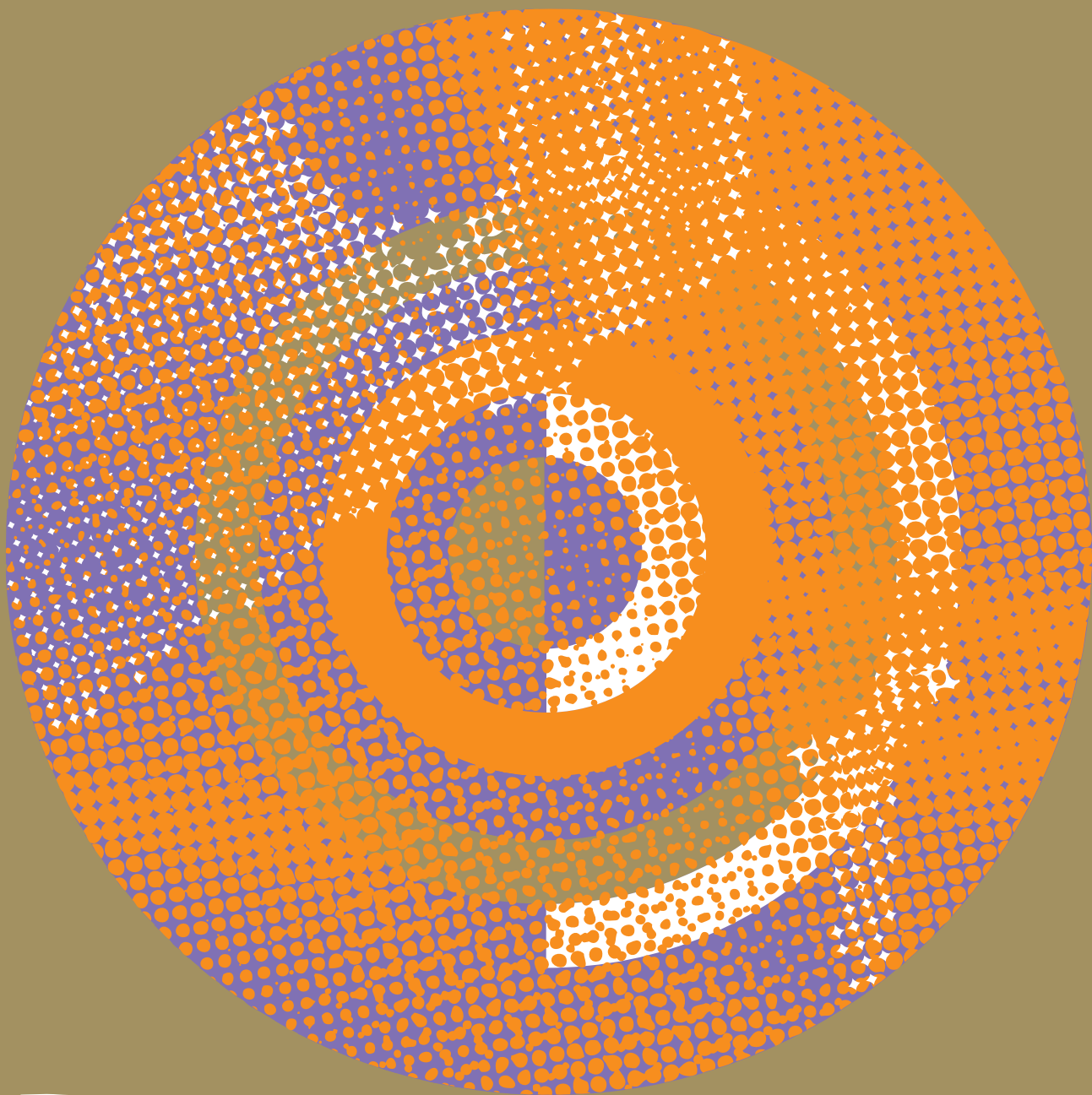


AONTAS ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2010



MISSION STATEMENT OF AONTAS

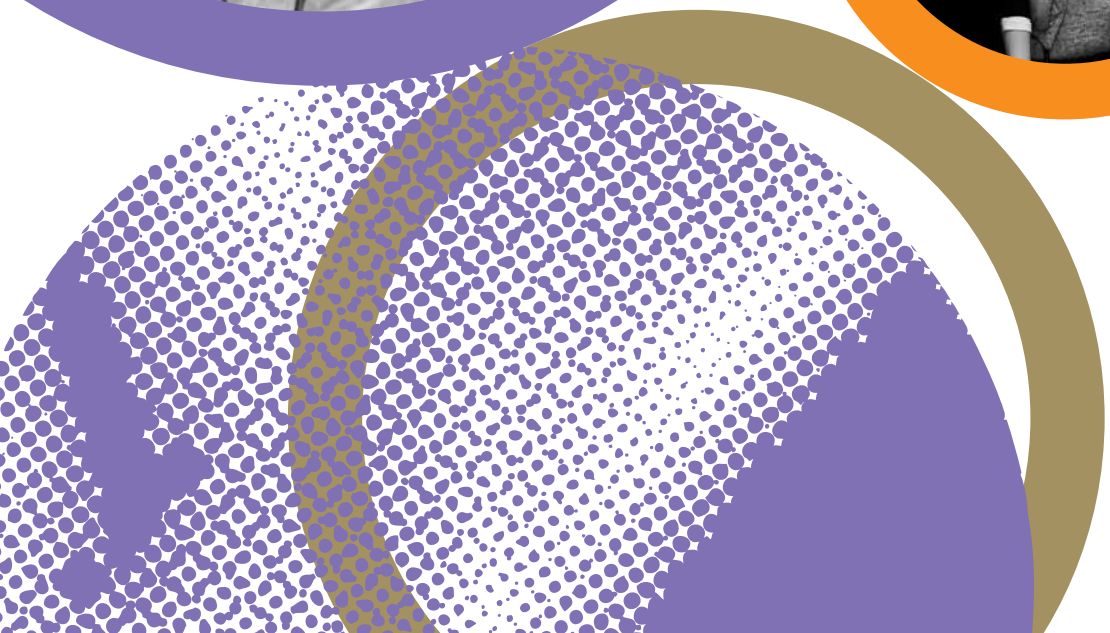
AONTAS is the National Adult Learning Organisation, a voluntary membership organisation. It exists to promote the development of a learning society through the provision of a quality and comprehensive system of adult learning and education which is accessible to and inclusive of all.

CORE VALUES

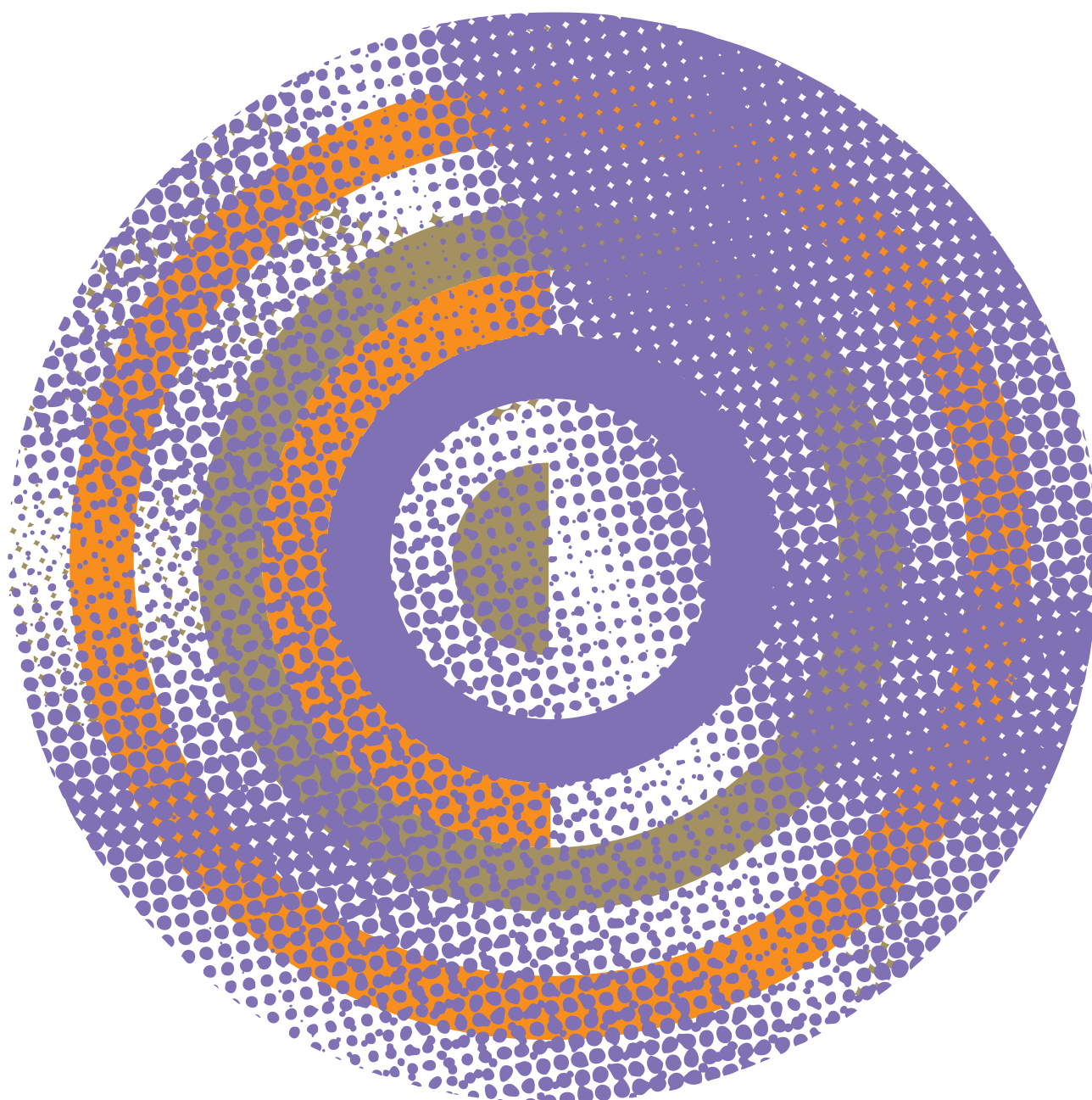
- AONTAS is committed to the concept of lifelong learning and its role in enabling people to participate in the human, social, economic and cultural development of Irish society.
- AONTAS affirms and supports the key role of adult and community education in combating poverty and social exclusion and 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.



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AONTAS ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2010





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FOREWORD

AONTAS currently focuses its priorities on voice, visibility and value for the adult learner. As a membership organisation AONTAS places the voice of the learner at the heart of research and policy work. The value of adult education and of the learner is truly visible in the wonderful educational achievements throughout the country. These are highlighted at events such as the STAR Awards and also through the many networks formed through its membership.

There are currently many people in our country who are experiencing the pain of disadvantage. This disadvantage may be the result of personal and social circumstances or of economic hardship resulting from sudden redundancy and unemployment or indeed both.

For the many adults who are now finding themselves in the position where they have to redirect their personal, social and civic lives, involvement in adult and community education is a pivotal focus. There are also many adults who are seeking to upskill and retrain for the labour market which only they can regenerate through their positivity, persistence and hard work.

Support for the adult and community education sector has never been more necessary if we are to revitalise society and rebuild a sustainable economy in Ireland in this period of great uncertainty. The provision of funding for this sector must continue to be maintained and the effectiveness and impact of the sector must be highlighted at the forefront of all political discourse.

For our society to regain its strength and vitality and national self-esteem, its citizens must have the opportunity to access education and training, both as an end in itself and as a means of attainment through the creation of further education and employment opportunities.

While upskilling and the regeneration of our economy is a necessary priority at this time, it is also necessary to reinforce our national sense of well-being, self-esteem and pride in ourselves, so that we are affirmed as valuable individuals and as valuable members of our families, communities and society as a whole.

AONTAS recognises and affirms the tremendous work that adult learners and educators are doing individually and in groups around the country. Investment in adult and community education is a sound and practical investment which will yield inspiring ideological results for the revitalisation of our society, particularly in a time when individuals and communities are suffering the ill-effects of the economic recession.

Marian Duffy,
President, AONTAS

OVERVIEW

Introduction

2010 was an eventful year for AONTAS in many ways that we didn't expect. Our biggest challenge was the loss of Jennifer Gunning, our Information/Research Officer in April. Jenny had been with us for five years and the shock of her death coloured our year like nothing before and forced us to revisit our priorities in an unprecedented way. We would like to thank everyone for all your kind messages and support for us and Jenny's family through what was a very difficult period.

Strategic Plan 2011-2013

As we entered the final year of our current strategic plan a key activity was the consultation process to inform our new three year plan. The process which was launched at the AGM on May 19th was wide and varied and involved a number of layers of consultation culminating in the final workshops at our general meeting on November 17th. These are described in the body of the report. We look forward to the adoption of the new plan at our AGM on May 10th 2011. As part of the process we examined the outcomes of our 2007-2010 plan which had five key objectives; policy, promotion, practice, partnership and organisational development. Our achievements over the past four years are summarized below.

Policy

- Prioritised influencing policy in the area of adult and community education through working consistently to bring issues of relevance to the attention of the Minister for Lifelong Learning and party political education spokespeople.
- Built strong relationships with a new staff team in the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science and

developed partnerships with key stakeholders in the sector.

- Developed and disseminated 16 submissions/position papers and a suite of manifesto and lobbying tools representing the range of issues of concern to our members.
- Engaged in research on a range of issues including the lifelong learning needs of older people, integrating development and adult education programmes and exploring the outcomes of DES funded community education.
- Collaborated with the Further Education Development Unit on drawing up guidelines for engaging disadvantaged men in education.
- Published the Adult Learner Journal on an annual basis in partnership with the Adult Education Officers' Association.

Promotion

- Developed and delivered a strong promotional strategy including establishing the Adult Learners' Festival as a key event in the adult and community education calendar.
- Developed a strong communications strategy resulting in stronger links with local and national media through the website, online networking, ebulletins and publications.
- Assisted 13,000 learners through the delivery of the AONTAS Information Referral Service.
- Used the analysis of information from the Information Referral Service to inform policy and establish partnerships with other information providers including the NQAI, the HEA and the VEC Adult Guidance Services.

Practice

- Established and developed the AONTAS Community Education Network to raise the profile of, gain recognition for and resource community education.
- Established a Senior Learner Network as a result of needs identified in the research report: Don't Stop me Now – the Lifelong Learning Needs of Older People.
- Supported members to develop their lobbying skills through training
- Delivered training in the use of the Quality Assurance Framework with Women's Community Education groups culminating in the Guide to Best Practice in Women's Community Education.
- Developed and delivered a model of best practice of professional development for Community Education Facilitators which can be replicated within the VEC Continuous Professional Development Programme.

Partnership

- Hosted conferences, seminars and networking events for AONTAS members and other stakeholders including visiting delegations from outside of Ireland.
- Represented AONTAS at national and international events.
- Worked with key stakeholders such as IVEA, NALA and NCCWN in the development of policy and advocacy for the sector.
- Built a network of partners who support the Adult Learners' Festival in a variety of ways.

Organisational Development

- Strengthened the Staff Team through continuous professional development.
- Managed tightly and made the best use of financial resources available to the organisation, in particular developing value for money practices in the current economic climate.
- Strengthened the AONTAS Executive Committee through training in governance and drawing on their experience as practitioners in the sector.

Moving Forward

The new plan which will take us through until the end of 2013 will focus AONTAS work on three key themes, Voice, Visibility and Value as identified by the membership.

Adult Learners' Festival

In February we held our fourth Adult Learners' Festival which was very successful with over 320 events held around the country. The STAR awards celebration which kicked off the Festival proved to be as popular as ever with 110 nominations resulting in 13 final awards. Learning Communities Day saw the launch of the DVD, Beyond the Classroom, documenting the work of community education and on the final day of the Festival we held an Adult Education Clinic to mark our Lobby for Learning day. This proved to be a great success with representatives of the four main political parties listening to the concerns of both learners and providers. In particular, adult learners brought to the attention of the politicians the effect of changes to financial supports for adult learners, an issue which AONTAS championed on behalf of mature students during the year, while providers raised the issue of rising demand in the context of diminishing resources.

Information Referral Service

Because of the loss of Jenny our Information Referral Service had to be suspended for a period of time and prospective learners were directed towards the information section of the website. This proved to be surprisingly popular, recording over 30,000 visitors during the year. AONTAS will be reconfiguring the service in the light of the new strategic plan and directing learners to other websites such as Qualifax and the HEA student support services. The VEC guidance services however remain a key point of first contact for learners. Accessing accurate and appropriate information remains a key barrier for adult learners especially in the context of the current recession where demand for adult education and training has been unprecedentedly high.

Issues for Members

Through the year we kept in close contact with our members who, through our various consultation processes, informed us about issues affecting them. For adult learners, key issues are finance, accessing accurate information, childcare and transport. The high demand for adult learning opportunities also presented logistical challenges for providers as they sought to provide a service in the context of diminishing funds and the effects of the Public Service Recruitment Embargo. These will be key issues for AONTAS as we move into one of the most challenging phases of our development over the next three years.

Conclusion

Much more needs to be done at government level to ensure that the further, adult and community education sector achieves parity of esteem with other sectors within the formal system since it is expected to respond to the needs of large sections of the population who have either been failed by that system or for whom it is unsuitable as a way of learning. In the targeting of resources government should look to the track record and capacity of the sector to deliver a quality, holistic and integrated service to adult learners. The old divisions between vocational training and further education, with their disproportionate budgets must finally be laid to rest and collaborative and integrated ways of working must be recognised and supported.

A recent proposal put forward by the Department for the establishment of a Back to Education Forum in an attempt to provide a space in which administrators, providers and stakeholder representatives could discuss any and all issues pertaining to adult literacy, community education and BTEI, and could assist in providing a clear structure for informing policy was welcomed by AONTAS. Such thinking is forward looking and essential to the overall vision and long-term development of services to adult learners. With the transfer of FÁS training services to the Department of Education and Skills there is now a clear opportunity to develop a broader forum which

would incorporate both education and training and which would establish the sector in the way it deserves. AONTAS is willing to contribute our ideas, experience and expertise to such a plan over the course of the next three years.

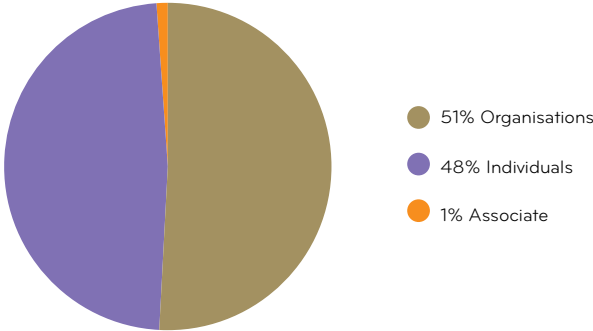
Berni Brady,
Director, AONTAS

SECTION 1

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

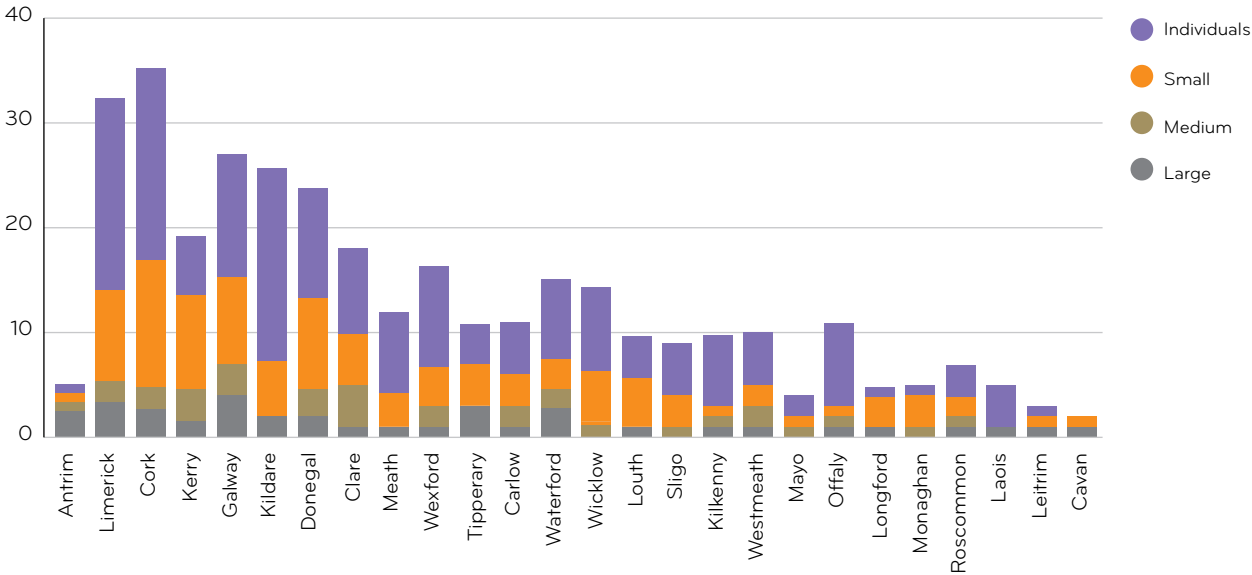
AONTAS Membership Services

As of 31st December the AONTAS membership comprised 589 members. The breakdown of membership illustrated in the pie chart below, now comprises 300 organisations, 285 individuals and 4 associate members. A full list of AONTAS members is available online at www.aontas.com/membership/



In percentage terms membership type can be broken down as follows: 51% organisations, 48% individuals and 1% associate. However, many adult educators or learners who are part of organisations subscribe as individual members and these account for 43% of the total individual membership.

Geographical representation of members excluding Dublin which accounts for 39%



Membership Recruitment

According to the trend in member applications, there is a significant increase in organisational membership applications in February and April. This could be attributed to the promotional work done as part of the Adult Learners' Festival.

There was a readjustment of members following a review of membership payments, therefore the total number of members lapsed during 2010 was 46 – 8% of the previous total membership. The number of new members that joined AONTAS in 2010 was 72 – 12% of the total membership.

The approach taken regarding membership recruitment is based on the goal of creating greater geographical representation, range and spread of organisational members. To this end the following strategies are employed to grow the AONTAS membership: encouraging existing members to encourage others to join, organisation of regional meetings, through the STAR award applications, networking during the Adult Learners' Festival and at all national meetings.

Membership Meetings

Over 420 members participated in various membership meeting activities during 2010 (excluding Adult Learners' Festival activities). From national and regional meetings, community education network meetings to learner focused meetings, a highly engaged membership sought to shape the new AONTAS strategic plan and advocate for better recognition and resources for the adult and community education sector.

General Membership Meetings

New members of the AONTAS Executive Committee were welcomed at the Annual General Meeting. The following Officer Board positions were filled: Marian Duffy (President), Loretta Needham (Vice President), Ruth Smith (Hon. Secretary) and Maria Gorman (Hon. Treasurer). Organisational members included: Lorraine Cunningham, Michael Murray, Lorne Patterson and John Ryan. One election took place for the individual Committee member with Liam Kilbride being elected to the position.

Both the Annual General, and the General Meeting, of the AONTAS membership acted as key consultation fora for developing the AONTAS strategic plan. The outcomes of the discussions at the Annual General Meeting shaped the strategic plan questionnaire. The three themes of Voice, Visibility and Value emerged and were identified as key areas for AONTAS to concentrate on over the course of 2011-2013. The General Meeting in November acted as the final national consultation space and assisted in fine tuning the plan to ensure that it is highly representative of the adult and community education sector.

Consultation Process for AONTAS Strategic Plan 2011-2013

Further to the national membership meetings a number of strategies were employed to create the most timely, effective and representative strategic plan which would guide the work of AONTAS in the challenging times ahead.

Firstly, a detailed membership analysis was carried out in order to create an effective consultation plan. Secondly, a number of consultation strategies were employed to facilitate members in contributing to the consultation, a summary of which is detailed in the table below. Finally analysis of all the information received from the consultation processes was carried out.

- 573 – Questionnaires to members
- 1 Adult Learners’ Festival information event
- 7 Interviews (IVEA, CEOA, AEOA, CEFA, TUI, DES and FEDU)
- 8 Stakeholder Surveys (NALA, FETAC, AEGI, NCCWN, ASTI, FÁS, Pobal and National Access Office)
- 1 Focus Group (key stakeholders and key organisations)
- 2 Regional Seminars (Kerry and Limerick)
- 1 AONTAS General Meeting
- 1 Community Education Meeting
- 1 Learner Network Forum
- 4 Community education workshops – Limerick, Clare, Galway and Dublin
- AONTAS Executive Committee meetings

For further information please see

<http://www.aontas.com/membership/strategicplan20.html>

Outcomes:

- The AONTAS Strategic Plan 2011-2013.
- Greater engagement with members, and understanding of the current issues facing the adult and community education sector, across Ireland.

Community Education Network

The Irish Community Education Network (CEN), which was established in 2007, is a political platform of independent community education groups within the AONTAS membership and serves under the organisational development section of the AONTAS Strategic Plan. It draws on the experience of its members to develop strategies to create a greater public understanding of community education and to advocate for a distinct funding stream for the sector.

The work of the Network is guided by a steering group, for its overall development and direction, and by themed subgroups to support strategic work e.g. a policy subgroup. This is the only network

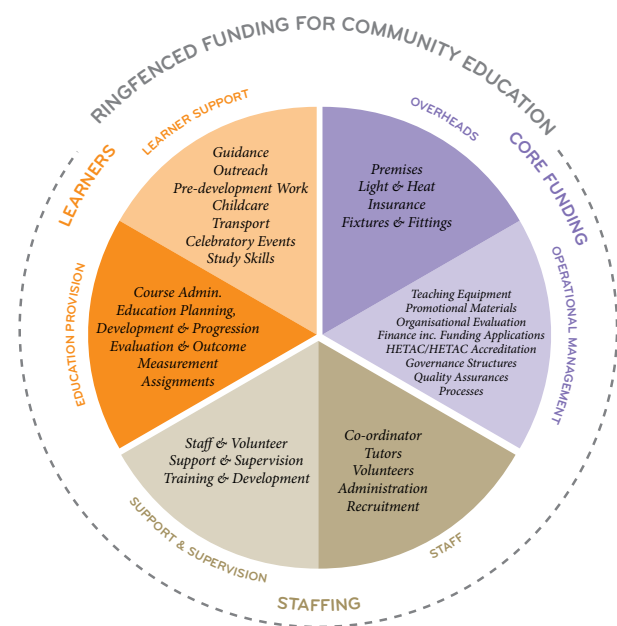
dedicated to independent community education groups at national level and it constantly works to ensure that it operates effectively through engaging in ongoing evaluation and critical reflection.

The Network is in existence for over 3 years and has met on 10 occasions. A report and details of all meetings are available from the AONTAS website.

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

CEN Work in 2010

2010 was a momentous year for the Network, having completed a position paper on a funding mechanism for community education, as it consolidated the range of advocacy activities undertaken over the course of three years. The following diagram illustrates the outcome of the discussions on a comprehensive funding mechanism and how funding is used.



Other key activities included launching ‘Beyond the Classroom’ television programmes on community education; delivering regional seminars to engage new groups; creating a new manifesto for advocacy; and presentations about the Network at an international conference. During 2010 the CEN held three national meetings, one launch for ‘Beyond the Classroom’ and four regional outreach seminars. It was supported by 6 steering group meetings, and three policy sub group meetings.

Strategic Work Plan for the Community Education Network

A strategic work plan 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:

- Three national action-focused meetings were held: Collective action and partnership work for progressing Community Education, Creating a vision for funding Community Education and The Position Paper for Funding Community Education. Reports are available online: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen/meetingscen.html>
- Outcomes from the national meetings include creating a stronger connection with the Department of Education and Skills, developing a representative and clear mechanism for funding community education and shaping an effective lobbying plan for community education.
- Established an active, participative policy subgroup to guide the development of the Position Paper for Funding Community Education.
- Launched the television programmes on community education 'Beyond the Classroom'. All programmes are available online: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen/workofcen.html>
- Created a paper on the CEN outlining its history, work and achievements. The paper charts the work and development of the network over the past 3 years and is used as a promotional and advocacy tool. It is available for download from the website: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>

- Completed a yearly evaluation of CEN meetings with views from Network members.
- Redesigned the Community Education Network section of the website: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>

International Promotion of the Community Education Network

AONTAS was requested to share our experience of developing a national network of non-formal education providers at a key international conference. Niamh O'Reilly presented 'Developing a voice for the non-formal adult education sector – A case study of the AONTAS Community Education Network' at the DARE (Democracy and Human Rights Education, Europe) conference in Glasgow in March: Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning.

Outcomes:

- Greater international awareness of the Community Education Network.
- Promotion of 'Beyond the Classroom' television programmes.
- Built links with the non-formal adult education sector across Europe.

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 2010, holding 6 meetings, mainly concentrating on developing the first National Adult Learner Forum. AONTAS also maintained strategic alliances with other organisations with the aim of using collaborative work that responds to the needs of learners.

AONTAS Senior Learner Network

The Senior Learner Network started the year by working to create a logo for senior learning which serves a dual purpose. Firstly it would act as an indicator for older people, who are considering going back to learning, that the course was 'senior learner friendly', and secondly would ensure that education providers meet the requirements that the senior learner network developed as outlined in its Learner Charter. Following this work, as the Senior Learner Network has strengthened and grown over the past 2 ½ years, it was time to move into an exciting larger forum that will act as a community of adult learners, the National Adult Learner Forum.

AONTAS was requested to share our experience of developing a senior learner network at the 'Learning Age Conference: Learning in Later Life', in June 2010. Niamh O'Reilly and PJ Gallagher co-presented at this WEA organised conference by sharing our experience of establishing and growing an effective network for senior learners.

Outcomes:

- A logo for senior learning.
- A national meeting of the Senior Learner Network, report available at http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/final_sln_report_may.pdf
- Consolidation of the Senior Learner Network into the National Adult Learner Forum.
- Presenting the achievements of the senior learner network at a high profile conference.



AONTAS Senior Learner Network

National Adult Learner Forum

The first National Adult Learner Forum was established as a key space for all learners to promote adult learning, to come together to identify the challenges they face and to act collectively to improve this. Over 60 adult learners from across Ireland, mature students, community education learners, senior learners and many more attended the launch of the AONTAS National Adult Learners' Forum which took place on November 3rd in Athlone. AONTAS committed to develop the voice of adult learners through its appointment of a Learning Advocacy Officer, whose responsibility is to develop strategies to build the capacity of learners to articulate their issues and create a movement to affect change.

Outcomes:

- A National Adult Learners' Forum Meeting.
- Expanded the Learner Network steering group to include another learner.
- Developed a workplan.

The report is available online:

http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/final_nalf_report_ver_2.pdf



SECTION 2

POLICY AND PROMOTION

Policy/Promotion Team

During 2010 AONTAS established a policy/promotion team led by Berni Brady and including Niamh Farren, Communications Officer, Jennifer Gunning, Information/Research Officer and Ciara Murphy, Administration and Resources Officer. The PP team meets on a regular basis at least once every four weeks. The team meetings are open to any member of staff who wishes to contribute ideas or inform themselves about ongoing issues. During the year the work of the team was challenged by the loss of Jenny in April and the departure of Ciara to a new job later in the year. It has since been reconstituted to include Damien Walshe, Learning Advocacy Officer who was recruited by AONTAS in November and Eleonora Peruffo who has taken up the role of Administration and Resources Officer in a reconfiguring of staff roles.

The objectives of the PP team are to:-

- keep abreast of policy issues and developments relating to adult and community education
- develop and deliver on a policy/promotion strategy in accordance with the objectives of the strategic plan
- monitor the policy/promotion strategy and respond actively to new issues that might arise.

Policy Issues Identified by AONTAS Membership in 2010

- Budget 2011 – For information about how the Budget will affect adult learners and the sector see <http://www.aontas.com/information>
- Retaining a Minister for Lifelong Learning.

- Activation Measures – Two rounds of activation measures were announced over the year 2010. The Minister for Finance indicated that more places would be allocated as part of Budget 2011.
- Realignment of relevant programmes within government departments in particular the changing role of FÁS.
- Public Sector Recruitment Embargo/Rationalisation of VECs – and how both will affect the demand for adult learning.
- Supports to mature students – Changes to the grant, and the Student Assistance Fund. The new scheme is expected to be introduced before summer 2011 – it is expected that grants will be administered by a single entity.
- The Hunt Report and the new Higher Education Strategy.
- Parity of esteem for part-time third level students.
- The New European Action Plan on Lifelong Learning.
- An effective funding mechanism for community education.
- Recognition of the value of accredited and non-accredited learning in fostering a lifelong learning culture.
- OECD (PISA) report on literacy at second level. Link to the report is here http://www.oecd.org/document/61/0,3343,en_2649_35845621_46567613_1_1_1_1,00.html

Promoting Policy

Both the strategic planning process and the Adult Learners' Festival provide the opportunity for AONTAS to focus on key policy issues for the sector and promote these issues in the political arena. The increasing demand for adult learning presents adult education providers with particular challenges, and policy changes in Budget 2010 also have had an impact on adult learners. For the traditional closing event of the Festival, AONTAS recreated the concept of a constituency clinic to focus on issues particular to the sector and adult learners. This event provided those participating with the opportunity to interact directly with spokespeople from the Green Party, the Labour Party, Fine Gael and with Minister for Lifelong Learning, Sean Haughey.

AONTAS invited providers and learners with a broad spectrum of experience to participate, and facilitated them in advance to identify and articulate issues. Key issues which emerged on the day include:

- The public sector recruitment embargo and its impact on staff within the adult education services, as staff excluding tutors are not considered 'frontline'
- Changes to the financial supports for adult learners, specifically the removal of eligibility for a Higher Education Grant for those on the Back to Education Allowance
- Lack of information on adult learning opportunities
- The need for greater co-ordination at Departmental level, specifically between the Department of Social and Community Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills.

AONTAS prepared and disseminated a short briefing document '*Adult Education – a Current Diagnosis*' on the day and subsequently on the website. Feedback on the event from both participants and spokespeople was extremely positive and the event was covered by the Irish Times.

Progressing Policy

Following this event AONTAS worked closely with the USI (Union of Students in Ireland) and the Grants for Mature Students Campaign to focus on the removal of eligibility for the Higher Education Grant. USI invited AONTAS to chair a public meeting on the issue and we raised the issue formally with both the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Social Protection.

In May 2010 AONTAS produced a briefing paper on the BTEA issue and the Social Welfare Bill. This was also circulated to Social Protection Spokespeople from the Opposition parties.

In June AONTAS was invited to meet with Minister for Social Protection, Eamon Ó Cuiv. One of the adult learners who participated in the Constituency Clinic also attended the meeting.

Although the meeting was not successful in reversing the decision, AONTAS continued to highlight the broader issue of financial supports for adult learners throughout the year.

In advance of Budget 2010 AONTAS prepared a detailed briefing document on the main policy issues affecting both learners and providers, which was disseminated to Education spokespeople from all parties.

In November 2010 AONTAS was invited to give a presentation to Labour party members in Dún Laoghaire, where we again raised the public sector recruitment embargo and the issue of financial supports for adult learners. Labour party leader Eamon Gilmore was in attendance.

All AONTAS briefing papers are available in the policy section of the AONTAS website.

As well as its regular meetings, in 2011 AONTAS will establish a joint policy working group with NALA to advance our common agenda for the adult and community education sector. Details of this process will be worked out with NALA early in 2011. The PP team will also consolidate collaborative working relationships with other stakeholders as part of the

ongoing work of the strategic plan. We will build on work we have already started as illustrated below.

Organisations Engaged with in 2010

- We continued to develop our relationships with VECs, through our membership strategy, consultation processes, the Festival, Explore and research.
- We worked with ICTU, through the Festival, disseminating information and general support for their campaigns.
- Equality Rights Alliance ; we disseminated their materials, linked them in with our membership and attended some meetings.
- USI/Grants for Mature Students Campaign; we worked with them regarding the BTEA changes and campaign.
- INOU; we met with their staff at various events, attended their seminar on Activation measures.
- Social Policy Network; NF attended two of their meetings using the opportunity to meet with organisations such as the CIC, Older and Bolder etc.
- HEA Access Advisory Group; BB is a member attending four meetings per year and contributing actively to policy discussions.
- Adult Education Guidance Initiative; we developed our relationship formally with the NCGE. BB has been an active member of the AEGI Advisory Group since 2000.
- NALA; We are represented on the steering group for the NALA distance learning programme funded under the LMA measures. We plan to develop and strengthen our links with NALA during the next strategic plan through the establishment of the joint policy working group.
- The NQAI; we have worked closely with them through the consultative group, responding to policy papers and developing the adult education information section of Qualifax.

- National Library Council; BB participates on the advisory group for their new e-learning initiative together with FÁS.
- Young Ballymun Group; BB is a member of the Literacivic Bursary Committee which dispenses funding to local projects in Ballymun.

AONTAS Communications Strategy

AONTAS Communications strategy encompasses a broad range of activities, from issuing press releases and briefings, through to the management of two websites, and production of the AONTAS quarterly magazine Explore. The communications strategy within the organisation also proposes to develop relationships with relevant agencies and organisations, as well as liaising with relevant policy makers and elected representatives as described above. The development of the policy promotion team has also made an impact on the communications strategy, reflected through longer term engagement with particular issues, campaigning activities and strengthening of relationships with decision makers and elected representatives

The objectives of the communications strategy over the period 2010 were:-

- to provide clear information on adult learning through mainstream and online media
- to highlight the particular challenges facing adult learners and adult learning providers.

Using Social Media

The development of new technologies, in particular social networking tools has been of interest to the NGO sector in general and AONTAS has been quick to explore its potential. The ability to create, publish and share content online in a variety of formats presents significant opportunities for AONTAS in a busy and often chaotic mainstream media environment. These technologies also allow us to engage with existing members and supporters and build a broader following.

During 2010 we made extensive use of social networking tools Twitter and Facebook. AONTAS

Facebook pages and a new Adult Learners' Festival page in December 2010 together provided a following of over 400 people. In December 2010 the number of Twitter followers was 450. These tools provide more opportunities to disseminate information and promote AONTAS messages – but there are additional outcomes. Social networking activity during 2010 supported the development of relationships with other NGOs, helped AONTAS make contact with journalists and engage others on policy issues. Use of social networking also increases traffic to the AONTAS and Festival websites. As use of this technology increases, so too do ways of measuring its impact and effectiveness. We plan to develop this further over the next three years.

Websites

Both www.aontas.com and www.adultlearnersfestival.com are important communications tools for AONTAS. In 2010 we upgraded and improved the Festival website, integrating social media tools and targeting three key audiences:

- STAR Awards nominees
- event organisers
- adult learners.

The main AONTAS website was also upgraded to include social media tools.

General Media Work

During 2010 AONTAS issued 12 press releases, which resulted in articles and interviews in local and community media throughout the country. More targeted engagement with media resulted in coverage in the Irish Independent during February and April, and again in August/September. During this period AONTAS also featured in the Evening Herald, the Sunday Independent, the Sunday Business Post and the Sunday Tribune.

Peak times for coverage for adult learning issues are January, August, September and during the Adult Learners' Festival. AONTAS also issued press releases to coincide with the AGM in May and General Meeting in November 2010.

Explore Magazine

Three issues of the AONTAS magazine Explore were produced and disseminated in 2010 with a fourth in production by the end of the year. The magazine is an important publication as it focuses on issues of relevance to adult learners and adult learning organisations, showcasing models of good practice, disseminating information from Europe and communicating with the membership. 1,000 copies of each edition of the magazine are disseminated to the membership and the publication is also made available online. Articles focused on everything from how to engage with media, to updates on the AONTAS strategic planning consultation process. Features showcased methodologies, practice and outcomes of adult learning in different contexts from the workplace to community education.

Oireachtas and 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 the editor and Parliamentary Questions.

Media Training

We support our members to promote their work by offering media training and promotional support. The Adult Learners' Festival Information Day in January provided a short session on the use of online and traditional media to event organisers, members and groups interested in the Festival.

In March 2010 AONTAS delivered a day long media training session in the Adult and Community Education Service in Jigginstown, which was attended by twelve local representatives involved in the delivery of education in Kildare.

In June 2010 AONTAS supported the work of the Senior Traveller Training Centres in promoting the findings of the 'Teach Report', a major research report on Traveller education. AONTAS worked with Dr Niamh Hourigan who conducted the research to disseminate the findings to local and national media.

Throughout the year AONTAS offered free media training to members through the AONTAS weekly update. Although a number of members indicated their interest in pursuing this training, this was not taken up due to the limited capacity of organisations. AONTAS is planning to pilot regional media training workshops in 2011 to address this capacity issue.

Adult Learners' Festival 2010

The Adult Learners' Festival has been established as a key national promotional event for the sector and the fourth annual Adult Learners' Festival took place from 22 – 26 February 2010. The overall theme of the Festival was 'Better Together', promoting greater collaboration within the broad adult and community education sector as well as working in partnership with a range of external organisations. Throughout the Festival week AONTAS promoted a different adult learning theme as follows:-

- Celebrate Learning – Monday, 22 February 2010
- Green Learning – Tuesday, 23 February 2010
- Learning Communities – Wednesday, 24 February 2010
- Learn @ Work – Thursday, 25 February 2010
- Lobby for Learning – Friday, 26 February 2010.

National Festival Activities

- The STAR Awards Ceremony for Adult Learning Projects.
- The Launch of the DVD series 'Beyond the Classroom'.
- The Adult Education Clinic on Lobby for Learning day.
- National and Local Public Relations and Advertising Campaign.
- Supporting and encouraging AONTAS members and adult learning initiatives to hold events and activities.
- Partnerships with other organisations.

The STAR Awards Ceremony

The STAR Awards Ceremony marked the official launch of the Adult Learners' Festival and took place in the Royal College of Physicians, Kildare Street Dublin. Minister for Lifelong Learning, Sean Haughey TD officially opened the Festival while Newstalk Broadcaster, Orla Barry was the guest speaker. Thirteen awards were presented out of a total of 110 nominated projects.

Launch of Beyond the Classroom

Beyond the Classroom is a series of four television programmes that provide an insight into community education in Dublin as it was experienced by the communities of Tallaght, Kilbarrack and Dublin's Inner City. The launch took place in the Lighthouse Cinema on Learning Communities Day. Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Emer Costello launched the programmes which were produced by Dublin Community Television (DCTV) in partnership with the AONTAS Community Education Network, with the aid of funds obtained through the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound and Vision programme. The series was broadcast every Wednesday evening in March 2010 by DCTV and can be accessed via the AONTAS website.

Lobby for Learning Day: The Adult Education Clinic

The Adult Education Clinic took place on Friday, 26 February 2010 as part of the Lobby for Learning Day. The Clinic which was the closing event of the Festival was modelled on TDs constituency clinics with representatives of the two constituencies in the sector (learners and providers) given the opportunity to meet with elected representatives including Minister for Lifelong Learning Sean Haughey, Fine Gael Spokesperson on Education Brian Hayes, Green Party Spokesperson on Education, Paul Gogarty and Labour Party Councillor, Aodhan O'Riordain. The overall aim of the event was to facilitate dialogue on the key issues for the sector with a view to informing the content of future party manifestos, briefings, responses and plans.

National and Local PR and Advertising Campaign

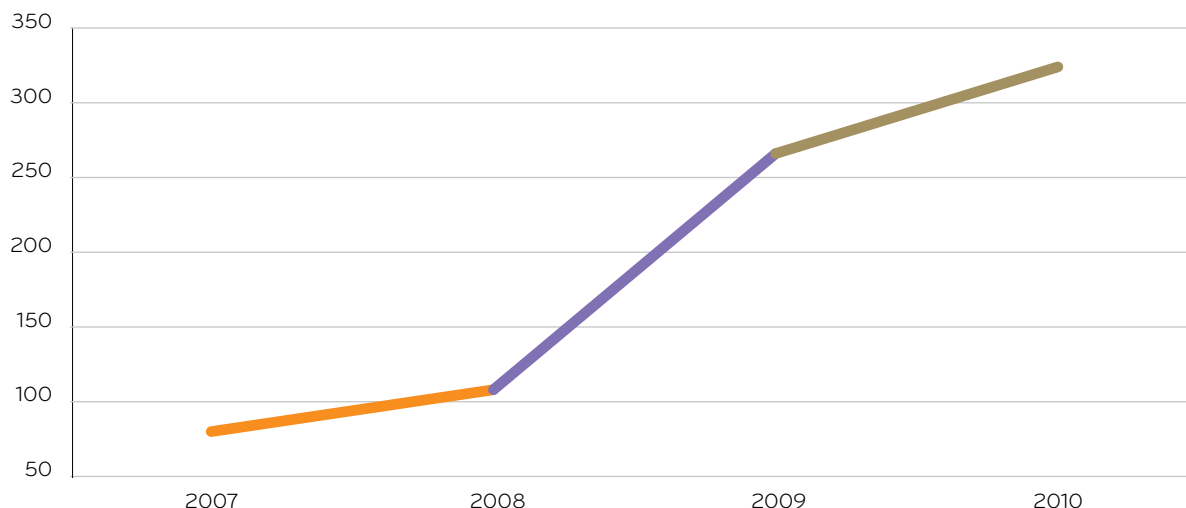
Releasing a shortlist of STAR nominated projects to relevant local media in advance of the Festival created local media interest and built up momentum about the names of the winning projects. Broadcaster and presenter of the popular 'Weekend Blend' on Newstalk, Orla Barry supported the Festival by speaking at the STAR Awards ceremony, recording an ad, presenting the awards and making herself available for photographs.

Media coverage for the Festival was captured using Kantar media monitoring service, which was used over a two month period before, after and during the Festival. In addition to paid advertising, the Festival was widely covered in various media throughout the country as follows:-

- RTE's Drivetime programme on the Friday before the Festival.
- In advance of the week, the Festival and relevant themes were covered by the Sunday Business Post, the Sunday Tribune, the Irish Independent, and the Examiner.
- During the week of the Festival, coverage was secured in The Examiner, the Irish Times Magazine, The Irish Independent and the Irish Times.
- During the week two photos appeared in the Metro Herald.
- The Festival featured on LM FM, Highland Radio, Galway Bay FM, South East Radio, Inishowen Community Radio, Clare FM, West Limerick Radio, Limerick Live 95, KCLR FM, Raidio Corca Baiscinn, NEAR fm, Dublin South FM, Galway Bay FM and Claremorris Community Radio.
- City Channel interviewed BB as part of their evening news programme.
- The Festival was covered extensively in local media in 27 counties throughout the country. 180 separate news articles from around the country were captured through the media monitoring service.
- Evaluation forms received to date from event organisers indicates that the Festival and local events received good coverage from local and community radio and newspapers. Our evaluation indicates that 51% of event organisers were successful in getting their events covered through local media.
- The Festival was covered on 15 different radio stations and almost 200 print articles about the Festival were documented.
- All of the STAR Award winners gained substantial media coverage. Since the Festival the project 'A Song For All' has received extensive media coverage with the winners performing in Carnegie Hall, New York, while the Open Training College (Nationwide winner) featured on RTE's magazine programme 'Outside the Box'.
- The Festival made extensive use of online and social media. In the lead up to the Festival AONTAS built up a Twitter following of almost 200, and established a Festival Facebook page for event organisers to stay connected and share resources.
- The Festival website recorded over 4000 visitors during the month of February.
- Local event organisers promoted their events through local media including newspapers and community radio A range of supports and resources were developed to encourage adult and community education providers' participation including:-
 - The "Event in a Bag" promotional materials, with balloons, posters and giveaways
 - Online Resources including Weekly ezine, Festival ideas and activities, Facebook and Twitter
 - The Adult Learners' Festival Information Day full of ideas on how to participate and host events
 - Membership Regional Meeting presentations on the Festival and how to become involved.

Number and Range of Events

As the graph below demonstrates, there has been a steady increase in the number of events taking place during the Festival since its inception:



A wide range of organisations, businesses, local services and adult and community education providers organised events for Festival week. Event organisers indicated that their events were primarily to provide information, highlight facilities available locally and promote and celebrate adult learning. A sample of 50 events showed participation of 4,000 prospective learners. Given that over 320 events took place, many of which were ‘information events’, the numbers of people seeking information on adult and community education is likely to be 30,000 for that week. The diversity of events hosted by groups and organisations highlights the broad scope of adult and community education opportunities available.

Partnership and Sponsors

AONTAS through the Festival has developed a number of relationships with key agencies and organisations with an interest in adult learning. In some cases the Festival provided the opportunity to strengthen an existing relationship, while in other cases new relationships were formed such as with the Arts Council and Grow it Yourself (GIY). Funding for the Festival is very tight and has reduced over the four years of the strategic plan as funding has diminished across the board. AONTAS is therefore extremely grateful to its sponsors for

their support and endeavours to produce very good value for their money. They include:-

- Department of Education and Skills
- FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council
- ICTU – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Institutes of Technology Ireland – www.bluebrick.ie
- ASTI – Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
- TUI – Teachers Union of Ireland.

Working partnerships were also developed with key agencies and organisations with a vested interest in adult learning. They include:-

- The National Library Council of Ireland. The Council disseminated Festival information to all libraries as well as including an article in Library News. As a result, 32% of the Festival events took place in libraries nationwide. AONTAS Director, Berni Brady was invited to participate a working group on the new e-learning initiative between Libraries and FÁS.

- The Small Firms Association/IBEC
Avine McNally, Assistant Director represented the Small Firms Association on the STAR Awards Judging Panel. She identified 3 companies who incorporate inhouse training and upskilling for their staff and were willing to assist in promotional work in advance of Learn @ Work day. She also promoted the STAR Awards Workplace Learning category among the SFA members. The Festival was also promoted through the SFA ezine, website and magazine.
- Grow it Yourself (GIY)
AONTAS partnered with GIY Ireland to celebrate Green Learning Day (Tuesday, 22 February 2010). 6% of events were organised by GIY groups.
- The NQAI, AEOA, NUI/Maynooth, NCCP, Active Retirement Ireland, VTOS, Community Education Facilitators, Pobal and FÁS were also represented on the STAR Awards Judging Panel.
- The Irish Heart Foundation provided links to the education sections of their website for the event and activity section of the website.
- The National Concert Hall provided event and activity ideas including 'Blow the Dust of Your Trumpet'.
- The Arts Council advertised the Festival to the Heritage Sites, Arts Officers in Local Development Boards and their own overarching Education, Community and Outreach Group, resulting in 7 events in Heritage sites being run.
- The National Federation of Voluntary Organisations the umbrella body for National Disability Groups encouraged their members through website and ezine promotion to host events.

AONTAS also met with other companies and organisations to encourage their participation during the Festival week including:-

- The Portobello Institute, CREATE, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies in Ireland, Campus Engage, Cultivate, McDonalds, FIT, Migrants Workers Centre and ENFO.
- Abbott Ireland who teamed up with local IOTs and Libraries to host events throughout the week in their plants around the country.



SECTION 3

INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

AONTAS Information Referral Service

The Information Referral Service provides both direct and referral information on adult education issues to individuals and groups. AONTAS receives calls, emails and website visits from prospective learners seeking information on courses, entitlements, grants and government initiatives such as the Labour Market Activation Measures.

Because of the loss of Jenny who ran the AONTAS Information Referral Service the service was suspended for a period of time in 2010 while we reconfigured its delivery as best we could. The direct telephone response was reallocated to other staff and we also began to promote our information resources through the web with interesting results.

Use of Web-based Information

Over the past year information on www.aontas.com has been continually updated to reflect new developments in adult education. Engagement with members of the public since the onset of the downturn either by phone or email indicates the particular gaps or information deficits that exist. During the year this information was collated and presented in the form of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the website. A Google Map, highlighting the new Labour Market Activation Measures was integrated into the website.

In August 2010 AONTAS produced 3 one page documents for dissemination to the general public and for the website. These 3 fact sheets included information on financial supports, the Labour Market Activation Measures and useful websites and resources. This section is kept up to date with relevant and current information on all aspects of adult learning and contains links to other organisations such as Qualifax, HEA and the NCGE.

The website contains information on all adult learning options, financial supports and where to access guidance.

AONTAS has seen a shift in the way that learners are now contacting the organisation with a huge increase in the number of overall hits on the website. Over the past twelve months the information section of the website had 31,342 visitors. AONTAS has found that it received increased queries during the months of February and between August and October. The peak in February is accredited to the success of the Adult Learners' Festivals which is now a firm fixture on the adult learning calendar. 528 telephone queries were received during Festival Week and more than 4000 visits were recorded on the Festival website.

Nature of Enquiries

At Information Events, 41% of participants requested information about upskilling or retraining and 22% requested information about Community Education, as recorded on the event organisers evaluation form. AONTAS also provided a free textline for people to request the Information Booklet during the Festival and 260 requests for the booklet were received.

The increased queries during the August to October period were due in part to the introduction of the Labour Market Activation Measures. In August 2010 there were 4,424 visitors compared to 2,119 in August 2009. The interest in the LMA Measures was high until mid October 2010 with 500 visits per day. AONTAS moved quickly to put information about the measures on the website and there was continual interest in the information section, in particular the Labour Activation Measures with an average of one thousand visitors per week from mid-August to mid-September 2010.

Throughout the year the top 3 information pages were:

- FAQs – 10,545 pageviews
- Adult learning options – 5,945 pageviews
- Financial support – 1745 pageviews.

Top 3 FAQs:

- How to become a counsellor – 2,983 pageviews
- How to repeat your leaving certificate – 2,685 pageviews
- How to become a teaching assistant – 1,969 pageviews.

Top 3 queries by email and phone from June to December:

- Financial Support
- How to repeat your leaving certificate
- How to become an adult education tutor.

The Information Booklet

The Information Booklet aims to introduce all adult learners and potential adult learners to the options available to them in adult learning in a way that is comprehensive and easy to understand. From a broad financial supports section, to a thorough list of learning opportunities available through to an extensive contacts list, the booklet provides all the information a prospective adult learner might need. The booklet also includes inspirational stories from adult learners who have started their lifelong learning journey and are encouraging others to do the same. The information booklet was downloaded 1052 times (partial data, the tracking started in April 2010) and 923 hard copies were distributed (partial data, as the service was suspended from April till June 2010)

Other Information Sources

AONTAS Update

The AONTAS Update is a weekly ebulletin designed to keep members informed about current lifelong learning issues as well as what's happening in AONTAS. The bulletin aims to:

- ensure AONTAS staff, Executive and members are well informed about current lifelong learning issues by providing a weekly round-up of the latest news gathered through the media and the Oireachtas monitoring
- act as a vehicle for AONTAS staff, Executive and members to communicate with one another on a weekly basis
- be reader friendly by using photos, hyperlinks and short snappy synopsis.

The bulletin is divided into four sections: Policy, Promotion, Membership and Information in line with the AONTAS Resource Pack. It is emailed to members every Tuesday afternoon. Feedback is positive with 95% of respondents in 2010 satisfied with the type of information the bulletin provides. The Policy and Information sections are the most popular with 60% of respondents finding the Policy section useful or very useful and 72.2% of respondents finding the Information section useful or very useful.

Resources and Publications

Since 2000 all AONTAS publications are available on the website and the Publications and Links section is the one most frequently visited after the Information Section. AONTAS also maintains a small collection of library resources which are used by AONTAS staff and Executive members to assist them in the completion of submissions, policy papers and research. Public requests usually come from students and researchers in adult and community education. Most resource requests come through the website but hard copy publications which are not on the website because they were published before 2000 are often requested by researchers. Publications most often downloaded for 2010 included the Adult Learner, the strategic plan consultation document and policy submissions.

The Adult Learner

The Adult Learner is the Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education founded in the mid 1980s as a collaborative project between AONTAS and the Adult Education Officers' Association. It is published annually and aims primarily to serve the needs of the adult education community in Ireland by providing a forum for critical reflection on the practices of teaching and learning. The journal aims to continue to make knowledge, research and writing accessible to the widest possible audience and emphasises the implications of critique for practice. The journal has a long established practice of giving priority to subject matter that addresses disadvantage, social exclusion, equality, workplace learning and the study of the teacher/student relationship. Community education, literacy, citizenship and access issues are also of importance in the journal. While the journal gives priority to papers from Ireland it also welcomes papers from those working in the international arena which may be of interest in the Irish context. The journal, calls for papers and guidelines for writers can be accessed on the AONTAS website under the publications and links section.

In-house Design

AONTAS endeavours to make the best use of its resources through staff training and development. In 2010 this enabled us to design a number of publications and resources internally including:

- Adult Learners' Festival Resources
- Teaching Council Submission
- Budget Submission
- AGM/GM Materials
- Senior Learner Network Materials
- Community Education Report
- Strategic Plan Consultation Materials.

Research

From September 2009 to June 2010, AONTAS carried out a major piece of research exploring the outcomes and impact of Department of Education and Skills (DES) funded community education.

This research is the first national study exploring the outcomes of community education. The study looked at whether learners experience benefits related to:

Progression (e.g moving on to other learning),

- Civic and political engagement (e.g. voting and volunteering);
- Social engagement (e.g. developing trust and tolerance of others);
- Health (e.g. self-esteem and eating more nutritious foods).

There were over 700 participants in this research, 683 of whom were community education learners who completed the main research tool which was a quantitative survey. The results provide policy-makers, providers and learners alike with evidence to make decisions about the support of and participation in community education. This information is of vital importance as difficult decisions are made about funding statutory services.

Findings show that community education:

- **Motivates learners to continue their learning.** Half the learners surveyed said they wanted to continue on to do an accredited course with their current provider and almost half indicated that every time someone does a course they should be able to gain certification. Seventy percent of learners surveyed said they wanted to continue on to learn a new skill as a result of their time in their community education.
- **Pays for itself.** Many community learners begin to volunteer as a result of their participation in community education. Even with conservative estimates, when this work is valued the return to the State on this volunteer work almost equals the funding provided for community education by DES.

- **Is very effective at developing the self-confidence of learners.** Eight-five percent of learners surveyed experienced positive change in their self-confidence and 80% experienced a positive change in their sense of purpose or hope.
- **Helps develop trust and tolerance in Irish society.** Sixty-four percent of learners surveyed indicated that they had experienced a positive change in accepting and understanding beliefs different to their own, while 60% said that they had experienced a positive change in being accepting and understanding of other cultures.
- **Helps some learners make healthier choices.** Forty-six percent of learners surveyed said they had started to exercise a bit more because of their experience in community education while 41% said they had started to eat more fruit and veg.

The study found this out and more, as well as making recommendations for the continued contribution of community education and strategies for enhancing its effectiveness. The research report entitled '**More than just a Course**' will be launched during the AONTAS Adult Learner's Festival in 2011 and will be available on the AONTAS website.



SECTION 4

REPRESENTATION

AONTAS continues to represent the adult and community education sector in Ireland at national and international venues, in particular representing the voice of adult learners. Organisations engaged with at a national level in 2010 are documented in the policy/promotion section of this report.

International Engagement

AONTAS is a member of the European Association of Education for Adults and the International Council for Adult Education. However we did not attend the Annual General assembly of the EAEA in 2010 which was held in Armenia, due to funding constraints. However BB represented the EAEA at a seminar in Brussels on the Action Plan for Lifelong Learning while the assembly was going on. She was part of a panel identifying policy issues for the future of lifelong learning in Europe.

In January and November BB attended conferences in Brussels and Copenhagen respectively on the evaluation and future development of the Grundtvig programme.

INFONET

InfoNet is a European network of editors in the field of Adult Education and Life Long Learning and a project within the framework of Lifelong Learning/ Grundtvig 4 (2005-2008/2008-2011). It:-

- provides a comprehensive, constantly growing database (InfoService) with reports (news, articles, background articles, interviews, etc.) related to adult education (currently around 600 articles)

- provides a thematic information letter (InfoLetter), issued every two months as a PDF file with links to the InfoService database
- has a network of around 25 correspondents (journalists/experts) all across Europe
- cooperates with important organisations and networks (e.g. EAEA).

InfoNet material is designed to be used by the media, as well as being used as a source of information for European institutions and others interested in European adult education issues. All texts are available in English and the original language, and they are written in accordance with special quality standards. InfoNet can currently be used free of charge, including reprinting the texts in the media. InfoNet can be accessed through its website at www.infonet-ae.eu

Berni Brady acts as the Irish correspondent and during the year contributed four articles and one background report as follows:-

A New Vision for Irish Education (05.01.2011, Article)

Teaching Adults: Profession or Vocation (15.02.2010, Article)

“This is why it’s worth it” (19.04.2010, Article)

Welcome to our World: Serving the Educational needs of Migrants in Ireland (27.09.2010, Article)

Adult Education in Ireland (09.2010, Background report)

The InfoNet Network holds an annual Milestone Conference which includes training workshops for correspondents and information inputs on adult education from the host country. The 2010 conference was held in Naples in October and was attended by Berni Brady.

Study Visits

AONTAS is regularly invited to deliver presentations and inputs for study groups from abroad, through Leargas and other organisations. AONTAS was invited by Leargas to give two presentations to visiting delegations in April and November 2010.

AONTAS also organised programmes for two language Denmark. These visits included presentations on various aspects of adult learning and organised visits to AONTAS members.

Grundtvig Learning Partnership

In August 2010 AONTAS was successful in an application for a Grundtvig Learning Partnership project together with a number of other European organisations. The project, entitled **'Sowing the Learning Seeds'** aims to share best practice of organising adult learning campaigns through specially themed weeks or Festivals. Participating learning organisations in the project are based in France, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia, Turkey and the Netherlands. The project includes a series of seminars on relevant themes to adult learning campaigns, which will be organised during Adult Learners' Weeks/Festivals in the participating countries. The first project planning meeting took place in Rheims, France in October 2010 with the second meeting organised to coincide with the AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival in 2011. Learning and examples of best practice during the project will be documented through a special Festival website.

Conference Presentations

'Developing a voice for the non-formal adult education sector – A case study of the AONTAS Community Education Network.'

DARE (Democracy and Human Rights Education Europe) conference: Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning, Glasgow. March 28th – 30th. Niamh O'Reilly, Head of Membership Services

'Our way of the highway – Analysing non-formal education as an alternative provider of higher level education.'

Pathways to Education: Connections Conference. University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology. April 28th -29th. Niamh O'Reilly

'AONTAS Senior Learner Network.'

Learning Age Conference: Learning in Later Life. WEA, Belfast 9th June. Niamh O'Reilly and PJ Gallagher.

'Method of assessing and describing informal and non-formal learning. Sharing the experience of the Irish Context.'

The DARE Focus Meeting "Citizenship Reloaded: The Demand for 'Active Citizenship' in Europe and its Implications for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)". Vilnius, Lithuania, July 1-3. Niamh O'Reilly

'The integration of Non-Formal Adult Learning in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.'
EAEA/NVL Conference 2010 The integration of non-formal adult learning in National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). Brussels, 25th – 26th November. Niamh O'Reilly

'Networks in Adult Education.'

Grundtvig Lecture Series, University of Essen 24th November. Berni Brady

Adult and Community Education in Ireland; the Role of the NGO,

Presentation to staff of the German Institute of Adult Education (DIE), Bonn, November 2010. Berni Brady

AONTAS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2010

Registration Number 80958

Charity Number 6719

Company Information

Directors	Ms. Marian Duffy (<i>President</i>) Ms. Loretta Needham (<i>Vice - President</i>) (<i>appointed May 2010</i>) Ms. Maria Gorman (<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>) Ms. Ruth Smith (<i>Hon. Secretary</i>) Ms. Deborah Brock Ms. Lorraine Cunningham (<i>appointed May 2010</i>) Ms. Linda Greene Mr. Michael Murray (<i>appointed May 2010</i>) Ms. Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha Ms. Elva O'Callaghan Mr. Lorne Patterson Mr. John Ryan Ms. Liz Waters Mr. Liam Kilbride (<i>appointed May 2010</i>) Ms. Jillian Harrison (<i>resigned October 2010</i>) Ms. Una Buckley (<i>term completed May 2010</i>) Ms. Mary Sweeney (<i>term completed May 2010</i>)	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
Secretary	Ms. Ruth Smith		

Directors' Report for the year ended 31st December 2010

The directors' present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2010.

Principal Activities, Business Review and Future Developments

The principal activity of the company 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 €8,157 (2009 - €4,687).

Going Concern

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

Directors

The liability of 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.

Directors' Report for the year ended 31st December 2010

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

Ms. Marian Duffy (*President*)

Ms. Loretta Needham (*Vice-President*)

Ms. Maria Gorman (*Hon. Treasurer*)

Ms. Ruth Smith (*Hon. Secretary*)

Ms. Deborah Brock

Ms. Lorraine Cunningham

Ms. Linda Greene

Mr. Michael Murray

Ms. Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha

Ms. Elva O'Callaghan

Mr. Lorne Patterson

Mr. John Ryan

Ms. Liz Waters

Mr. Liam Kilbride

There were no changes in members between 31st December 2010 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.

Directors' Report for the year ended 31st December 2010

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. The directors' are confident that the company has adequate financial resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

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.

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

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Date: 2nd April 2011

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

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Date: 2nd April 2011

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of AONTAS

We have audited the financial statements of AONTAS for the year ended 31st December 2010 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 2010 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: 2nd April 2011

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2010

		2010	2009
	Notes	€	€
INCOME			
Restricted and unrestricted funds	2	993,960	1,089,284
Resources Expended			
Administration			
Salary costs		168,899	178,382
Pension scheme		25,882	27,686
Staff training and expenses		8,310	10,956
Postage and courier services		15,460	20,221
Stationery		7,944	10,898
Telephone		8,133	7,702
Travel and subsistence		5,629	8,625
Executive and general committee expenses		11,041	8,932
Legal fees		55	624
Audit and accountancy fees		6,716	8,359
Bank interest and charges		770	824
Representation and affiliation		9,138	16,888
Miscellaneous		1,494	(438)
Rent of venues and equipment		850	1,000
Computer costs		2,271	938
Research and projects apportionments		(15,091)	(12,707)
		257,501	288,890
Premises			
Light and heat		3,718	3,841
Rent and rates		78,911	83,028
Repairs and maintenance		20,037	18,602
Leasing charges		6,688	8,829
Insurance		8,022	7,339
Cleaning		3,261	3,634
Depreciation of computers and office equipment		10,372	10,297
		131,009	135,570

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2010

	2010	2009
Notes	€	€
Development		
Salaries	300,653	317,991
Pension scheme	38,118	40,807
Consultants and contract staff	450	650
Travel and subsistence	681	3,094
Printing and publications	40,373	47,430
Conferences / seminars / membership meetings	27,453	54,522
Public relations strategy	5,110	6,434
Adult learner festival	96,932	84,449
Information resources	5,410	3,069
Recruitment	2,250	-
Childcare	150	255
Research and project apportionment	(23,743)	(33,130)
	493,837	525,571
Research and Projects		
Research	63,774	51,088
Quality Assurance Framework	38,888	41,196
BTEI men's participation research	-	12,056
Wheel training links project	-	11,870
InfoNet milestone conference	182	18,356
Grundtvig Sowing the Learning Seeds	612	-
	103,456	134,566

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2010

		2010	2009
	Notes	€	€
Income			
Total incoming resources	2	993,960	1,089,284
Resources Expended			
Total resources expended		(985,803)	(1,084,597)
Net surplus resources for year	10	8,157	4,687

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 43-45 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 2nd April 2011 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2010

		2010		2009	
	Notes	€	€	€	€
Fixed Assets					
Tangible Assets	7		12,128		22,126
Current Assets					
Debtors	8	11,652		29,511	
Cash at bank and in hand		234,999		231,176	
		246,651		260,687	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	9	(207,804)		(239,995)	
Net Current Assets			38,847		20,692
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities			50,975		42,818
Funds					
Unrestricted Funds	13		50,975		42,818
Total Funds			50,975		42,818

The notes on pages 43-48 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 2nd April 2011 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31st December 2010

		2010	2009
	Notes	€	€
Reconciliation of surplus to net cash inflow from operating activities			
Net incoming resources (before interest)		7,504	4,575
Depreciation		10,372	10,297
Decrease / (increase) in debtors		17,859	(4,382)
(Decrease) / increase in creditors		(32,191)	(75,834)
Net cash inflow from operating activities		3,544	(65,344)
Cash Flow Statement			
Net cash (outflow) / inflow from operating activities		3,544	(65,344)
Returns on investments and servicing of finance	11	653	112
Capital expenditure	11	(374)	-
(Decrease) / Increase in cash in the year		3,823	(65,232)
Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net funds (Note 12)			
Decrease in cash in the year		3,823	(65,232)
Net funds at 1st January 2010	12	231,176	296,408
Net funds at 31st December 2010		234,999	231,176

The notes on pages 41-48 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 2nd April 2011 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

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 Womens Quality Assurance 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 from the Department of Education and Science 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 2010

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 company 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 2010

	2010	2009
	€	€
Restricted Funds		
Department of Foreign Affairs - Irish Aid Research Grant	3,545	470
Department of Education and Science Grants:		
BTEI Research	4,402	12,055
Research	43,775	51,100
Quality Assurance Framework Project	38,887	41,197
FETAC Festival Sponsorship	-	17,000
TUI Festival Sponsorship	2,000	-
ICTU Festival Sponsorship	4,500	4,500
ASTI Festival Sponsorship	500	500
IOT Festival Sponsorship	1,500	-
The Wheel Training Links Grant	1,000	7,000
InfoNet Milestone Conference	-	18,356
Grundtvig Sowing the Learning Seeds	612	-
	100,721	152,178
Unrestricted Funds		
Department of Education and Science :	391,264	477,000
Grant in Aid (Core Funding)	474,764	438,500
S.P.I.D.A.S. supplement	23,678	22,430
Members' subscriptions	(200)	(2,306)
National conference	653	112
Bank interest received	3,080	1,370
Miscellaneous	893,239	937,106
Total Income	993,960	1,089,284

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

3. Net Incoming Resources for the year

	2010	2009
	€	€
Net Incoming Resources for the year is stated after charging:		
Depreciation of tangible assets	10,372	10,297
Operating lease rentals		
- Office equipment	6,688	8,829
Auditors' remuneration	6,716	6,840

4. Employees

	2010	2009
Number of employees		
The average monthly numbers of employees during the year were:	9	9
Employment costs	2010	2009
	€	€
Wages and salaries	469,552	496,373
Other pension costs	64,000	68,493
	533,552	564,866

5. Pension costs

The company 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 company in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by AONTAS to the fund and amount to €64,000 (2009 : €68,493).

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

6. Taxation

No charge to current or deferred taxation arises as the company 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 2010	64,306	33,100	49,519	146,925
Additions	-	374	-	374
Disposals	(993)	(21,761)	-	
At 31st December 2010	63,313	11,713	49,519	124,545
Depreciation				
At 1st January 2010	48,246	27,034	49,519	124,799
On Disposals	(993)	(21,761)	-	
Charge for the year	8,029	2,343	-	10,372
At 31st December 2010	55,282	7,616	49,519	112,417
Net book value				
At 31st December 2010	8,031	4,097	-	12,128
At 31st December 2009	16,060	6,066	-	22,126

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

8. Debtors

	2010	2009
	€	€
Other debtors	11,652	29,511

9. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2010	2009
	€	€
Trade creditors	-	9,052
Deferred income	199,902	222,751
Accruals	7,902	8,192
	207,804	239,995

10. Reconciliation of movements in funds

	Statement of Financial Activities	Total
	2010	2009
	€	€
Fund balance at beginning of year	42,818	38,131
Net movement in funds	8,157	4,687
Fund balance at end of year	50,975	42,818

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

11. Gross Cash Flows

	2010	2009
	€	€
Returns on investments and servicing of finance		
Interest received	653	112
Capital expenditure		
Payments to acquire tangible assets	374	-

12. Analysis of changes in net funds

	Opening balance	Cash flows	Closing balance
	€	€	€
Cash at bank and in hand	231,176	3,823	234,999
Net funds	231,176	3,823	234,999

13. Reserves

	Balance at beginning of year	Incoming resources	Balance expended	Balance at end of year
	€	€	€	€
Specific Funds:				
Restricted grants	-	100,721	100,721	-
Unrestricted grants	42,818	893,239	885,082	50,975
	42,818	993,960	985,803	50,975

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.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2010

15. Status

The liability of the members is limited.

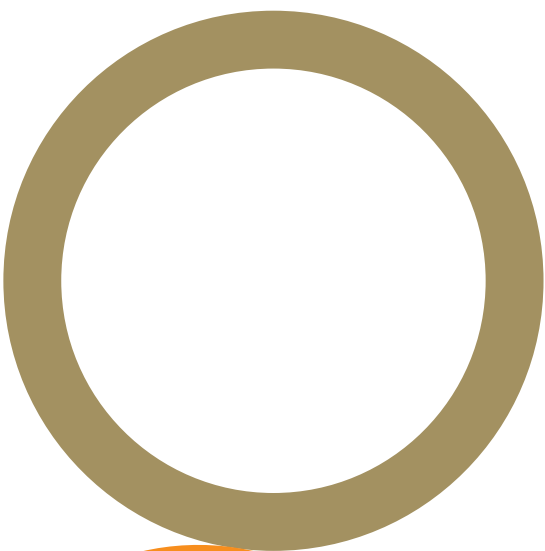
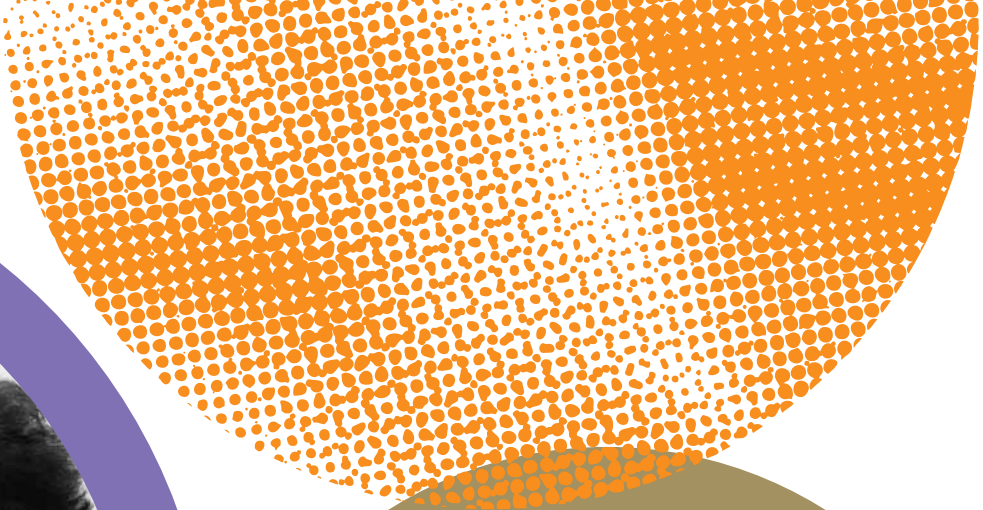
Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while they are members or within one year thereafter for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before they ceased to be members and the costs, charges and 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 2nd April 2011 and signed on its behalf by

Ms. Marian Duffy
President

Ms. Maria Gorman
Hon. Treasurer



AONTAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President

Marian Duffy (*Co Carlow VEC*)

Vice President

Loretta Needham (*Society of
St Vincent De Paul*)

Hon. Treasurer

Maria Gorman (*Kerry Education
Service*)

Hon. Secretary

Ruth Smith (*Tipperary Women's
Network*)

Organisational Members

Lorne Patterson (*Longford
Women's Link*)

John Ryan (*City of Limerick
VEC*)

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha (*Adult
Education Officers' Association*)

Elva O'Callaghan (*NCCWN*)

Liz Waters (*An Cosan*)

Linda Greene (*Clondalkin
Womens Network*)

Deborah Brock (*Tallaght/Dodder
Valley Partnership*)

Micheal Murray, *NUI/Maynooth*

Lorraine Cunningham, *Blaney
Blades, Monaghan*

Individual Members

Liam Kilbride

Jillian Harrison

Resigned October 2010

AONTAS STAFF

Berni Brady

Director

Jacinta Cuthbert

*Head of Organisational
Development*

Niamh O'Reilly

Head of Membership Services

Niamh Farren

Communications Officer

Jenny Gunning

*Information and Research Officer,
died April 6th 2010*

Ciara Murphy

*Resource and Communications
Officer, left September 2010*

Eleonora Peruffo

Administrator

Dympna Larkin

Membership Liaison Officer

Kathryn Laing

Receptionist/Clerical Officer

AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation

2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Tel: (01) 406 8220/1

Fax: (01) 406 8227

Email: mail@aontas.com

www.aontas.com