

BREAK GENDER STEREOTYPES, GIVE TALENT A CHANCE

Review of the national situation for the purpose of
the workshop in IRELAND

2008



Document produced in the framework of the Contract "Raising the awareness of companies about combating gender stereotypes", commissioned by the European Commission to the International Training Centre of the ILO in partnership with EUROCHAMBRES.

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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

The programme has six general objectives:

- (1) to improve the knowledge and understanding of the situation prevailing in the Member States (and in other participating countries) through the analysis, evaluation and close monitoring of policies;*
- (2) to support the development of statistical tools and methods and common indicators, where appropriate broken down by gender and age group, in the areas covered by the programme;*
- (3) to support and monitor the implementation of Community law, where applicable, and policy objectives in the Member States, and assess their effectiveness and impact;*
- (4) to promote networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches at EU level;*
- (5) to enhance the awareness of the stakeholders and the general public about the EU's policies and objectives pursued under each of the policy sections;*
- (6) to boost the capacity of key EU networks to promote, support and further develop EU policies and objectives, where applicable.*

For further information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_fr.html.

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FOREWORD

Does the European economy manage to make full use of its human capital?

This document intends to contribute to this discussion, from the perspective of gender equality.

This document has been prepared in the framework of the contract “Raising the awareness of companies about combating gender stereotypes” commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to the International Training Centre of the ILO in partnership with the association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES).

The initiative, which involves Chambers of Commerce and SME organizations in 15 EU Countries¹, aims to help SMEs discover how overcoming gender stereotypes can have a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. On this purpose, 15 workshops on “Break Gender Stereotypes, Give Talent a Chance” are organized for business relays and SME managers in the selected countries.

The Country Reviews do not have the ambition to give an exhaustive picture of gender issues in the labour markets of the 15 countries. They rather aim to enrich the workshops and the tools presented therein with country-specific information. They collect up-to-date statistical data and qualitative information on the different ways in which women and men enter and progress into employment and occupations in the various countries. In addition, information on existing legislative provisions, public and private initiatives and good practices is provided. Suggestions on the impact of gender stereotypes are also offered, to initiate dialogue and action at enterprise level.

The final aim is to offer concrete suggestions on how SMEs in the selected countries can overcome gender stereotypes and tap the business potential of gender equality.

¹ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain

1. STATISTICS

Table 1: Statistical data

Demography and Employment	Ireland			EU27		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1. Total population 2007 (figure in 1000)	2,157	2,158	4,315	241,671	253,457	495,128
(Figure in %)	50.0	50.0	100.0	48.8	51.2	100.0
2. Life expectancy 2005 (%)	77.1	81.8	78.4	75.4	81.5	:
3. Fertility rates 2005 (%)	1.88			1.51 ^b		
4. Employment rate 2007 (%)	77.4	60.6	69.1	72.5	58.3	65.4
5. Unemployment Rate 2007 (%)	4.9	4.2	4.6	6.5	7.8	7.1
6. Activity rate 2007 (%)	81.4	63.3	72.4	77.6	63.3	70.5
7. Youth unemployment rate 2007 (%)	10.0	8.1	9.1	15.2	15.8	15.5
8. Long term unemployment rate 2007 (%)	1.7	0.9	1.4	5.6	6.6	6.0
9. Part-time work 2006 (%)	7.2 ^d	32.3 ^d	18.0 ^d	4.4	25.8	14.4
10. Employees 2007q04 (1000)	907	854	1,761	97,388	86,042	183,430
11. Self-employment 2007q04 (1000)	197	40	237	15,491	7,417	22,908
12. Entrepreneurs 2007q04 (1000)	103	22	125	7,574	2,375	9,949
13. Average hourly pay 2002 (in euro)	18.29	13.47	16.20	13.79 ^c	10.40 ^c	12.56 ^c
14. Gender Pay Gap in unadjusted form 2006 ^e	9			15		
15. Participation in decision-making 2007						
National Parliaments (%)	87	13	100	76	24	100
President in largest publicly quoted companies (%)	95	5	100	97	3	100
Member of highest decision-making body in largest publicly quoted companies (%)	93	7	100	90	10	100
GEM Value 2007	0.699			:		
GEM Rank 2007	19			:		
16. Graduations of women and men in tertiary education 2004						
ISCED 5 (%)	42.8	57.2	100	40.8 ^c	59.2 ^c	100 ^c
(Ratio Women/Men)	1.3			1.4 ^c		
ISCED 6 (%)	54.3	45.7	100	56.8 ^c	43.2 ^c	100 ^c
(Ratio Women/Men)	0.8			0.8 ^c		
17. Single-headed households, 2005 (%)	:	:	:	14 ^c	14 ^c	:
18. Children in childcare aged 0-2 years, 1-29hrs/30+hrs 2006 (%)	13/5			14/12		
19. Children in childcare aged 3 to mandatory school ages, 1-29hrs/30+hrs 2006 (%)	80/13			44/40		

NOTES: a - 2004, b - 2005, c - EU25, d - Eurostat 2007, e - Estimation, g - The Pay Gap is the difference between men's and women's average gross hourly earnings as percentage of men's average gross hourly earnings (for paid employees), p - Provisional, : - No data

Source: European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2008 compendium*. Except:

1, 10, 11, 12: Eurostat Database

2, 3: Eurostat News Release, "A statistical illustration of the situation of women and men in the EU27", 32/2007, March 2007 and UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/08, Table 1

13: Eurostat, «Salaires bruts en Europe, Principaux résultats de l'enquête sur la structure des salaires 2002», *Statistiques en bref, population et conditions sociales*, 12/2005, Communautés européennes, 2005

15: European Commission, DG EMPL, Database on women and men in decision-making and the Human Development Report 2007/2008 (for the GEM rank and value)

16, 17: European Commission, *The life of women and men in Europe – A statistical portrait*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008

18, 19 (EU27 data): Commission of the European Communities, *Commission staff working document accompanying document to the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school-age children*, Brussels, 2008. {COM (2008) 598}

2. SITUATION AND STEREOTYPES

2.1. WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

There has been a significant increase in women's labour market participation in Ireland over the past decade. In 1995 the number of women in employment was 482,900, with a fifth working part-time. By 2006 there were 879,800 women active in the workforce. This represents an increase of 83% in the number of working women over eleven years, with an increase of 67% in the number of women working full time and a trebling of the number of women working part-time. Women represented 42.8% of the labour force in 2007. The employment rate for men increased from 69.1% in 1997 to 77.4% in 2007².

In Ireland, women are significantly more likely to be looking after the family if not in the labour force. Women are more likely than men to leave employment or to change employers to obtain part-time employment when they have children or other family responsibilities. Indeed, still a fifth of working women work part-time. The National Centre for Partnership and Performance, a Government think-tank, has commented that "women who take career breaks to care for children often face significant barriers to re-enter the workforce representing a labour market constraint that needs to be addressed. Highly skilled women face particular difficulties in re-entering the workforce at an appropriate level."

Young women are much more likely than their mothers to be working or looking for a job. In addition, among women aged 25 to 54 who have two or more children below age 16, the full-time employment rate is only 22%³.

Ireland had the lowest reported rate of unemployment among men and women aged 55 to 64 in the EU in 2006. However, on the other hand, the female employment rate for women aged 55-64 years has almost doubled over the period 1997-2007, but is still very low by EU standards⁴.

² Kavanagh M., *Women, Learning, and the Labour Market in Ireland - Irish country report for inclusion in the EAEA study on Gender Aspects in Lifelong Learning*, AONTAS – The National Adult Learning Organisation, June 2007

³ Cournède B., *Removing Obstacles to Employment for Women in Ireland*, Economics Department Working Papers no. 511, ECO/WKP(2006)39, OECD, September 2006

⁴ European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2008 compendium*

2.2. OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Occupational gender segregation refers to differences between genders in employment occupations. Despite the reduction of the gender employment gap in most EU countries in recent years, employment in the EU remains highly segregated. Women are over represented in some occupations and economic sectors, such as services and care professions, and under-represented in others, such as scientists and engineers. As a consequence of segregated labour markets there is an under-representation of women in sectors crucial for economic development.

Ireland is one of the countries with the highest rates of labour market segregation in the EU. The rates of gender segregation in Ireland stand at 22.7 in economic sectors, one of the highest in the EU, and 26.8 in occupations in 2005. These indexes measure gender segregation in the labour market; the higher the value of both indexes, the higher the segregation biased against women. However, as with all indicators, the index should be interpreted within a specific context as well as its individual components and care should be taken in cross-country comparisons. Women in Ireland predominate in caring roles, which are often less well paid. The following table shows the gender segregation index in occupations and economic sectors in Ireland.

Table 2: Country Segregation Index 2005⁵

	Gender segregation in occupations	Gender segregation in economic sectors
Ireland	26.8	22.7
EU27	24.9	17.8

Source: European Commission, *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis 2008 compendium*, pp. 52-53.

In Ireland, six sectors of activity employed just over 64.5% of all working women in 2005, all of them involving the supply of market or public services. These sectors are, as indicated in the table below: health care and social services, retailing, education, hotels and restaurants, business activities and public administration. These same six sectors, however, accounted for only 31% of men in employment. Men concentrate in the construction sector, agriculture and retail trade, although the degree of concentration for men is much lower than for women (except for construction). The following table shows the concentration of men and women in sectors of activities.

⁵ The concentration of men and women in different occupations and economic sectors is measured with an occupational segregation index. Gender segregation in occupations is calculated as the average national share of employment for women and men applied to each occupation; differences are added up to produce the total amount of gender imbalance expressed as a proportion of total employment. Gender segregation in economic sectors is calculated as the average national share of employment for women and men applied to each sector; differences are added up to produce the total amount of gender imbalance expressed as a proportion of total employment.

Table 3: Concentration of men and women in sectors of activities (NACE two digit)⁶

% of women employed	IE	EU25	% of men employed	IE	EU25
Health & Social work	18.9	17.2	Construction	20.7	13.0
Retail trade	13.5	12.5	Agriculture	8.9	5.2
Education	10.7	11.4	Retail trade	5.7	6.3
Hotels & restaurants	8.0	5.1	Business activities	5.3	6.1
Business activities	7.4	7.3	Land transport	4.5	4.2
Public administration	6.0	7.3	Public administration	4.4	7.2
Financial intermediation	3.1	2.2	Hotels & restaurants	4.1	3.4
Other service activities	2.8	2.6	Wholesale trade	3.3	4.1
Cultural & sporting activities	2.4	2.1	Manufacture food & beverages	3.3	2.5
Manufacture food & beverages	2.1	2.2	Education	3.2	3.8
Wholesale trade	1.9	2.6	Health & Social work	3.0	4.0
Construction	1.5	1.5	Vehicle sale & repair	3.0	3.2
Agriculture	1.3	3.8	Metal products	1.4	3.1
Private households	0.8	2.3	Machinery	0.8	2.7
Top 6	64.5	60.8	Top 6	49.6	41.9

Note: Persons aged 15 years and over. No distinction is made between private and public sectors. The top six are according to the EU average which may not coincide with the top six in each country. In the adaptation we have made we have ordered the sectors according to the country importance, but some important sectors might not appear.

Source: Adapted from "The concentration of women and men in Sectors of Activity", *Statistics in Focus publication (Population and Social Conditions, 53/2007 - NACE 2 digit)*, and for a comparison with EU aggregated data see "European Business: Facts and figures 2008", ISBN 978-92-79-07024-2 available from the Eurostat web page.

Table 4 shows how women and men concentrate in different occupations in Ireland. The concentration of Irish men and women in the top 6 occupations is higher than the EU average. As in the rest of the EU, in Ireland women tend to concentrate into fewer occupations than men. Most Irish women work as shop salespersons and demonstrators, housekeeping and restaurant services workers, personal care and related workers and administrative workers. Many of these professions are traditionally considered to be feminine (nurses, child care) and are often undervalued in society and thus less well paid. Men concentrate in very different occupations to women, mainly as managers of small enterprises, motor vehicle drivers, and high skilled manual workers. These occupations are generally better paid and have more social recognition than the occupations in which women are concentrated.

⁶ NACE is an international classification of economic activities. The digits indicate the level of disaggregation: the higher the value the more level of disaggregation.

Table 4: Occupational patterns of women's and men's employment (ISCO three digit)⁷

% of women employed	IE	EU25	% of men employed	IE	EU25
Shop salespersons & demonstrators	10.4	8.0	Managers of small enterprises	11.8	4.4
Other office clerks	7.1	5.2	Building frame & related trades workers	8.0	4.7
Housekeeping & restaurant services workers	6.3	3.9	Motor vehicle drivers	5.8	5.2
Personal care & related workers	6.1	6.6	Building finishers & related trades workers	5.0	4.0
Secretaries & keyboard-operating clerks	5.4	3.7	Production & operations department managers	3.8	2.6
Domestic & related helpers, cleaners & launderers	4.3	7.6	Machinery mechanics & fitters professionals	3.7	3.5
Managers of small enterprises	4.0	2.9	Architects, engineers & related professionals	3.4	3.1
Finance & sales associate professionals	1.8	2.9	Shop salespersons & demonstrators	3.4	2.6
Administrative associate professionals	0.3	4.4	Finance & sales associate professionals	2.4	3.3
Nursing & midwifery associate professionals	0.2	2.6	Physical & engineering science technicians	1.6	3.6
Top 6 in each country	41.2	35.6	Top 6 in each country	38.0	25.5

Note: The top six occupations are listed according to the EU average, and may not coincide with the top six in each country. In the adaptation the occupations are ordered according to the country importance, but some important occupations might not appear.

Source: Adapted from "The concentration of women and men in Sectors of Activity", *Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions* 53/2007.

The figures indicated in the *Report on Equality between Women and Men* (European Commission, 2008) for Ireland's distribution by sex for managers show an increase in women in decision making positions rising from 27.3% in 2001 to 30.2% in 2006. However, the involvement of women in decision-making, at both enterprise and political levels on the home stage is still comparatively low. In the private sector, boardrooms and senior executive positions remain largely male dominated. Among the top 50 companies in Ireland, female representation is only 5 per cent among chief executives⁸. Small numbers of women are beginning to achieve partnership in leading accounting and legal firms, but overall women in Ireland remain underrepresented in economical and political decision-making positions.

Table 5: Distribution of managers by sex in EU Member States – 2001 and 2006 (%)

	Women	Men	Women	Men
	2001		2006	
Ireland	27.3	72.7	30.2	69.8
EU27	30.1	69.9	32.6	67.4

Note: EU aggregate for 2001 is the value for EU-25 and not EU-27.

Source: Adapted from the *Report on equality between women and men*, pp.32. (European Commission, 2008. ISCO 12 and 13).

⁷ ISCO is an international classification of occupations. The digits also indicate the level of disaggregation: the higher the value the more level of disaggregation.

⁸ European Commission, DG EMPL, Database on women and men in decision-making

2.3. THE ROLE OF SMES

Research carried out by the Small Business Forum⁹ indicates that over 97% of businesses in Ireland today are small, that is, employ fewer than 50 people. Small workplaces accounted for over 60% of the workforce (1,262,900 people) in the second quarter of 2006. They form an essential part of the supply chain for larger firms, and in particular are part of the support infrastructure needed to attract and retain foreign investment¹⁰.

The same proportion of males and females employed in small workplaces are classified as highly skilled non-manual (37%). In contrast, almost 61% of females in employment in small workplaces are classified as working in low skilled or elementary occupations compared to just 24% of males. Employment in wholesale and retail trade, construction, and financial and other business services accounted for over 44% of the total number of persons employed in small workplaces in the second quarter of 2006¹¹.

While indigenous companies have traditionally focused on local markets, and are crucial in the supply chain for larger companies, some small companies are beginning to recognize the potential in international markets and growing to capitalise on opportunities. The Small Business Forum highlighted weak management capability and the lack of innovation as the important challenges faced by small businesses in Ireland¹².

Regarding entrepreneurship, it is much more common among Irish men than Irish women. One in ten Irish men (10.5%), compared to one in twenty-four Irish women (4.2%), are early stage entrepreneurs. Men are 2.3 times more likely than women to be a nascent entrepreneur and nearly three times more likely than women to be new firm entrepreneurs. In terms of established entrepreneurs, men are more than three and half times more likely than women to be established entrepreneurs¹³.

2.4 GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotyping exists in all sectors in Ireland. It may diminish the opportunities of women and men in the workplace, and reinforce inequalities experienced by women in access to resources, power and respect. Gender stereotyping is the generalisation of what roles, occupations and work is appropriate to women and men, often justified by tradition, and inaccurate generalisations arising from the limitations in choice for men and women. Stereotyping limits choice, inhibits innovation and prevents effective problem solving. Generally speaking gender stereotypes are being reinforced, not changed. Women tend to work in jobs that involve caring, nurturing and providing services for people while men monopolise senior managerial positions and manual jobs which involve using machinery or production processes regarded as physically onerous.

Given the gender segregation patterns visible in the Irish labour market, the predominance of women as housewives and carers, and the continued segregation in education, it is safe to assume that gender stereotyping exists in Ireland. The challenge is to build awareness about the impact of gender stereotyping

⁹ *Small Business is Big Business – Report of the Small Business Forum*, The Small Business Forum, May 2006

¹⁰ *Small Business in Ireland*, Stationery Office, Dublin, Ireland, May 2010

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Fitzsimons p., O’Gorman C., *Entrepreneurship in Ireland in 2006 - The Irish Annual Report*, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)

¹³ Ibid

for the SMEs, in particular the loss of skill, and innovation that involves the early exit of women from the labour market, and the underestimation of women's management and leadership skills.

Women in employment have been shown to have higher educational qualifications than their male counterparts. There are, therefore, other factors that clearly impact on the ability of women to translate educational qualifications into greater participation in higher paid employment. Recent research¹⁴ suggests that subject choice at third-level (and before) determines the areas in which women work. The study also found that women were more likely than men to opt for careers in the public sector and caring professions. The research focused on the experience of graduates who had completed third level education three years previously and found that the gender pay gap had clearly emerged during this three-year period.

The Forum on the Workplace for the Future 2005 found from a survey done with 8000 employees in both public and private sectors that "women receive less training than men, have less discretion over their work, receive less information in the workplace and have high levels of work stress"¹⁵. Female workers in the private sector also receive less training than their male counterparts, which creates a real discrimination against women, as work-related training can have a strong influence on earnings, job security or career prospects. Education and training are central to the advancement of women as they enter or advance through the labour market and it is a key element for women who wish to re-enter the labour market after a maternity leave. The position is no better in the public life. In 2007 13% of public representatives (TDs) in Dail Eireann (national parliament) were women, well below the average EU rate of 23%¹⁶.

¹⁴ National Women's Council of Ireland, *National Women's Strategy 2007-2016*, April 2007

¹⁵ Kavanagh M., *Women, Learning, and the Labour Market in Ireland - Irish country report for inclusion in the EAEA study on Gender Aspects in Lifelong Learning*, AONTAS – The National Adult Learning Organisation, June 2007

¹⁶ European Commission, *Report on Equality between Women and Men 2008*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008

3. SUCCESS STORIES

The Equality Authority¹⁷

The Equality Authority chairs programmes aimed at promoting best practice in delivering planned and systematic approaches in the workplace, supported by the social partners. This includes the Equality Review Programme and the Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise Programme. The Equality Review Programme, funded through the Department of Justice, equality and Law Reform, was developed to support organisational examinations of practices, perceptions, policies and procedures to reveal good practice and areas for improvement to promote equal opportunities. The Equal Opportunities at the level of the Enterprise Committee, with membership of representatives from the employers organisations, the trade unions and government departments produced two sets of Guidelines for Enterprises, '*Guidelines for Best Practice in Relation to Equal Opportunities Policy*' and '*Guidelines for Equality Training*'. In addition, the Committee provides support to SMEs. Funding is provided to the SME to engage equality expertise to promote employment equality policies and deliver equality and diversity training. These responses demonstrate the willingness, when provided with a supportive context, on the part of employers and employees to put in place best practice measures and play their role in achieving equality. The Equality Authority has developed initiatives on the issue of stereotyping, including research on inequality and the stereotyping of young people and background papers on gender stereotyping in marketing.

National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies¹⁸

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment chairs the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies. The Committee was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and continues under the current National Agreement. Its membership is made up of representatives from employer's organisations, trade unions, government departments and the Equality Authority. The National Framework Committee has developed a support scheme to assist in the development of planned and systematic approaches to work-life balance at enterprise level. Under this scheme, an experienced consultant can be made available to work with small to medium sized enterprises in developing and implementing work life balance policies and arrangements. In addition the Committee supports the annual Work Life Balance Day.

Supporting Women Entrepreneurs Locally (SWELL)

In Longford, a small town in a rural area with limited employment opportunities, barriers to self-employment were regarded as particularly serious. Longford Women's Link identified the low level of entrepreneurial activity among women as a critical issue. The research showed particular difficulties for women trying to earn money by working for themselves: in obtaining information; in obtaining start-up finance; and in trying to balance a working life with roles as a parent or partner or carer. To redress this issue, five local agencies Longford Women's Centre, Longford County enterprise Board, Longford County Development Board, Longford Community Resources Ltd and County Longford Vocational Education Committee formed the Longford EQUAL Development Partnership. The project was called SWELL-Supporting Women Entrepreneurs Locally in Longford.

¹⁷ More information at: <http://www.equality.ie/>

¹⁸ More information at <http://www.worklifebalance.ie/>

The project involves:

- 'One-stop' information service through the Women's centre, in an atmosphere where women feel comfortable and encouraged to ask questions;
- Pre-enterprise training that will build women's self-belief in their own skills and abilities;
- One-to-one mentoring support service, where in a confidential and sympathetic setting women can obtain information specific to their needs and issues as well as discuss the balancing of work and family commitments;
- Referral to key local agencies and support structures with whom the Women's Link has developed relationships;
- Networking with women in business networks.

Women in Science & Engineering Research (WiSER)¹⁹

The centre for Women in Science & Engineering Research (WiSER) is a project in Trinity College Dublin. WiSER seeks to develop sustainable practices to ensure that women can compete in research on an equal basis using their scientific expertise, knowledge and potential. WiSER research has revealed that despite knowledge of the barriers experienced by women in Trinity College Dublin and concerted effort on a number of fronts, gender inequality persists. The website identifies that:

- Within the EU-25 women make up 30% of undergraduates and 36% of PhD students in science and engineering, but only 9% of full professors; and
- In Trinity College, women account for 43% of undergraduates in science and engineering, but this drops to only 4% at full-professor level.²⁰

The WiSER project was established to devise practical strategies to prevent this loss of skill, knowledge and talent. WiSER runs a wide variety of activities throughout the year which aim to increase the representation of women in science and engineering. Some are directed specifically at women in the college, including seminars, training, workshops and other networking opportunities. Others, like the WiSER conference, aim to engage in the wider debate about the position of women.

¹⁹ More information at <http://www.psu.edu/spacegrant/wiser/>

²⁰ More details on the Website of the project, at www.tcd.ie/wiser/

4. SUPPORT

In 2007 the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform produced the National Women's Strategy. This Strategy covers a ten-year period and *"aims to provide a framework within which the outstanding gaps in the position of women in Irish society will be addressed"*. It highlights Ireland's approach to gender equality with three elements: firstly, the Constitution, backed up with detailed legislative provisions, which creates the fundamental entitlement to equality; secondly, the introduction of the concept of gender mainstreaming in public policy making albeit in a limited way; and thirdly, positive action measures to address gender inequality. Membership of the European Union is viewed by many as historically significant to the promotion of gender equality legislation in Ireland. This Strategy is to be monitored through a Committee, consisting of the social partners.

An Inter-Departmental Committee identified a broad range of different fields of government, economic and social activity that impact upon the lives of women in Ireland today. Three key themes have been identified to encompass the holistic approach and these are

- Equalising socio- economic opportunity for women;
- Ensuring the well-being of women; and
- Engaging as equal and active citizens.

The main Constitutional reference to equality appears in Article 40.1 while the position of women in Irish society is addressed in Article 41.2. There is considerable debate as to the function of these articles in Irish society, some arguing that they support gender stereotyping, and others arguing that they support the 'family'. An All-Party Oireachtas Committee and the Constitution Review Group are two bodies that have argued the need to make the articles gender neutral. The recommendations of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee are contained in a report on a much wider brief in relation to the family and are under consideration by the relevant Departments now.

There is Irish legislation specific to the position of women in Ireland, some more general and applying to all citizens but of particular relevance to the role of women in Irish society. Among the more relevant enactments are the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004, and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, which outlaw discrimination in employment and in the supply of goods and services on nine grounds, including gender. The acts cover most aspects of employment, including advertising, pay, dismissal and collective agreements, and apply to all types of employment. The Equality Act 2004, which came into force on the 19th of July 2004 amends and consolidates the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000. It also gives effect to EC directives on equal treatment of men and women, equal treatment employment directive and race discrimination.

In addition to employment equality and equal status legislation there are the:

- Maternity Protection Acts 1994 and 2004, which provide for maternity leave and other facilities, the Adoptive Leave Act 1995;
- Parental Leave Acts 1998 and 2006;
- Carer's Leave Act 2001;
- Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act 2001;

- Protection of Employees (Fixed-term Work) Act 2003;
- National Minimum Wage Act 2000;

Harassment, also defined in the Equality Acts, is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine grounds, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It includes unwanted conduct, may include acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. The Equality Authority has published a Code of Practice on Harassment and Sexual Harassment at Work, which has been approved by the Minister (S.I. No 78 of 2002). Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Positive Action recognises that certain groups in society have been disadvantaged, and the Acts permit employers to take steps with a view to ensuring full equality in practice between employees on all of the nine discriminatory grounds.

ACRONYMS

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EU25	The 25 Member Countries of the European Union (from May 2004 to December 2006)
EU27	The 27 Member Countries of the European Union (as from January 2007)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GNP	Gross National Product
IE	Ireland
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
NACE	Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Program