

AGREED
Department of Justice and Equality
National Women's Strategy 2017- 2020

Meeting of the Strategy Committee
3 October 2018, 10:00

The attendance list is appended.

1. Opening remarks and welcome

Minister Stanton opened proceedings, welcomed new members and expressed the Committee's appreciation to outgoing members. He also noted apologies from those who could not attend the meeting.

2. & 3. Agenda and Minutes of Previous Meeting

The agenda was adopted, with the addition of an item under AOB. The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted without comment.

4. Information items

Minister Stanton welcomed Dr Helen Russell and Dr Fran McGinnity to present on the recent ESRI/Pobal joint publication, "*Maternal employment and the cost of childcare in Ireland*". Dr Russell's and Dr McGinnity's presentation discussed the background of the study, its motivation and research questions, its sources, key conclusions that emerged and their policy implications. A link to the report is provided with these minutes¹.

Minister Stanton also welcomed Ms Caroline O'Loughlin from the Expenditure Reform Division of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to brief the Committee on progress on the Equality Budgeting Initiative to progress action 6.14 of the Strategy. Ms O'Loughlin outlined the Programme for Government commitments which promoted the initiative, the policy-based approach taken drawing on international best practice on equality budgeting, and the scope of the pilot launched in Budget 2018 highlighting the six programme areas involved. She set out the next steps planned for expanding the programme, with new areas to be announced in the Budget 2019 speech and additional metrics to be included in the Revised Estimates (REV). Ms Donegan (Dept of Finance) noted tax adjustments could also feature, with allowances for disabled drivers as an example, and undertook to provide some figures on this. Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) advised the NWCI was to conduct a post-budget analysis on 17 October and invited Committee members to attend.

¹ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/maternal-employment-and-the-cost-of-childcare-in-ireland>

Minister Stanton thanked the speakers for their presentations. The Secretariat undertook to keep the Committee informed of developments on these matters.

A note was circulated from the IFA regarding an online survey its Diversity committee was carrying out to learn how best to support women to get involved in the Association.

5. Discussion items

The Committee discussed a short note from the Secretariat on financial provision made by Departments in 2018 to implement actions for which they have responsibility. The Secretariat highlighted that many actions were progressed through mainstreaming, and would not have a separate provision. It was agreed to carry out the exercise again in respect of provisions for the following financial year.

With a view to advising on the scope of future work on Action 4.14, regarding women's representation and progress in local participation structures, the Committee discussed experiences women's community organisations have had with local participation structures, and practices that helped or hindered women in such organisations to get involved in local structures.

Ms Holt (NCCWN) observed that there were fewer routes for women to participate in local structures, with 17 community projects outside SICAP and Traveller projects getting smaller, and that research was needed to get a complete picture of the situation. Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) said the sector had been negatively impacted by reduced funding. She mentioned the NWCI had submitted a proposal with NUIM to the Irish Research Council COALESCE Research Fund on women's rural development and leadership and was on the reserve list, and had also submitted a proposal to D/HPLG for a survey of current post holders in local government to identify barriers and supports to women's progress. Issues such as childcare, transport, and culture came into play. Noting the 2019 local elections, she suggested gender quotas at local level. With considerable investment being put into rural development at present, the NWCI felt this should be tracked to monitor its impact and where it was going. Ms Joyce (NTWF) observed that there were key challenges for Traveller women to access consultative spaces, with the NCCWN and Traveller women's groups outside of SICAP, and challenges with representing Travellers on Public Participation Networks. Ms Joyce also supported a quota system in local elections, with minority quotas so that marginalised women are given a chance and all of society is reflected in the results. She undertook to forward a note on the needs of Traveller and Roma community women to the Secretariat. Ms Doyle (Community Platform) felt the sector had seen a lot of reversal, compared to the support area-based partnerships had received in the past. There was a need for reflection at local level if the intention is to move more women into politics. She noted, by way of example, that there was no women's network in Galway. Ms O'Brien (DFAT) advised that the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, under review this year, offered opportunities to women in local structures.

The Secretariat advised that it planned to consult further with the relevant Departments and stakeholders having regard to the Committee's observations and would set out a workplan for this action. The Minister thanked Committee for their contributions and urged members to send in relevant ideas to the Secretariat.

6. Review of progress

Draft of first annual progress report (2017/2018)

The Secretariat updated the Committee on the preparation of the draft progress report for 2017/2018. It was intended that the report would be published in due course, after it was submitted and noted at Cabinet Committee level. Ms Walsh (Dept of Justice & Equality) undertook to forward a note on developments on violence against women. Minister Stanton asked for any comments on the draft to be provided by 12 October.

Progress with Indicators and Targets

The Secretariat presented progress since the last meeting to produce a set of indicators for each action and corresponding data, and thanked Departments and Committee members for their contributions. It was proposed to view this as a working text that would be added to as the knowledge base grew.

September 2018 Traffic light status report

Minister Stanton thanked Departments for contributing status updates to the September traffic light report. The floor was opened to comments and questions from the Committee members.

Ms Joyce (NTWF) asked if more detail could be provided in relation to the Traveller and Roma communities, in particular as regards Action 3.11 on public life, and Action 2.9 on health, and suggested incorporating the health implementation plan being developed within NITRIS. In response to a question from Ms Doyle (Community Platform) on the mainstreaming of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into all Departments, it was clarified that this was being pursued by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Ms O'Connor (Dept of Employment Affairs & Social Policy) briefed the Committee on developments under Action 1.41 since the Roadmap for Pensions Reform was published in February. She advised that a national consultation process on a proposal for an automatic enrolment system to improve coverage and adequacy of pension coverage by women would close in November. The gender dimension of the Total Contributions Approach (TCA) reform process was being monitored. Among the matters being examined was the number of years required for a full pension. Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) expressed concern that the gender impact analysis process appeared to be taking place after amendments were implemented, and that the operating assumptions would be robust. Ms O'Connor undertook to bring the concerns expressed to her colleagues and set up meetings if required. Noting the proposals, Ms Joyce (NTWF) observed that getting into the employment market was the major barrier for Traveller women, and that the most significant employer for

Traveller women was still the Traveller participation structures at both national and local levels.

Mr Hurley (Dept of Justice & Equality) advised, in regard to Action 3.1 on the proposed referendum on Article 41.2 of the Constitution, that the Government had announced its intention to proceed by way of simple deletion, as this was considered the least risky option. The Joint Oireachtas Committee decided not to waive pre-legislative scrutiny of the referendum bill when it met on 5 September and hearings took place on 19 and 26 September, which meant the referendum could not take place in October. The results of the pre-legislative scrutiny were awaited. In response to a question from Ms McCarthy-Flynn (NWCI), Mr Hurley advised that the Government indicative timetable for referendums had been published in September 2017 and the Department was not in a position to give information on proposals for Citizens Assembly-type review of women's equality more generally, as mentioned by the Taoiseach. Ms Ward (Children's Rights Alliance) suggested a broader debate on the diversity of family life might be needed in light of the narrow Constitutional definition of the Family, while Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) said she would welcome a broader discussion of family life and caring.

Ms Ní Néill (Dept of Justice & Equality) briefed the Committee on the launch in July of the Better Balance for Better Business review group, to advance Action 4.1. Dr Baxter (Dept of Justice & Equality) highlighted the importance of having a business-led group to engage with businesses about increasing the percentage of women on corporate boards.

Mr O'Sullivan (Dept of Children & Youth Affairs) advised that the LGBTI Youth Strategy had been launched, completing action 2.11, while legislation supporting the Affordable Childcare Scheme had been signed into law, advancing action 1.4.

Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) welcomed Minister Mitchell O'Connor's announcement of a forum aiming to address sexual harassment at third-level institutions. Ms Walsh (Dept of Justice and Equality) advised that Minister Flanagan and An Garda Síochána would also be in attendance. Mr Joyce (ICTU) drew the Committee's attention to progress in negotiation at the International Labour Conference of a proposed international convention to address harassment and violence in the world of work, attended by ICTU, Ibec and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

From the chair, Dr Baxter (Dept of Justice & Equality) observed that the report reflected good progress being made, and invited Departments to provide updates on outstanding actions by the end of the following week.

7. AOB

Ms McCarthy Flynn (NWCI) asked if the Committee could consider how to bring the issue of family homelessness into the National Strategy for Women and Girls. She noted that since the Strategy was developed there had been a very noticeable increase in family homelessness, predominantly affecting lone parent families, with

the rate now the second highest in the EU, and this was of concern to its membership. Dr Baxter (Dept of Justice & Equality) was open to seeing if an additional action could be added to the Strategy in this area. Mr Kennedy (Dept of Housing, Planning & Local Government) undertook to bring the NWCI concerns and suggestion to the attention of the appropriate unit in his Department.

8. Next meeting

From the chair, Dr Baxter (Dept of Justice & Equality) thanked the Committee for their contributions and announced that the Secretariat would contact the Committee members on arrangements for the next meeting in January 2019.

Attendance

Minister David Stanton TD, Chair
Orla O'Connor, NWCI
Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, NWCI
Miriam Holt, NCCWN
Rachel Doyle, Community Platform
Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum
Tanya Ward, Children's Rights Alliance
Dr Kara McGann, Ibec
Nichola Harkin, Ibec
David Joyce, ICTU

Dr Carol Baxter, Department of Justice & Equality
Marion Walsh, Department of Justice & Equality
Harry O'Crowley, Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine
Eoghan Richardson, Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation
Denis O'Sullivan, Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Paul Fay, Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Michael Keenan, Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Brendan O'Reilly, Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
Alison Geraghty, Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht
Ann Howard, Department of Defence
Ann marie O'Connor, Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection
Margaret McCarthy, Department of Education & Skills
Anne Donegan, Department of Finance
Emer O'Brien, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Dr Fiona Mansergh, Department of Health
Jason Kennedy, Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Paula Dowd, Department of Rural & Community Development
Olive Walsh, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
Fergal Fox, HSE

Apologies

Sandra Cairns, PAS
Aisling Cusack, USI

Sheelagh Daly, Enterprise Ireland
Deirdre Garvey, The Wheel
Walter Jayawardene, IHREC
Deirdre O'Neill, DPER
Geraldine O'Sullivan, IFA

Guests

Dr Helen Russell and Dr Frances McGinnity, ESRI
Caroline O'Loughlin and Struan Charters, DPER

Secretariat

John Hurley, Deirdre Ní Néill, Eileen Fitzgerald, Elaine Houlihan.