

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

Meeting of the Strategy Committee
25 January 2018, 09:30

The attendance list is appended.

1. Opening remarks and welcome

The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting, expressed the Committee's appreciation to outgoing members and extended a welcome to new members.

2. Agenda

The agenda was adopted without amendment. No items added under AOB.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 26 September 2017 were agreed.

In response to a query from the Ms O'Connor about the briefing on Budget 2018 requested at the previous meeting, the Secretariat said it had not been possible to arrange this for the meeting and circulated a note from the DEASP on changes to pension and social welfare schemes introduced in Budget 2018 as they affect women and lone parents.

4. Review of the Traffic light status report

The Minister thanked Departments for contributing status updates to the January traffic light report (circulated at meeting), and asked that updates on outstanding actions be provided by the end of the week. The Secretariat advised that status updates had been provided in respect of 132 of the 139 actions, with work begun on 116 actions. 10 actions were reported as complete, 89 on track, minor delivery issues reported in respect of 14 actions, and more significant delivery issues in respect of 3 actions.

As actions 1.30, 1.5 and 1.8, 2.24, 3.13, 5.4 and 5.11 were reported as completed, the Minister invited DBEI, DES, DHealth and DJE to brief the Committee on these actions. In response to a query, DES clarified that there was no connection between NSWG Action 1.8 and work being done by the Research Council. DHealth explained how the new Drug Strategy would impact women and girls, and that it provided for the number of drug and alcohol liaison midwives to increase from 3 to 5 by end 2018. The completion of action 5.4, removing the requirement for a financial contribution for access to civil legal aid in domestic violence cases, was viewed by the Committee as a very welcome development. Reflecting on action 1.30, the Minister suggested that Minister Breen might be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee regarding the supports provided to female entrepreneurs.

The Minister invited observations on the actions reported as having minor or significant delivery issues.

- DCYA advised, in respect of action 1.4, that Minister Zappone had made a statement on 24 January on progress with the affordable childcare scheme with the interim measures continuing in September 2018. The Childcare Support Bill and regulatory impact assessment were published in December 2017 and development of the ICT system was continuing, but no details could be given about timelines yet.
- In regard to Action 4.7, DFAT stated that the agreement under which Ireland had supported the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) programme to promote the development of more gender-sensitive parliamentary institutions was coming to an end and that it would be reassessed this year.
- DHealth and HSE advised that the new National Intercultural Health Strategy (action 2.7) was substantively complete and that launch date details would be made known in due course. Delivery of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence training programme for frontline staff, including public and community health workers (action 5.6), had begun but was behind schedule. Good progress was being made on the proposal to legislate for assisted human reproduction (action 2.25).
- DJE advised that an inter-departmental process would begin at end January on the matter of paid parental leave during the first year of a child's life (action 1.2). Among the points for examination were how such leave might be aligned with paid maternity and paternity leave.
- DTTAS advised that it was hoped to have the new national sports policy in place in Q1 2018 (actions 3.5 and 4.4).
- The Secretariat was advised that action 4.9 remained in progress while consideration is being given by DPER to follow-up action to the ESRI research on gender equality in the senior civil service, and that the DRCD had reported a minor delivery issue with the development of indicators for the Action Plan for Rural Development (action 6.9) but expected to be on track again shortly.

5. Information items

The Department of Justice and Equality (John Hurley) briefed the Committee on the recent public consultation and symposium on measures to address the gender pay gap (action 1.22). The next steps for the Department would be to consult individually with stakeholders over the next two months with a view to preparing legislative proposals on wage surveys. The Government would need to consider whether it was preferable to propose amendments to the Private Members Bill currently before the Seanad, or to propose a new Government Bill. The Department would also be examining what soft measures were needed and how to address these before legislative measures would come into force. Ms O'Connor expressed the NWC's support of legislation and observed that the symposium illustrated the need to tackle the gender pay gap from a number of different actions, suggesting that a plan to do so be developed by the Committee. Mr Hurley concurred that there were several actions under the NSWG relating to the gender pay gap and that, when more foundation work had been carried out, it might be possible for a meeting of the Committee to review the state of play.

Mr Hurley also updated the Committee on the application of legislation on lobbying to the development of the NSWG and the Committee's activities. The legislation viewed the making of representations about legislation, policy and funding matters to designated officials to be lobbying. Designated officials included the Ministers and Assistant Secretary Carol Baxter. Submissions to public consultations were exempt if made to a generic email address, but considered lobbying if copied to designated officials. However as submissions were exempt if published by the Department, Mr Hurley proposed this was the approach that should be taken. In regard to members' contributions to the Committee, Mr Hurley advised that its terms of reference left it open for the Committee to address policy matters such as changes to the Strategy, which would fall under the lobbying legislation. However these exchanges would also be exempt if the Committee's procedures abided by the Transparency Code. This would require details such as the Committee's membership, its terms of reference, agendas and minutes, for example, to be published online every 4 months. The Department was considering this option and would welcome opinions from the Committee. Ms O'Connor expressed the NWCI's support for this approach. No objections were made by the Committee members present.

Mr Hurley informed the Committee that the EU Commission had launched an online public consultation on the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework, if they wished to contribute views.

The Department of Justice and Equality (Carol Baxter) referred to the proposed Commission for the Status of Women announced recently by the Taoiseach. It was intended that the Commission would look in broad terms at longterm issues affecting women and to give the current state of play. This proposal was at an early stage of development and she hoped to be in a better position to brief the Committee at its next meeting. It would not affect the NSWG, which would continue.

Ms Doyle asked what procedures were in place to ensure good communications, while Ms Joyce expressed concern that progress be made on actions to be implemented by the NTRIS Strategy and that it would be clear what was meant when referring to these actions as being on track. She suggested the NTRIS strategy would draft a report and say how they would contribute to the NSWG.

The DEASP (Ms McDonald) provided a briefing on changes to the State pension for post-2012 recipients announced in January 2018. A note was also provided on changes to social welfare schemes introduced in Budget 2018.

6. Progress with Indicators and Targets

The Secretariat advised that Gender Equality Division had by now met bilaterally with most Departments to consider possible progress indicators for the actions under their aegis. It was proposed to put forward a short set of high-level indicators, which would be included in the annual progress report. A further, more detailed set of indicators

would focus on the actions. Gender Equality Division hoped to have this proposal to the Committee for the next meeting.

Ms Joyce observed that it was important that indicators across all the actions recognised ethnic diversity and socio-economic groups where there are particular challenges. Ms Doyle concurred and advised that the most marginalised groups would need to be a priority as the trickle-down effect doesn't always work.

7. Format of first annual progress report (2017/2018)

The Secretariat provided a suggested template for the first progress report under the Strategy for the views of the Committee, and invited comments both at the meeting and subsequently by email.

DFAT suggested that, as Ireland would be presenting its voluntary national review under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development later in 2018, that it might be useful in the NSWG progress report to reflect on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (relating to gender equality) and include a narrative on key achievements. Ms Baxter agreed, and advised the Committee that Minister Stanton would be attending the UN Commission for the Status of Women in March, including side events on climate change and trafficking, and that the NWCI and IHREC were also expected to be attending.

8. Priorities for 2018

The Secretariat provided suggested priority actions for 2018 and invited comments both at the meeting and subsequently by email.

DHousing advised that Minister of State Phelan had engaged with Women for Election (a non-partisan group) with a view to advancing action 4.5, and would be engaging further with stakeholders, including the NWCI, during 2018 with a view to having something ready for the 2019 elections.

Minister Stanton flagged that he wished to consult the Committee on their views on maternity and paternity leave for politicians and how this might be done, noting this might be a barrier for many to enter the Dáil and local government. Provisions for public representatives who became seriously ill was a related concern. Ms O'Connor advised the NWCI had been working on maternity leave for politicians and family friendly working procedures. The NWCI was providing a secretariat to the newly-formed Women's Caucus in the Oireachtas, and its priorities for the coming months would include the referendum on women in the home and a number of ancillary recommendations for Oireachtas Committees.

Ms Garvey referred to action 4.1, and hoped this would also look at leadership in the non-profit sector and community groups, and asked whether there was space for also looking at the wider context. Ms Baxter explained this would initially look, for 2018, at corporate boards, ISEQ companies and the big business sector, and as far as possible

taking a business-led approach. Such a process had been very successful in the UK, led by Lord Davies. Ms Baxter said the Department would look and see how it could move on expanding to the wider context.

The USI advised that it was doing work on engaging women to go for leadership roles in society, and would be looking for additional support. On the question of language, the USI sought assurance that “women” was inclusive of non-binary and gender fluid identity, and asked that this be part of the vision going forward. The USI was also on the steering group of the LGBTI+ strategy being developed by DJE. Ms Joyce highlighted that, in encouraging women’s participation in politics, effort would be made to reflect the diversity of women and ensure politics are inclusive of women from minority groups and to create opportunities for women to make informed choices. Ms Doyle suggested the NWCI report on a “women-friendly” Oireachtas could be looked at, and that it was necessary to create the conditions for women to want to engage with politics.

Minister Stanton advised that feedback would continue to be welcomed on this matter and he proposed to invite a political scientist to give an overview to a future meeting.

9. AOB

No items were raised under AOB.

10. Next meeting

The Minister announced that the next Strategy Committee meeting would take place on 24 May 2018, from 09:30-11:30am in 51 St Stephen’s Green.

The Committee asked for the agenda and papers to be circulated 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.

[Note: the date of the meeting was subsequently changed to 13 June, at 3pm.]

Attendance

Minister David Stanton TD, Chair

Faris Bader, Department of Finance

Carol Baxter, A/Secretary, Department of Justice & Equality

Síona Cahill, Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

Grant Couper, Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government

Rachel Doyle, Community Platform

Deirdre Garvey, CEO, The Wheel

Dr. Cate Hartigan, Health Service Executive

Miriam Holt, NCCWN

Ann Howard, Department of Defence

Walter Jayawardene, IHREC
Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum, representing Traveller and Roma women
Michael Keenan, Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Lisa Keyes, Public Appointments Service (PAS)
Dr Fiona Mansergh, Department of Health
Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, Head of Development, NWC
Dr Kara McGann, Senior Labour Market Policy Executive, Ibec
Nicole McHugh, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Gráinne Morrissey, Department of Education and Skills
Orla O'Connor, Director, National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC)
Margaret O'Gorman, Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
Eoghan Richardson, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Marion Walsh, Department of Justice and Equality
Olive Walsh, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Tanya Ward, Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance, representing the Community & Voluntary Pillar

Apologies

Moira Murrell, Nichola Harkin, Ann Marie O'Connor, Rebecca Minch, Paula Barry-Walsh and Sarita Johnston.

Department of Justice and Equality – Gender Equality Division (Secretariat)

John Hurley, Deirdre Ní Néill, Eileen Fitzgerald, Terence O'Hagan