

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

Meeting of the Strategy Committee
13 July 2017, 10:00

The attendance list is appended.

1. Opening remarks and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a welcome to new members.

2. Agenda

The agenda was adopted and no items were raised under AOB.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 22 March 2017 were agreed.

4. Discussion of Terms of Reference

(a) Proposals for amendments to ToR

The Secretariat (Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice & Equality) introduced its proposals from to amend the Terms of Reference, as circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting. It was agreed to explicitly refer to the matters on which the Committee would advise the Department during the implementation and review phases of the Strategy and to reflect its published title. A proposal from PAS to reflect the "development and use of a traffic light system and scorecard to monitor progress ..." was also accepted.

The Secretariat would circulate the amended terms of reference to the Committee.

(b) Working methods of the Committee/Committee meeting schedule

The Chair opened discussion on the Committee's working methods and outline work schedule. Noting that the Committee was key to maintaining the momentum and ensuring that progress is on track, he proposed that it would meet three times every year. The Strategy also envisaged that there would be ongoing engagement with stakeholders and that problem-solving teams could be convened to address issues.

The Secretariat set out its ideas in this regard, and referred to the possibility of sub-committees being formed as required. Sub-committees could meet between plenary meeting dates and might be useful in situations where a number of Departments are involved in a particular action, where actions were red under the traffic light system,

or where a new action was proposed. The Chair invited the Committee's views and observed that it would not be the case of having working groups just for the sake of it.

Pavee Point asked if non-statutory bodies would be included in the sub-committees. The Secretariat confirmed that any organisation represented on the Committee could be on sub-committees and they could be represented by someone other than the Committee member, where appropriate.

The Chair introduced an outline meeting schedule (document provided at the meeting) and highlighted that consideration of proposals for amended or additional actions was included in the May meeting next year. He said it would be useful to set aside some time formally for this work and it would coincide with the anniversary of the launch of the Strategy and that there would be similar discussions in May 2019 and May 2020. In response to a query from the NWCI as to whether discussion of an urgent issue, if such arose, would have to wait until May, the Secretariat replied that the plan was flexible and it would be possible to discuss it. The Department of Justice & Equality said that Departments would be expected to provide progress reports for each meeting.

(c) Information point on the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

The Secretariat outlined, for the Committee's information, the main provisions of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 as it applied to the work of the Committee. The Act places the onus on a lobbying organisation to register and report to the Standards in Public Office Commission on its lobbying activities. The Secretariat alerted Committee members to the potential application of the Act to submissions made by groups under the public consultation and to members' involvement in the Strategy Committee for the development phase of the Strategy, as the Committee did not adhere to the Transparency Code. Several Committee members commented that their organisations were registered under the Act and had made returns in respect of their involvement in the preparation of the Strategy. Having regard to the exemptions set out in the Act, it was noted that the Act does not apply to matters relating solely to the implementation of the Strategy. However, where the Committee's role in assessing proposals for amendment or addition to the actions contributed to ongoing policy development, the Act might yet apply.

Clarification would be sought by the Secretariat on the applicability of the Act generally to the Committee.

6. Arrangements for Monitoring and Reporting on implementation – Traffic light system

The Secretariat introduced a proposed traffic light monitoring system for use by the Committee (document provided at the meeting). The use of such a system had been proposed at the Committee's meetings in March where it was agreed that this monitoring and control tool would be used to identify actions which were not progressing to plan and where support and guidance is needed from colleagues on the

Strategy Committee. The Secretariat had prepared a draft based on similar systems in use for the Disability Strategy, the 2nd National Strategy for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, and the Department's overall management reporting. The suggested status definitions were explained, illustrated by a sample report.

The Chair opened to the floor for comments, emphasising the importance of keeping the system simple and visual. A discussion followed on the value of including narrative in the status reports, the appropriate level of detail required, the interpretation of status definitions, decision-making in the assignment of status to actions, and stakeholder engagement in determining the status of individual actions. There was consensus on 5 status levels for individual actions – Black (not yet scheduled to begin), Green (broadly on target), Amber (minor delivery issue), Red (significant delivery issue), and Blue (completed). However, more clarity was requested on the conditions that would correspond to each status.

The Department of Education & Skills advised that, from its experience of using traffic light systems, the focus was often on the red actions and the completed actions are sometimes overlooked. To reflect the timeframes in the Strategy, it was suggested that a delay of more than 12 weeks (i.e. 1 quarter) would be more appropriate to prompt the status of an action to be raised from amber to red. This was agreed.

The roles of stakeholders to an individual action and the overall monitoring role of the Committee gave rise to some confusion. The Department of Justice & Equality suggested incorporating stakeholder engagement and satisfaction in the consideration of quality, and that questions could be drafted to prompt the action's project manager to consider how stakeholders viewed the action's progress. Following discussion, it was agreed to simplify the guidance on assigning a status to actions. The guidance should refer to time and delays (i.e. whether critical milestones were being met on time) and to whether the action was meeting expectations in regard to quality and scope.

The question of where the responsibility for assigning status to individual actions lay was also discussed. ICTU observed that, in respect of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, it was the Chair of the Committee who decided on the appropriate status for each action. The Department of Justice & Equality advised that most actions in the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based violence are Government-led and progress is rated by the lead person for the action. Where there is disagreement on status it is the lead person who decides. The Secretariat clarified that it was intended that the status of the action would communicate the assessment of the project team responsible for the action. The Department of Justice & Equality suggested that there could be negotiation in the Committee about the interpretation of action's status.

The format of the report was also discussed. The Department of Education & Skills expressed concern that incorporating progress made, planned activity and projected end date details for each action might lead to too much text and narrative. The Department of Justice & Equality advised that a similar system was used by the

Committee to monitor progress on the 2nd National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and that, while the traffic light captured status in a snapshot, the Committee also found a narrative useful. She said, in that instance, draft reports were issued to Committee members two weeks before each meeting and queries requested within a week, so as to allow the relevant Department or agency time to prepare for discussion on that point at the meeting. There was general agreement that, in the event that an action's status is reported as Red, a narrative should be provided, but that it would otherwise be optional.

The potential uses of the traffic light report were discussed. ICTU felt it would be a useful tool in informing the public on progress in the Annual Report. Community Platform welcomed the use of this system saying it would provide a level of transparency. Pavee Point said clear and transparent detail would be useful. The Department of Justice & Equality said it expected that the traffic light system would principally be for the Committee's use, but that it might also inform the narrative of the public reports and proposed that the annual progress reports could include an abridged form of the traffic light status report.

PAS asked if there were any potential issues in using the traffic light system to monitor progress. The Chair noted the report needed to be as transparent as possible. The Secretariat said the traffic light reports will come under the FOI Act and provided a statement of progress at a particular time.

The Secretariat advised that a revised traffic light progress reporting template would be circulated for feedback and discussion. Departments would be requested to provide a progress report on actions for circulation to the Committee in advance of the next meeting. The Chair urged the Committee to work together to overcome any problems and difficult issues arising.

It was agreed to revise the traffic light status reporting template as discussed and circulate it to the Committee for any further comments. The template would be used at the next meeting to brief the Committee on progress made to date.

7. Priorities, Targets and Indicators.

(a) Indicators and targets

The Secretariat advised that responsibility for developing targets and indicators was assigned in the Strategy to Gender Equality Division, advised by the Committee. The progress made in respect to indicators and targets was outlined and the Secretariat explained it proposed to focus on output and outcome indicators for this Strategy. To date, an exercise to identify potential indicators was conducted. Departments had been asked to look at and respond to this template with their own proposals by 17 July. From this, the Secretariat intended to produce a first rough cut of indicators by the end of July, which would be circulated to Committee members for their contribution. Taking account of feedback from the Committee the Secretariat hoped to be in a position to compile a second draft and circulate it for discussion with a view

to agreement at the next meeting of the Committee in September. It was proposed to include progress under the indicators in annual progress reports, the first of which was due in Quarter 2, 2018. The Committee's views were invited on this approach.

Pavee Point asked how outcomes for women and girls from a minority ethnic background would be measured where data was not currently available. The Secretariat referred to action 6.13 of Strategy, which called on all Departments to identify knowledge gaps in relation to gender equality. The Department of Justice & Equality also advised that a working group was being convened to measure progress under the Migration and Integration Strategy, which would consider this particular issue.

The Chair said further development on indicators and targets is required for the next meeting and that there would be bilateral contact with the Committee membership on this before September. In response to a question from the NWCI, it was confirmed that NGOs would be circulated on discussions on indicators.

(b) Priority actions for 2017

The Secretariat presented proposals for the actions to be prioritised in 2017. The Department felt it would be useful to look at the actions due to be completed first, highlighting 17 actions due to complete in 2017 and an additional 15 due to be completed by the end of 2018. The Secretariat noted that successful completion of this group of short-to-medium term actions could ensure that the implementation of the Strategy did not lose momentum. A further group of 16 longer term actions were recommended for the Committee's close attention as important to progress this year. The Department of Justice & Equality suggested extending this list to include action 5.3 on the Cosc multi-annual awareness raising campaign.

It was agreed to revise the list of actions to be progressed as a priority in 2017 and circulate it to the Committee.

8. Next meeting

The next Strategy Committee meeting will take place on 26 September.

Attendance

Minister David Stanton TD, Chair

Organisations

Carol Baxter, Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice and Equality

Marion Walsh, Department of Justice & Equality

Gavan O'Leary, Department of Education & Skills

Olive Walsh, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Faris Bader, Department of Finance

Grace Bolton, Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Aisling Redmond, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Ann Howard, Department of Defence
Lisa Keyes, Public Appointments Service
Helen McCormack, HSE
Niamh Allen, National Women's Council of Ireland
Miriam Holt, National Women's Council of Ireland
Rachel Doyle, The Community Platform
Danielle Martin, The Wheel
David Joyce, ICTU
Ann Russell, SIPTU
Dr Kara McGann, Ibec
Nichola Harkin, Ibec
Gabi Muntean, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
Laura Pohjolainen, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

Apologies

Kate O'Flaherty, Department of Health
John Healy, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Rebecca Minch, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Maria Hurley, Department of Employment and Social Protection
Paul Lemass, Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Orla McBreen, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Nina Brennan, Department of Enterprise and Innovation
Sarita Johnston, Enterprise Ireland
Moira Murrell, Chief Executive, Kerry County Council, City and County Management Association
Karen O'Loughlin, National Campaigns and Equality Organiser, SIPTU
Geraldine O'Sullivan, Irish Farmer's Association
Síona Cahill, Union of Students in Ireland

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

John Hurley, Deirdre Ní Néill, Eileen Fitzgerald, Terence O'Hagan, Liza Lerloch and Elaine Fitzpatrick