

# **TOWARDS GENDER PARITY IN DECISION-MAKING IN IRELAND**

**AN INITIATIVE  
OF THE  
NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY  
2007 - 2016**

**2013**



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY



NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRATEGY  
2007-2016



## MINISTER'S FOREWORD

During the consultation process for this Report on women and decision-making, I heard a phrase which has become one of my mantras – “*we employ least, those whom we educate most*”.

This is particularly true when we look at the comparatively poor record we have in Ireland in advancing women to the most senior decision-making positions. EU statistics tell us that we, in Ireland, have the best educated female population in Europe. However we do not use this talent to best effect.

With women making up just 16 per cent of deputies in the Dáil at present, we have a long way to go to reach even the EU average for female parliamentary representation, which is about 25 per cent. The UN presses for parity and identifies a critical mass of 30 per cent – the level of engagement required to influence decisions. The steps being taken here in Ireland to require political parties to meet a gender target for candidates in the general elections will help to address this imbalance.

Extensive psychological research in recent years shows that decisions made through the collaboration of the two sexes are the best decisions. Yet many organisations still do not adequately nurture their female talent to ensure that there is gender balance in senior management positions. Women are still under-represented on State and corporate boards.

In this Report, prepared by a Sub-Committee of the National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee, including civil servants and representatives of the National Women's Council of Ireland, the trade unions and IBEC, we have identified some of the key issues and are planning a range of actions which will help to foster the advancement of women into decision making roles. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Sub-Committee and the many experts who made presentations to us.

We have been very fortunate to receive generous funding from the European Commission's Progress Fund to support the implementation of aspects of this report.

**Kathleen Lynch, T.D.**  
**Minister for Disability, Equality,**  
**Mental Health and Older People**  
**March 2014**





<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Foreword by the Minister</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – International Context</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – Increasing Female Participation in Decision-Making</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 4 – Women in Management Roles</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 5 – Women’s Participation on State and Corporate Boards</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Chapter 6 – Strengthening Women in Political Decision-Making</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter 7 – Women in the Diplomatic Service</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Chapter 8 – Women in the Judiciary</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Chapter 9 – Implementing the Recommendations</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – List of members of the Sub-Committee</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Appendix 3 –Persons who made Presentations to the Sub-Committee</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Table 1 – Key statistics from the Council of Europe Report ‘Parity Democracy – a far cry from reality’, 2009</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Table 2 – Gender Distribution of Irish Civil Servants by grade and type</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Table 3 – Workplace attachment of Male and Female General Service Civil Servants</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Table 4 - Percentage of female candidates by political party in the 2011 General Election</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Table 5 – Women’s representation in the Irish Diplomatic Service</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Table 6 – Gender breakdown of Irish Judges by Court</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Table 7 – Graduates and Post-Graduates in Law – 2005 and 2007</b>	<b>86</b>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- A. The National Women's Strategy (NWS) was launched in April 2007 with the aim to achieve
- an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.*
- B. The 20 Key Objectives and over 200 planned actions contained in the Strategy are grouped under the three key themes of:
- Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women;
  - Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and
  - Engaging women as equal and active citizens.
- C. On recommendations from Gender Equality Division and the National Women's Council of Ireland, the NWS Monitoring Committee agreed to the establishment of a Sub-Committee in late 2010 to address women in decision-making roles. The Sub-Committee meetings have been chaired by the two successive Ministers of State with responsibility for Equality, Minister of State Mary White T.D. and Minister of State Kathleen Lynch T.D.

### 2. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

- D. Chapter 2 of this report outlines the key documents and policy initiatives of the multilateral bodies – the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN, to address the under-representation of women in decision-making roles. All of these bodies send strong messages about the need for Member States to include more women in decision-making roles from a mix of human rights, democratic and economic perspectives.

### 3. INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES

- E. The third Chapter of this report outlines the main barriers and obstacles to women's participation in decision-making roles and puts forward some suggestions as to how the situation might be improved.

#### *The main Barriers/Obstacles to Women's Advancement*

- F. The main barriers and obstacles to women's advancement into decision-making roles have been identified through the extensive international literature and good practice reviewed by the Sub-Committee in the course of its deliberations.
- G. The barriers and obstacles identified can be divided into two categories:
- **Traditional gender roles** – The reconciliation of family/private life and working life and the availability of accessible and affordable childcare (and caring services to support other dependent groups) are essential
  - **Attitudes and perceptions** – Stereotypes and perceptions continue to frustrate women's efforts to reach top management positions in all areas of decision-making in Ireland.

#### *Challenges to Gender Equality*

- H. There are strong gender patterns in relation to subject choice at third level education with men dominating in engineering and related subject areas and women dominating in health, welfare and education, which impact on women's future lives.

- I. In Ireland, a situation prevails such that (a) we have sustained leakage of talent and potential from the educational system of males resulting in a much more educated female population and (b) an employment system that shows sustained leakage out of the labour force of that educated population and its clustering in certain sectors and at lower levels.
- J. Some of the persistent challenges which will be faced in tackling the issues of gender equality and the appointment of women to leadership roles are likely to include :
- A belief that gender equality has already been achieved. The introduction of legislation in this regard is seen as sufficient;
  - The belief in meritocracy – if someone is good enough they will get to the top. This doesn't take into account the extra constraints and obstacles which women have to contend with. The idea of a meritocracy is stronger in Anglo-Saxon countries than in the Nordic countries;
  - The belief that it is only a matter of time before change is seen, the momentum is there. The removal of the marriage bar should be used as a benchmark against this argument; and
  - The invisibility of the gender order – this is seen as a social/cultural phenomenon.

***The Economic Case to Support Gender Equality and Women's Leadership Role***

- K. This Report outlines how the effects of the economic recession have underlined the necessity of having a diverse and skilled workforce and of maximising the potential of all employees within an organisation. A research report<sup>1</sup> commissioned under the Swedish Presidency of the EU in 2009 estimates that if true gender equality were achieved in the EU, then EU Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has the potential to grow by 27 per cent. The Swedish study estimates that the impact in Ireland could be an increase of 35 per cent in GDP.
- L. The low numbers of women in decision-making positions represents a vast pool of untapped potential and under-utilisation of talent. Recent studies<sup>2</sup> suggest that organisations with a good gender-balance in senior positions tend to perform better than those who do not. Women in senior decision-making positions are also thought to be more risk-averse than their male counterparts. This moderating influence may also have a positive impact on the organisation's performance.

***Possible Solutions***

- M. The Sub-Committee's examination of international literature and good practice has identified the following as examples of how change can be effected:

***Recruitment Policies/Practices:***

- Traditional recruitment policies and practices can limit the pool of applicants and result in skills shortages and a workforce that may not be representative of its consumer base.
- To ensure a representative, diverse and effective workforce, companies may need to review their recruitment practices to ensure that they are as inviting to women as they are to men.
- Ensuring that interview boards have at least one representative of each gender can help to promote an inclusive policy in candidate selection. Training for interview board members in gender and diversity issues would also be beneficial. Companies could also consider gender-proofing their interview questions to ensure that candidates of each sex have a fair chance of selection.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Gender equality, economic growth and employment', Asa Lofstrom, financed by the Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Bottom Line: Corporate performance and women's representation on boards', Catalyst, New York, 2007

'Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver', McKinsey & Company, France 2007.



*Retention Policies:*

- As mentioned previously, work/life balance policies within organisations are also an important incentive in attracting and retaining a diverse and flexible workforce.
- An Equality Authority study found that the presence of a formal policy on equality (inclusive of gender) in the workplace is strongly associated with lower levels of work stress and higher levels of both job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

*Staff Training and Development:*

- Training programmes are vital for enabling individuals to progress along their chosen career paths. Organisations need to be mindful of part-time workers when organising their training schedules.
- The provision of dedicated leadership training programmes for women with the potential to move forward into senior management positions can help to build confidence among female employees regarding their ability to progress into top management and decision-making roles.
- The establishment of formal networks within organisations would lessen the potentially negative effects of informal networks which women often find themselves excluded from.
- Re-entry training courses or programmes for employees returning after an extended period out of the workforce, for example after maternity leave or a career break, can also be beneficial in retaining skilled individuals.

*Mentoring/Role Models:*

- The lack of female role models in decision-making positions can influence self-selection among other women who perceive that there are few opportunities for women in senior management and so exclude themselves from going forward for promotion or training programmes.
- Conversely, successful female role models can inspire other women to push themselves to attain positions in senior management, on company boards and in politics.
- Mentoring programmes can have a positive impact in supporting career progression and professional development, particularly for women.

#### **4. WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT ROLES**

- N. This Chapter looks at the low number of women in management roles in employment in the Private Sector, the Public Sector and to a lesser extent in the Community and Voluntary sector, in Trade Unions and in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

*Women Working in the Private Sector*

- O. This Report outlines the current situation with regard to women in management roles in private sector employment, both in Ireland and across the EU.
- P. An examination of international literature and best practice in this area shows that increased female participation in decision-making roles has a positive effect on organisational excellence and business performance and profitability.
- Q. In making the following recommendations to increase the number of women in senior management roles in the Private Sector, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

**The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That steps be taken to promulgate the business case for gender equality as an instrument for economic growth;**
- **That steps be taken to broaden the understanding of the persisting cultural barriers to the advancement of women and the maximisation of their potential contribution to the achievement of corporate goals;**
- **That employers and employer organisations be encouraged to collaborate on the development and implementation of a ‘*Women into leadership*’ training course in consultation with the Women in Enterprise Group, to be widely disseminated as a best practice model;**
- **That employers and employer organisations be encouraged to collaborate on the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for female employees identified as having leadership potential;**
- **That consideration be given to including a new category of award in the ‘Best Workplaces in Ireland’<sup>3</sup> award on ‘Best Workplaces for Women in Ireland’. Criteria might include employers who offer leadership training, mentoring, coaching and flexible working for female staff. The award could be displayed on company websites/advertising etc.;**
- **That steps be taken to broaden the understanding of the persisting structural barriers to the advancement of women and the maximisation of their potential contribution to the achievement of corporate goals;**
- **That companies be encouraged to implement an equality policy and periodic equality audits and to report on actions taken in respect of these policies in their annual reports;**
- **That employers be encouraged to implement work/life balance policies for both male and female employees and to actively encourage their male employees to avail of and share family leaves; and**
- **That IBEC continue to disseminate and promote its Maternity and Parenting Toolkit.**

#### ***Women Working in the Public Sector***

- R. The report outlines that the Public Sector has traditionally been a key employer of women in Ireland. However a more detailed examination of the statistics shows that the structure is largely pyramidal with relatively few women rising to senior positions.
- S. An examination of international literature and best practice in this area shows that women may be making sacrifices in their personal lives in order to reach senior management positions.
- T. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in senior management roles in the Public Sector, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

#### **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That new targets of 40 per cent women be set for the senior management grades of APO and PO with immediate effect;**
- **That consideration be given to the desirability of establishing a specific leadership training course to foster the advancement of women into senior management roles in the public sector, including the Civil Service. In relation to the Civil Service, this**

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<sup>3</sup> Great Place to Work Ireland in association with the Irish Independent newspaper

might be developed in two tiers with a specific focus on women at Principal Officer level as a response to the comparatively low number of women at Assistant Secretary level from which pool Secretaries General are usually drawn;

- The Sub-Committee welcomes the establishment of the Senior Public Service and the commitment to networking, education, training and coaching, and mentoring opportunities for officials at Assistant Secretary level and above. However, as women only account for a very small percentage of senior officials, these opportunities will largely be afforded to male officers. Therefore, the Sub-Committee recommends that a formal mentoring scheme is established for female officers at Assistant Principal and Principal level in each Department. This scheme could have an Inter-Departmental focus with mentors/mentees coming from different Government Departments;
- That gender disaggregated statistics be provided for Local Government staff to allow for the monitoring of the number of female staff in senior management and director of services posts;
- That the profile of the Women Manager's Network be raised across all Departments. Each Personnel Unit to be asked to send an email to all staff at HEO/AO level and above advising them of the existence of the Network and encouraging their female staff to join. The Women Managers Network should continue to disseminate meeting documents/reports etc. to members who cannot attend due to geographical location, work commitments, worksharing arrangements etc. through their intranet facility;
- That Departments also be encouraged to establish their own network of women managers to meet regularly;
- That a biennial conference be organised by the Women Manager's Network (in collaboration with the Gender Equality Division, D/J&E) to raise the profile of female managers across the Civil Service and to organise workshops/seminars etc for female officers (funding for this might be provided under the National Women's Strategy);
- That Ministers remind Departments of their commitment regarding gender mainstreaming and the obligation of a gender impact assessment of policies and programmes contained in the Cabinet Handbook. Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality, undertakes to provide a guidance document for all Departments to be disseminated widely for use in this regard; and
- That gender-sensitivity training be provided for Personnel Officers and for all those involved in recruitment and in determining promotions (both internal and external).

#### *Women Working in Civil Society, Trade Unions and Non-Governmental Organisations*

- U. The report shows that women form a significant part of the work force in Irish Non-Governmental Organisations but, as in the public and private sectors, their presence in senior management positions is still relatively low. The Sub-Committee recommends that the civil society organisations recognise that they are in a position to play two roles in relation to women and leadership – the advancement of their own teams into management positions and the fostering of their board members to become leaders in other fields, such as through enhanced political engagement.

#### **The Sub-Committee recommends that**

- These organisations continue to prioritise the advancement of women as a key goal for the achievement of gender equality.

- **The umbrella organisations for the Community and Voluntary Pillar should be encouraged to gather gender disaggregated statistics on women’s participation in decision-making in the Community and Voluntary sector, in both paid and voluntary capacities, periodically.**
- **Furthermore, in their roles as employers, and often as employers of significant size, the Sub-Committee recommends that the community and voluntary sector and the umbrella organisations adopt the appropriate recommendations from among those listed earlier in this chapter to ensure that they also foster the advancement of women into decision-making roles within their own organisations.**

## **5. WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION ON STATE AND CORPORATE BOARDS**

### *Women on State Boards*

- V. This report provides an overview of the current situation regarding the percentage of women on State Boards in Ireland. The 2012 statistics show that women occupy about 34 per cent of these posts and 20 per cent of the posts of Chair.
- W. In 1993, the then Government decided to set a target of 40 per cent for the representation of women on State Boards and Government Ministers were asked to consider gender when making appointments to these boards. Since 2001 these data have been monitored and reported to Government on an annual basis.
- X. The Programme for Government, published in March 2011, states that the newly appointed Government
 

*“will take steps to ensure that all State Boards have at least 40 per cent of each gender”.*
- Y. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women on State Boards, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

### **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That a Talent Bank of women suitable for consideration for appointment to State Boards be developed and maintained by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality or its agent, in consultation with relevant organisations as appropriate. This talent bank should include a provision for self-nomination;**
- **That active steps should be taken to identify suitably qualified professional women who can offer their expertise in particular to the more economically focused State Boards where there is a significant gender deficit at present;**
- **Private Sector Employers should be encouraged to assist with the identification of suitably qualified women to serve on State Boards as part of their Corporate Responsibility effort;**
- **That all Government Departments and nominating bodies are recommended to consult the Talent Bank in their selection processes and when making nominations to the relevant Minister, where the Minister is responsible for the appointment; and**
- **That all Government Departments and the Agencies under their aegis be required to submit material on the steps they are taking to “ensure that all State Boards have at least 40 per cent of each gender” in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, as part of their annual return on State Board figures to the Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality. This material may be published.**

### ***Women on Corporate Boards***

- Z. This report provides an overview of the current situation regarding the percentage of women on Corporate Boards in Ireland and in the EU.
- AA. In 2011, to address the gender imbalance on corporate boards, EU Vice-President and Justice Commissioner, Ms. Viviane Reding, called on publicly listed companies in the EU to take voluntary steps to increase women's participation on corporate boards to 30 per cent by 2015 and to 40 per cent by 2020. She also invited all publicly listed companies in Europe to sign up to the "***Women on the Board Pledge for Europe***" to commit to reaching these voluntary targets. In November 2012, the European Commission published its proposal for a *Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures*<sup>4</sup>. The proposal is under negotiation at the EU Social Questions Working Group and in the European Parliament.
- BB. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women on Corporate Boards, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

#### **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That Ireland actively participate in and foster the implementation of the work on this topic being driven by the European Commission and its Commissioner for Justice, Citizenship and Fundamental Rights;**
- **That major companies be encouraged to develop a Corporate Governance Code to include commitments on the percentage of women and men members at board level;**
- **That failure to achieve targets within a reasonable time frame might lead to the introduction of mandatory targets in accordance with the work being undertaken in this regard by the European Union; and**
- **That this Code would also contain recommendations on gender diversity at organisational level particularly in the senior decision-making echelon.**

### ***Training for Male and Female Board Members***

- CC. The Sub-Committee also considered that there is a special need to offer training to boards and board members, on both State Boards and Corporate Boards to ensure that all new board members fully understand their responsibilities and are encouraged to maximise their contribution to the work of the Board. In this regard, it is recommended that the training include a module to raise awareness of gender differences and the need for women and men to collaborate and to understand and respect their individual strengths in order to ensure the efficient and effective workings of the Board and its organisation/company.

The Sub-Committee therefore recommends:

- **That a training course for "Board Ready" women and a mentoring programme be developed on a pilot basis through an established training mechanism and with the support of ISEQ and other large scale companies and the State Boards.**

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<sup>4</sup> COM (2012) 614 final

## 6. STRENGTHENING WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

- DD. Women have been under-represented in Irish politics at both national and local levels throughout the life of the State. Effectively there has been no significant increase in women's involvement in politics in more than 15 years.
- EE. Following the General Election in February 2011, the percentage of women elected to Dáil Éireann currently stands at 15.6 per cent, a slight increase on the pre-election figure of 13 per cent. The EU27 average in 2013 for national parliaments is 27 per cent, with nine Member States recording 30 per cent or higher. The internationally accepted figure for women to have influence in political decision-making is a minimum of 30 per cent.
- FF. The Programme for Government contains the following commitments to increasing female participation in Irish politics:

*We recognise that there needs to be a substantial increase in the number of women in politics. We will ask the Constitutional Convention, which is examining electoral reform, to make recommendations as to how the number of women in politics can be increased.*

*Public funding for political parties will be tied to the level of participation by women as candidates those parties achieve.*

- GG. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women on Corporate Boards, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

### The Sub-Committee recommends:

- **The Sub-Committee notes the new Government legislation linking public funding to political parties to the selection of female candidates for election. If the 30 per cent target is not reached at the next general election, this Sub-Committee asks the Government to consider adopting a legislative quota for party candidates whereby each party would be required to submit the names of equal numbers of men and women in each constituency;**
- **That the recommendations in this Report should also apply as appropriate to local and European elections;**
- **That political parties in receipt of public funding should implement a formal training and mentoring programme for female party members identified as having leadership potential;**
- **That political parties in receipt of public funding establish an active female committee structure inside the party at both central and regional levels as appropriate with a view to influencing more women to consider a career in politics and for exerting pressure within the party to select more female candidates for elections;**
- **That political parties in receipt of public funding establish a dedicated women's network;**
- **That consideration be given to the need to extend the opening times of the Dáil creche to include the longer working hours on Dáil sitting days, if necessary;**
- **That female T.D.s on maternity leave be entitled to an automatic pairing<sup>5</sup> arrangement for a minimum of 18 weeks (the EU recommended period of maternity**

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<sup>5</sup> Pairing – an arrangement where a T.D. of one party agrees with a T.D. of an opposing party not to vote in a particular division, giving both T.D.s the opportunity to be elsewhere.

leave) and that their male counterparts receive automatic pairing for up to a week following the birth of a child; and

- **That further informed consideration be given to the need to transform the Irish political system including the operation of the Houses of the Oireachtas to make it more responsive to the family needs and responsibilities of its Members.**

## **7. WOMEN IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

- HH. An overview of the situation in Ireland and across the Council of Europe member states is provided in the introduction to this Chapter.
- II. An examination of international literature and best practice in this area shows that cultural and social difficulties may prevent more women from being appointed to the highest diplomatic posts.
- JJ. The Report also notes the positive steps that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has taken over the last few years to proactively address the under-representation of women in diplomatic posts and in senior decision-making roles within the Department.
- KK. In issuing the following recommendations to advance the number of women in the diplomatic service, the Sub-Committee acknowledges the good work which is already underway in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in this regard.

### **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That the pilot mentoring scheme currently under way in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade be extended to include a female only mentoring scheme to specifically address the under-representation of women in decision-making roles in the diplomatic service;**
- **That the Women's Network in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade be facilitated in enhancing discussion and engagement with the female Heads of Mission to highlight the importance of female role models in encouraging more female officers to apply for top level posts. This should include consideration of a targeted conference; and**
- **That consideration should be given to the establishment of a process whereby accompanying spouses of both genders might be facilitated to preserve and enhance their pension entitlements including both State and private pensions while they are engaged in an unremunerated accompaniment role abroad.**

## **8. WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY**

- LL. Women's participation in the judiciary represents the final group of decision-makers which are monitored regularly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. In Ireland, the independent role of the judiciary is enshrined in the Constitution.
- MM. In July 2011, the President of Ireland appointed the first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Ireland while in February 2011 a female Attorney General was appointed for the first time.
- NN. Within the Irish Judicial system, women account for almost 32 per cent of the total number of Judges in all of the Courts. The percentage of female Judges is 30 per cent or higher in the Supreme, the Circuit and the District Courts, with the High Court at just 12.1.
- OO. In Ireland, applications are invited from suitably qualified barristers and solicitors for appointment to all Courts and these are screened by the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board.

The purpose of the Board is to identify persons and inform the Government of the suitability of those persons for appointment to judicial office.

- PP. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in the judiciary, the Sub-Committee is mindful of the special place of the judiciary in the Constitution.

**The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That in the public advertisement of judicial vacancies, the JAAB Notice should explicitly state that it welcomes applications from women;**
- **That a job shadowing scheme for female solicitors, barristers and senior counsel be established by the President of the High Court to address the under-representation of female Judges in the High Court; and**
- **That the functions of the JAAB be extended to include responsibility for promoting diversity within the judiciary and for promoting the judiciary as a career option.**

## **9. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

QQ. The achievement of the overall goal of increasing women's representation in decision-making will require a commitment from a wide and diverse body of stakeholders. Much of this commitment requires changes of attitude and changes of approach rather than financial investment. At a time when financial considerations are paramount, the implementation of initiatives which can achieve tangible benefits without any or with minimal cost is to be encouraged.

RR. In some instances, mentoring programmes have been recommended as possible solutions by the Sub-Committee. It may also be appropriate to establish some good practice models for training and development courses for particular sectors, such as for example, the Civil or Public service or for the private sector, and for further initiatives to support women's advancement in politics. The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality has successfully applied for grant funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), under the EU's PROGRESS Programme, to implement some of the recommendations contained in this report.

SS. The outcomes to be achieved through the implementation of the Recommendations of the Sub-Committee are tangible and measurable. Indeed most are already routinely measured by the European Commission. The NWS includes a monitoring process and it is essential that progress in the achievement of greater female involvement in leadership roles through the implementation of the recommendations of this Sub-Committee is also monitored regularly.

**The Sub-Committee recommends that**

- **the Annual Progress Report on implementation of the NWS should henceforth include up to date data on women in leadership roles, while progress on this topic should be discussed at each meeting of the NWS Monitoring Committee until the deficits have been removed.**
  - **the national equality machinery and all relevant civil society bodies continue to encourage the active engagement of women in all decision-making roles among their memberships.**
- TT. Finally in preparing this Report the Sub-Committee experienced difficulty with regard to the availability of both gender based data and time series of comparable data.

**Accordingly the Sub-Committee recommends that**



- **all relevant data sets funded by the State include full gender disaggregation, in accordance with international good practice.**



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

1. The National Women's Strategy (NWS) was launched in April 2007 with the aim to achieve  
*an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life*<sup>6</sup>.
2. The 20 Key Objectives and over 200 planned actions contained in the Strategy are grouped under the three key themes of:
  - Equalising socio-economic opportunity for women;
  - Ensuring the wellbeing of women; and
  - Engaging women as equal and active citizens.
3. Implementation of the Strategy is overseen by a Monitoring Committee representative of all relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and the social partners and chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Gender Equality. In order to build further on some of the themes of the Strategy, the Secretariat<sup>7</sup> to the Monitoring Committee proposed the establishment of one or more Sub-Committees to address specific areas with gender deficits.
4. The NWS recognises the low numbers of women in decision-making positions in Ireland as a democratic deficit which has economic, social and cultural impacts. The Strategy has as one of its Key Objectives "To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland".

### Roles in Achieving Equality in Leadership

5. Throughout the Report, reference will be made to work previously or currently undertaken to foster the advancement of women into decision-making roles. This includes work undertaken or supported by
  - The Department of Justice and Equality which has responsibility for the development of gender equality policy at national level; the implementation of the National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016; the implementation of the ESF supported Equality for Women Measure 2008 – 2013, a programme of positive actions; and the international policy brief on gender equality;
  - The Department's former independent office, the NDP Gender Equality Unit which received ESF support to promote gender equality in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006;
  - The Equality Authority which has a dual role in working to combat discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in the areas covered by the equality legislation, which includes gender (it is anticipated that this role will continue under the new Human Rights and Equality Commission);
  - The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) which serves as the national representative organisation for women's organisations and which works to lobby government and to foster gender equality through work with and on behalf of its affiliate members;
  - The Community and Voluntary Sector which is a widely disparate body of organisations, large and small, and which includes a significant number of women's

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<sup>6</sup> Vision of the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016.

<sup>7</sup> Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality

groups and affiliates of women's groups which work actively on the ground, frequently to support women's development, to foster their roles in society at all levels, to provide training and to lobby for their advancements at local and national levels;

- As a part of the Community and Voluntary Sector, women's organisations at local and national levels continue to play an important role working with women and promoting their voices within decision-making arenas. This work includes capacity building, training, mentoring and encouraging women to represent themselves at local, regional and national levels;
- ICTU and the trade union movement; which work to achieve gender equality for their members as employees and for their own staff and executive committees;
- IBEC which has been active in working with its members in promoting awareness of gender equality issues for a number of years; and
- Other Government Departments and State Agencies which have a role in relation to specific aspects of Government policy which impact on the achievement of gender equality and which are asked to consider the gender impact of new policy proposals to Government.

### **Why Address "Women in Decision-making Roles" at this time?**

6. Addressing equal participation in decision-making is a recognition of the rights of women and men to participate and have a voice in plans, strategies and decisions affecting their future. Such participation is broadly understood to include social, political and economic participation and requires an active role by all citizens of society, including women, to shape their futures. Engaging the process in this way through developing policies, communicating ideas and seeking public support is referred to as active citizenship. Citizenship is defined as:

*the effective, informed engagement of individuals in their communities and in broader society around issues relating to the public domain...[people] need to know about politics, law, economics, the functioning of communities and social groups and their rights and responsibilities in terms of these communities and groups. And they need to feel confident in applying this knowledge, which requires a 'toolkit' of citizenship skills: investigating, communicating, participating, negotiating, taking responsible action<sup>8</sup>.*

7. In this regard, the Programme for the Government launched in March 2011 states that

*The Government...will strive to ensure that every one of our citizens has an effective right, free from discrimination, to contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the nation.*

8. The work of the two Commissions on the Status of Women strongly recommended greater involvement of women in decision-making roles. Since the second Report was published in 1992, successive Governments have taken steps to increase women's representation on State Boards with some success, although there are still some underlying weaknesses.
9. As will be explored further later in this report, Ireland has international obligations in relation to women and decision-making. As a signatory of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) in 1985, Ireland has entered into internationally recognised commitments in relation to the inclusion of women in decision-making roles, including in politics, in public life and in the diplomatic service. The Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 brings similar commitments to all UN States Parties, including Ireland. The European Union (EU) also actively recommends that its Member States advance the role of women, including in decision-making roles.

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<sup>8</sup> Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation – [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

10. A wide range of bodies have undertaken work to foster the advancement of women into leadership roles. In particular, the NWCi has undertaken a number of projects on politics and other leadership initiatives over the past twenty years, as recommended by the Second Commission on the Status of Women.
11. Significant investment had been made by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (now the Department of Justice and Equality) into positive actions to foster women in leadership roles under the Equality for Women Measure of the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006. This included a number of positive actions undertaken by the National Women’s Council of Ireland; by other national representative bodies; three political parties; and by a number of regional and more localised women’s groups. Further actions were supported by the ESF and Exchequer supported NDP Gender Equality Unit.
12. The successor Equality for Women Measure 2008 – 2013, as launched in May 2008, envisaged streams of grant support for projects which would foster the advancement of women into senior management roles and women in decision-making. The management strand was launched in 2010 but did not attract many project proposals which had this goal. The launch of the broader “women and leadership” Strand has been deferred pending the outcome of the work of this Sub-Committee.
13. Since the current economic downturn, the public expenditure situation has led to significant cuts to the funding provision for the equality machinery and positive actions focusing on gender equality. Due to the need to achieve public expenditure savings and to maximise the focus on employment creation for the newly unemployed within the ESF supported Human Capital Investment Operational Programme, funding for the Equality for Women Measure was reduced from €31.75 million to just under €12 million for the period 2008 to 2013. Accordingly it was only feasible to undertake more modest positive actions than had been envisaged originally.
14. Experience since the completion of the 2000 – 2006 Equality for Women Measure and other positive action initiatives and since the publication of the NWS show that, while the results of previous positive action projects were impressive in terms of engagement with women, the long term benefits of such projects and of the ongoing debate on the need to have a more inclusive leadership have not yet been fully reflected statistically in women’s penetration of the upper echelons of decision-making, be it in political, managerial or corporate governance roles.
15. Despite some small progress, the low number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland is still regarded as unsatisfactory, not just from a democratic point of view, but from an economic, social and cultural point of view. According to the 2013 figures from Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the EU, Ireland has an almost perfectly gender-balanced population with 98 men per 100 women in the population. According to the CSO publication ‘Women and Men in Ireland 2011’, in Ireland, in 2011, the age group 30-64 had a perfectly gender balanced population with 100 men per 100 women in the population. This makes the low figures for the number of women in decision-making positions all the more stark, as women in Ireland remain under-represented in decision-making structures across all sectors.
16. Recovery from the economic crisis provides an opportunity to promote the inclusion of women in decision-making positions as a matter of urgency. The Programme for Government, published in March 2011, includes commitments to the advancement of gender equality and the advancement of women into decision-making roles, including on State Boards and in political life.

#### **Work of the Sub-Committee**

17. Taking note of the lack of tangible progress in relation to women and decision-making, Gender Equality Division in its role to steer the achievement of the National Women’s Strategy, had proposed to the NWS Monitoring Committee in 2009 that a Sub-Committee work on women in decision-making roles. The same call for suggestions led the National Women’s Council of Ireland to propose work on women in politics. It was agreed that the themes would be fused, into one body of work.

18. Accordingly a Sub-Committee was established in late 2010 to address women in decision-making roles.
19. The Sub-Committee meetings have been chaired by the two successive Ministers of State with responsibility for Equality, Minister of State Mary White T.D. (Green Party) to February 2011 and Minister of State Kathleen Lynch T.D. (Labour Party) thereafter.
20. The terms of reference for the Sub-Committee are contained in Appendix 1 and its membership in Appendix 2.
21. Since its inaugural meeting in December 2010, the Sub-Committee has met on nine occasions. Secretarial support was provided by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality.
22. The Sub-Committee has reviewed national and international literature and best practice for each of the decision-making fields encompassed in this report. The group also heard evidence from a number of experts, which has helped to inform the recommendations contained in this Report. A list of the experts who assisted the Sub-Committee is contained in Appendix 3. On the basis of this information, the Sub-Committee has drawn up a number of recommendations in relation to each target group.

#### **Scope of the Sub-Committee**

23. The National Women's Strategy Sub-Committee is closely linked to the National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee. Both Committees include representatives of a number of Government Departments together with representatives of the social partners, under the chairmanship of the Minister of State with responsibility for Equality. In undertaking this piece of work, the Sub-Committee members from the Executive and the work of the Sub-committee were constrained by separation of powers as enshrined in the Irish Constitution. This limited the scope of the Sub-Committee in relation to recommendations in relation to the legislature and the judiciary.

#### **Structure of this Report of the Sub-Committee**

24. This introductory Chapter sets the context and presents the rationale behind the establishment of this Sub-Committee to examine the issues surrounding the low participation of women in decision-making roles in Ireland.
25. Chapter 2 of the Report outlines some of the developments which have taken place in an international context in relation to women in decision-making, including the work of the multi-lateral organisations: the EU, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.
26. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the key gender equality issues including the economic argument for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and highlights some of the key international studies which support these arguments.
27. The Sub-Committee decided to focus specifically on decision-making in the six decision-making roles which are monitored by the European Commission as part of its initiative to foster gender equality. Each group is dealt with separately and therefore chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively examine the decision-making sectors contained in the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee: Women in Senior Management Positions in Private and Public Sector Employment; Women on Boards (both Corporate and State Boards); Women in Politics; Women in the Diplomatic Service; and Women in the Judiciary.
28. Chapter 9 discusses the implementation of the recommendations. Following the completion of the Report, it will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for the National Women's Strategy. If it is acceptable to the Monitoring Committee, it is likely that it will be referred to the Minister for Justice and Equality with a recommendation that it be submitted to Government with a request for approval to publish the Report.

## **Acknowledgements**

29. The Sub-Committee would like to thank all the experts who gave freely of their time, frequently at short notice to assist them in their deliberations.
  
30. The Secretariat of the Sub-Committee identified a range of literature of relevance to each of the themes for consideration of the Sub-Committee. This work, together with the drafting of this Report, was largely undertaken by Ms. Louise Sandom, Administrative Officer, with support from Mr. Paul Laycock, Executive Officer, and direction from Mr. Patrick O’Leary, Assistant Principal Officer and Ms. Pauline Moreau, Principal Officer, Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality. While it acknowledges the significant contribution of all the team members, the Sub-Committee wants to recognise especially the painstaking attention to detail shown by Ms. Sandom.





## CHAPTER 2

### INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

#### Introduction

31. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the multilateral bodies which work to achieve true gender equality from a mix of human rights and economic development perspectives, all favour the advancement of women into decision-making roles. The paragraphs which follow offer an overview of their thinking and recommendations on the matter.

#### European Union

32. The concept of equality between women and men was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community of six states in 1958. All new Member States were required to adopt the *acquis communautaire* – the body of legislation which had been adopted by the Community. This included a strong body of legislation addressing gender equality issues, particularly in the workplace.
33. In its economic and social policies, the EU has come to recognise the demographic and economic deficit, particularly in relation to pensions, which requires the Union to maximise the human capital contribution of all its citizens. Accordingly, the EU requires Member States to maximise the size of their labour markets by encouraging both men and women to remain economically active throughout their lives. A range of factors has resulted in European women reaching higher standards of education than their male counterparts and it is recognised as an economic weakness if these women are not encouraged to maximise their contribution by advancing in the workplace and in other decision-making roles. As a result, the advancement of women into decision-making roles at all levels and in all fields is also a key goal of the economic and social policy of the EU.
34. The European Commission adopted a series of strategies to foster gender equality and Member States were encouraged to adopt policies which would advance the economic prosperity and competitiveness of the Community/Union and to address issues such as poverty and social exclusion by encouraging the economic engagement of women. This resulted in the development of a number of specific targets during the early 2000s, including targets on women's labour market participation and the availability of childcare services to support working mothers.
35. More recently, the European Commission has also done considerable work in collaboration with the Member States on the implementation by Member States of the actions proposed under the Beijing Platform for Action. This has included innovative research and the establishment and monitoring of key indicators for many of the areas of concern identified by the Beijing Platform. This has led to EU Council Conclusions on a range of topics.
36. The topic was taken to a higher level when the first *European Pact for Gender Equality* was adopted by the European Council (of Prime Ministers) in 2006. The Pact emphasised the importance of utilising women's untapped potential in the labour market, including by promoting women's empowerment in political and economic life.
37. Under the Hungarian Presidency in the first half of 2011, a revision of the original Pact was prepared to provide fresh impetus and to reaffirm and support the close link between the Pact and Europe 2020, the EU's key document for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and the Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015. The *European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020* was adopted by the Employment, Social Protection, Health and Consumer Affairs (ESPHCA) Council in March 2011 and has, as one of its priorities, the promotion of the equal participation of women in decision-making.
38. Furthermore and in this regard, sight should not be lost of the European Commission's and the recommendations of the Council of Ministers of the European Union that Member States recognise the importance of sustaining support for gender equality during the economic crisis to

ensure that the achievements to date are not lost and to ensure that the contribution of women to all facets of society is maximised. Specifically in this regard the Commission<sup>9</sup> noted that

*Gender equality is not only a question of diversity and social fairness; it is also a precondition for meeting the objectives of sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion. Investing in gender equality policies pays off in terms of higher female employment rates, women's contribution to GDP, tax revenues and sustainable fertility rates. ... equality between women and men has proven to be a sustainable solution to old and new challenges. Gender equality policies should therefore be considered as a long-term investment and not as a short-term cost.*

39. Remaining on the European stage, ***A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men: A Women's Charter*** was presented by the European Commission as a political declaration on the occasion of International Women's Day in March 2010. The Charter sets out five key areas for action and commits the European Commission to building a gender perspective into all its policies for the next five years while taking specific measures to promote equality. One of the key areas for action which the Charter aims to promote is "Equality in decision-making through EU incentive measures".
40. On 21st September 2010 the European Commission adopted its new ***Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015***, the successor to the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010. The new gender Strategy builds on the five priority areas identified in A Women's Charter and has equality in decision-making as one of its priority areas for action.
41. Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the current decade. It desires the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The Union sets five ambitious objectives on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy, to be reached by 2020. Each Member State will adopt its own national targets in each of these areas. The Europe 2020 Strategy promotes inclusive growth and the need for increased economic engagement of women, noting that:

*"Inclusive growth means empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change and build a cohesive society..."*

*Europe needs to make full use of its labour potential to face the challenges of an ageing population and rising global competition. Policies to promote gender equality will be needed to increase labour force participation thus adding to growth and social inclusion".*
42. In order to improve statistics and monitor progress towards gender balance, the European Commission has built a comprehensive database on Women and Men in Decision-Making. In June 2008, the European Commission launched the *European Network of Women in Decision-making in Politics and the Economy* to provide a European platform for debate, exchange of information and good practices and for identifying the best strategies to make progress on this issue.
43. A number of EU Council Conclusions and Indicators aimed at increasing female representation in decision-making and monitoring the situation across the EU Member States have also been adopted. These can be accessed on the website of the Council of Ministers of the European Union<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2009) *Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic & Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. COM(2009)694 final, Brussels, p.7

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index_en.htm)

44. More recently, the European Commission has published its proposal for a *Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures*, which promotes the increased involvement of women on corporate boards (further detail can be found on pages 63 and 64).

### Council of Europe

45. Council of Europe *Recommendation Rec (2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making*<sup>11</sup> defines "balanced participation of women and men" in political and public decision-making as a minimum of 40 per cent of representation of each sex in any decision-making body in political and public life.
46. In 2009, the Council of Europe (CoE) produced a report entitled "Parity Democracy - a far cry from reality". The Report is a comparative study of the results of the first and second rounds of monitoring of CoE Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.
47. The Report examines balanced participation of women and men in politics (including Local Government), the Judiciary, the Diplomatic Service and in the CoE itself. The CoE Report uses the data collected from two questionnaires which issued to Member States in 2005 and 2008 to evaluate developments and to identify trends in the evolution of balanced participation. Ireland ranks below the Member State average in all areas of balanced participation in decision-making, except for the percentage of female mayors which is slightly above the average. The key statistics from the Report are presented in Table 1 below. The table gives the average Council of Europe Member State rate and the corresponding rate for Ireland.

**Table 1**  
**Key Statistics from the Council of Europe report**  
**'Parity Democracy - a far cry from reality', 2009**

Indicator	M.S. Avg.	Ireland
Women elected to Lower houses of parliament	23.7%	13.3%*
Women elected to Upper houses of parliament	24.7%	21.7%**
Percentage of female Ministers	24.4%	20.0%
Percentage of female Deputy/Junior Ministers	25.7%	10.0%
Percentage of female Mayors	10.2%	11.4%
Percentage of female Municipal Councillors	23.7%	17.9%
Percentage of female High/Supreme Court Judges	25.8%	25.0%
Percentage of female Ambassadors	15.1%	9.1%

\* Following the 2011 General Election this figure has increased to 15%.

\*\* Following the 2011 Seanad Elections this figure has increased to 30%.

48. At the seventh Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men, in Azerbaijan in May 2010, a Draft Resolution was adopted entitled "bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality to achieve real gender equality".
49. The Resolution recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in their dealings with member states in the field of balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, including in decision-making, should address the issue of the under-representation of women by:
- *adopting and implementing positive action and temporary special measures to promote the balanced participation of women and men in political, public and economic decision-making;*

<sup>11</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2229>

- *establishing concrete goals and benchmarks to promote the balanced participation of women and men in political and public life in line with the measures proposed in Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.*

50. In the Action Plan 'Taking up the challenge of the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality', also adopted at the meeting in May 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe were invited, through the work of the Steering Committee on Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) to:

*continue its follow-up activities to Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making with a view to promoting the implementation of common standards throughout member states and promote women's participation through the development of activities aimed at encouraging women and men to share equally responsibilities and benefits of paid and unpaid work, in particular home and family responsibilities;*

*promote the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec<sup>12</sup>.... on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building and undertake follow-up activities in this field;*

*develop activities to monitor the equal access to justice of both women and men at national and international levels, in particular to the European Court of Human Rights, prepare an analysis of the data collected and develop, if necessary, awareness raising activities to promote women's access to justice.*

#### **United Nations**

51. The ***Beijing Platform for Action*** is an agenda for women's empowerment which was developed at the fourth UN World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995. It calls for the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and programmes. It also sets out a programme of actions to be undertaken by a wide range of stakeholders including the UN, Governments, NGOs and the media to focus on concrete measures to address the critical areas of concern for women on a worldwide basis.
52. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies twelve critical areas of concern for gender equality including "Power and Decision-Making". Reviews of the implementation by the EU Member States and the EU institutions of the critical areas of concern are undertaken periodically by the EU Presidency.
53. The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. It was ratified by Ireland in 1985. The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to and equal opportunities in a number of domains. The Convention contains thirty Articles, two of which have a specific focus on women in decision-making roles. Article 7 of the Convention states that:

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:*

*to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;*

*to participate in the formulation of Government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public duties at all levels of Government;*

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<sup>12</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 10 of the Committee of Ministers on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building.

*to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.*

54. Article 8 of the Convention relates specifically to women being involved in representing their country at international level; whether in the diplomatic service or attending meetings of the multilaterals – the EU, Council of Europe and the UN. Article 8 states:

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations.*

55. States Parties are also urged to adopt temporary special measures in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention to overcome historical discrimination against women. Article 4.1 states that :

*Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.*

56. The most recent examination of Ireland's CEDAW Report, in 2005, brought criticism from the CEDAW Committee of the significant under-representation of women in elected political structures, particularly in the Oireachtas. The Committee stated that it was further concerned at the low representation of women in the civil service and in the Department of Foreign Affairs at the higher grades.

57. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is a multilateral treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966, which entered into force from January 1973. The Covenant is part of the International Bill of Rights, along with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. ICESCR is monitored by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Covenant was signed by Ireland in 1973 and ratified in 1989.

58. Article 8 of the ICESCR Covenant states that

*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular:*

...

*(c) Equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence;...*

59. The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination deals with racism and racial discrimination and sets certain standards for governments at the national and local levels. Although its examination of Ireland in 2011 did not specifically address women in decision-making roles, the low profile of women from minorities, including migrant and Traveller women in decision-making roles, prompted the comment of the CERD Committee that the State Party [Ireland] take all necessary measures to ensure that migrant and minority women continue to be a focus for target actions and objectives in the National Women's Strategy following its forthcoming review.

60. In July 2010, a new UN organisation for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – UN Women, was established to consolidate the four existing UN bodies on women: the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). One of the strategic priorities of UN Women is to strengthen women's role in leadership and decision-making.

61. The Gender, Governance and Political Participation Programme of UN Women aims to increase the participation and the representation of women in public spaces and in political representation spheres to strengthen democracies, to ensure that women can exercise and enjoy their rights and to eradicate gender discrimination.

## CHAPTER 3

### INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES

#### Introduction

62. In outlining the reasons why it is necessary to increase female participation in decision-making roles, it is perhaps important to define what is meant by gender equality in the context of this Report:

*“Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally favoured”.*

63. Gender equality of opportunity can be defined as creating the means whereby both women and men can avail of the opportunities to participate in the economic, cultural and political realms of society. These settings can form the basis for generating equality in society:

- Economic equality focuses on access to employment, income and economic development alongside access to key social goods such as education, health and accommodation;
- Cultural equality relates to the status of a particular group and the acknowledgement of their particular identity, experience and situation and accommodating same in policies and practices; and
- Political equality is about access to decision-making in a democratic society. It involves participation in decision-making in the full range of institutions in society.

64. The previous Chapter has underlined the international obligations with which Ireland must comply with regard to increasing the participation of women in decision-making roles. Indeed, the Beijing Declaration recognises that:

*“Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace...”*

65. Over the past fifteen years, a small cadre of women have made a considerable impact in both the corporate and political worlds, particularly in the USA. This has led to a number of studies of the potential impacts that a wider body of women could make if they were to become engaged at the highest levels of decision-making. Studies have found evidence of enhanced corporate governance and better decision-making among firms which have a female presence of at least two women on corporate boards. Recognition of the complementary skills of men and women and their differing thought processes has led to speculation that some of the factors which contributed to the banking meltdown of the late 1990s might have been avoided had the more cautious but equally valid thought processes typical of women been present in the corporate board rooms.

66. As women account for more than 50 per cent of the population of Ireland, their exclusion from the highest decision-making roles represents a democratic deficit. This continued exclusion is also problematic from an economic, social and cultural point of view. It is likely that persisting gender stereotypes and perceptions continue to hinder women’s efforts to reach the highest decision-making roles, while beliefs surrounding the cultural roles traditionally held by women and men, particularly in relation to childcare and care of other dependents, have a detrimental effect on women’s advancement in the workforce. This has created a situation whereby women are not reaching their full potential in the labour market, which affects the performance of the economy as a whole.

67. To achieve true representation of women in Ireland in the decision-making sectors, be it in management, in corporate governance or in politics, it is also essential that proactive steps be taken to ensure that women from all communities in Ireland, including the LGBT community, the Traveller community, women with a disability and migrant women are encouraged to participate in activities which will bring them into decision-making roles.
68. The remainder of this Chapter will address the economic, social and cultural reasons for increasing female participation in decision-making roles and will explore the main barriers to women's advancement in the labour market which have been identified. It draws on the extensive literature review considered by the Sub-Committee and the experiences of the guest-speakers who met with the Sub-Committee in the course of its deliberations. The under-representation of women in the political sphere will be examined in Chapter 6.

### **The main Barriers/Obstacles to Women's Advancement**

69. In the examination of the literature and good practice examples from other countries, the Sub-Committee has identified a number of key issues and obstacles which act as potential barriers to women's advancement in decision-making roles, which must be addressed at societal level if progress is to be achieved. These include:

#### ***Traditional gender roles:***

- A report published by the National Women's Council of Ireland in 2009<sup>13</sup> shows that women are still responsible for more than 80 per cent of the tasks of family life, e.g. childcare, eldercare, cooking, cleaning, etc. The reconciliation of family/private life and working life is a prerequisite for fostering women's advancement in the labour market and ultimately into positions of decision-making responsibility.
- The availability of accessible and affordable childcare (and caring services to support other dependent groups) is essential to the engagement of mothers in both economic and decision-making life. While the past ten years has seen a significant increase in the availability of childcare in Ireland, the provision of a quality service necessitates a good staff ratio and this contributes to the comparatively high cost of delivering childcare. A number of countries with higher direct and/or indirect tax regimes and more extensive Welfare State structures make childcare available at more affordable costs. A further consideration, particularly in the context of the extended care requirements needed by mothers who wish to engage in activities including the long hours culture associated with management, corporate and State Board commitments and politics, is the need for childcare at atypical hours. This is most frequently addressed by availing of the services of childminders. The EU continues to recommend that Member States work towards the Barcelona targets<sup>14</sup>, set in 2002.
- Reconciliation policies which promote a more equitable division between women and men of time spent on paid and unpaid work are necessary so that the balancing of work and family life becomes the norm in workplace policy for employees at all levels. There is a perception that flexible working is only available for less senior employees. This is likely to be related to the long hours culture often associated with senior management.
- Pregnant workers continue to face a significant risk of discrimination. The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme/Equality Authority's research on '*Pregnancy at Work*' found that up to 30 per cent of the women surveyed had experienced unfair treatment during pregnancy. At its most extreme, unfair treatment included dismissal. This was reported by 5 per cent of women employed during pregnancy. The finding that 10 per cent of women surveyed reported loss of salary or denial of promotion suggests that prejudicial attitudes towards pregnancy and childcare responsibilities continues to be a factor limiting women's career progression. This research took place before the economic downturn became very pronounced and the situation may have been aggravated since then.

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<sup>13</sup> NWCI: Who Cares, Challenging the Myths about Gender and Care in Ireland: 2009.

<sup>14</sup> To provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and to at least 33% of children under three years of age.



- Sectoral segregation in the labour market can also hinder women's efforts to be promoted to senior management. Again there is evidence from numerous pieces of research that women recruits including in graduate programmes are often placed in "soft" roles such as human resources due to perceived gender characteristics and this can lead to a lack of experience in line management which may be a barrier to promotion to the top managerial positions, including in industrial organisations.
  - Once in the labour market, women can also be excluded from informal networks. These informal networks can range from the golf outings in the private/public sector to the "pint buying culture" prevalent in Irish politics. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that these are the arenas where deals are made and promotions can be secured. An employee can also raise their visibility within the workplace through involvement in these informal networks.
  - Women may be excluded from the opportunity to engage in the full range of sports and other recreational activities which are primarily scheduled for evenings or at weekends. This can arise due to caring commitments, the lack of free time and the minority roles which are open to women in many sports and other recreational organisations. Apart from this loss of choice with regard to recreation, this can also preclude women from active participation in the frequently highly influential local networks which develop around such sports and recreational activities.
70. The report produced by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, T.C.D. entitled '*Women and Ambition in the Irish Civil Service*' asks the question 'What role does socialisation play in shaping women's ambition?' The research found that ambition is not seen as a positive characteristic in a woman. Female respondents to the survey were also less likely than men to rate their own performance in the highest terms, 70 per cent of female respondents rated their own performance as equivalent to that of their co-workers, while 70 per cent of male respondents rated their performance as higher than their co-workers. This suggests that perceived gendered characteristics and traits act as barriers to female advancement in the labour market.

***Attitudes and Perceptions:***

71. Gender stereotypes and perceptions continue to frustrate women's efforts to reach top management positions in all areas of decision-making in Ireland. The core concern for cultural/social equality is the mutual respect and recognition that is due to all members of society independent of gender. In relation to gender it requires society to respect the different identities, experiences and situations of men and women. However, cultural/social equality is hampered by the socialisation process. The socialisation process, where an individual's human behaviour is shaped by societal norms and values, is gender ordered where positions of authority and organisations are designed based on the male model. To effect change in these organisations requires an awareness and knowledge of the influence of the gender order and the socialisation process. Ultimately, as organisations are part of society, it would be a matter for society to change and acquaint itself with a culture of beliefs, customs and attitudes that are gender sensitive. This undoubtedly would take some time and the pace of change would be slow.
72. A European Commission report<sup>15</sup> identifies the key issues in the following quote from a 2011 report:

*"The reasons for the current over-representation of men in power and decision-making are not only structural and multifaceted, but are also grounded in traditional gender roles.*

*While many structural barriers that may impede women's attempts to climb the corporate ladder have been removed through legislation, other significant structural factors limit women's career opportunities. The traditional division of labour, which defines women's*

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<sup>15</sup> Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010 – The gender balance in business leadership. European Commission, 2011.

*responsibility as caring for the family and that of men as providing for it also acts as a barrier to women's advancement. Examples of structural barriers that affect women's opportunity to participate in the labour market on an equal footing with men are tax policies that do not encourage two-earner families and a lack of access to care services for dependent persons (children, disabled and the elderly) or of adequate leave schemes and flexible working arrangements.*

*Other barriers to women's advancement are found in many business cultures where traditional gender roles prevail. These underpin the view that women should take primary responsibility for raising the family and engender doubts about their capacity to fulfil this role together with a professional career, particularly at senior level. This contributes to vertical segregation: women are under-represented in line management positions that lead to the top positions and where recruitments for CEO posts are made. Women are consequently less highly trained and are less often offered middle-level line management positions that would prepare them for the highest positions. A lack of role models may also discourage some women from looking for management positions<sup>16</sup>”.*

### **Challenges to Gender Equality**

73. The report of The Leadership Initiative *‘Towards a new Prosperity: A Study to Underpin New Thinking and Better Solutions’* was published in May 2011. In the study, gender order is defined as the social constructions of masculinities and femininities and the manner in which these become evident within various domains (this study is restricted to reviews on the education and employment sectors). The study argues that gender order in Education and Employment hampers recovery from the economic downturn. Some of the key points from the report are summarised below.

#### ***Education:***

- Dept of Education statistics reveal that year on year boys are more likely than girls to leave school without qualifications – in the twenty year period from 1982 to 2002 the proportion of boys amongst those leaving school with no qualifications increased from just over half (53%) to almost two thirds (64%);
- Examination results at Junior Cert and Leaving Cert levels show gender differences in relation to (a) sitting ordinary or higher level papers and (b) results achieved;
- Males are also more likely to drop out of third level education and overall fewer men than women have third level qualifications; and
- There are also strong gender patterns in relation to subject choice at third level with men dominating in engineering and related subject areas and women dominating in health, welfare and education.
- Enrolment patterns in higher education show that 59 per cent of full time under-graduates in the university sector are women with 56 per cent of post graduates also female.<sup>17</sup>
- Within the Irish University system, only 11 per cent of full professors are women, with 14% female associate professors.<sup>18</sup>

#### ***Employment:***

- Gender outcomes observable in the employment sector indicate that the transfer of educational attainment to employment attainment is heavily gendered with women (although they are more highly qualified) less likely to participate, more likely to leave the workforce and more likely to be confined to certain sectors, occupations and levels;

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> HEA: Student Statistics 2008 - 2009

<sup>18</sup> P O'Connor : 2008 Fourth Conference on Higher Education Barcelona

- The decline in women’s participation rates in employment (which is highly correlated with having young children) points to a considerable loss of experienced personnel to the labour force. Moreover, once having left the labour force, re-entry for women is frequently associated with downward mobility; and
  - Despite the huge changes in the gender profile of the Irish labour force, gender segregation persists. The key pattern here is the dominance of men in senior positions and this pattern prevails across the economy as a whole, in new as well as traditional occupations and even in sectors or professions where women dominate the work force (e.g., healthcare, education).
74. In summary, currently in Ireland, a situation prevails such that (a) we have sustained leakage of talent and potential from the educational system of males resulting in a much more educated female population and (b) an employment system that shows sustained leakage out of the labour force of that educated population and its clustering in certain sectors and at lower levels. In other words, at a time of economic crisis and challenge where there is an accepted need to maximise the country’s resources, Ireland is systematically under-educating a sizeable cohort of males, creating the conditions in which large numbers of its most educated feel unable to reconcile work and family life and thus withdraw from the workforce and drawing its top decision makers in business, science, industry and public administration from an artificially small talent pool.
75. Across the economy as a whole, vertical segregation persists, whereby women are clustered into lower level occupations, while most senior positions are held by men. This is the case even in those areas and occupations dominated by women. In 2009, almost half of all women in employment (48%) were working in three sectors of the economy: human health and social work services (19.8%), wholesale and retail sector (16.6%) or education (11.6%). In the same year, exactly half the male labour force (49.7%) were clustered in industry, construction and wholesale and retail.
76. It becomes clear how gender outcomes impact negatively on both men and women and how they entail significant costs for Ireland’s economy and society in terms of lost opportunity costs. In particular the combination of gender outcomes in education and employment combine to frustrate the full development and deployment of female human capital in Ireland. Human capital is a key to Ireland’s economic and social future and the centrality of skills for life to social and economic development. There are evident cost savings that can be made if certain gender-dependent dynamics are tackled and that in tackling these, a human capital dividend is achieved that transfers into enhanced productivity.
77. Some of the persistent challenges which will be faced in tackling the issue are likely to include :
- A belief that gender equality has already been achieved. The introduction of legislation in this regard is seen as sufficient;
  - The belief in meritocracy – if someone is good enough they will get to the top. This doesn’t take into account the extra constraints and obstacles which women have to contend with. The idea of a meritocracy is stronger in Anglo-Saxon countries than in the Nordic countries;
  - The belief that it is only a matter of time before change is seen, the momentum is there. The removal of the marriage bar should be used as a benchmark against this argument; and
  - The invisibility of the gender order – this is seen as a social/cultural phenomenon.

### **The Economic Case to Support Gender Equality and Women’s Leadership Role**

78. The economic recession has underlined the necessity of having a diverse and skilled workforce and of maximising the potential of all employees within an organisation and in the broader

economic environment. A research report<sup>19</sup> commissioned under the Swedish Presidency of the EU in 2009 estimates that if true gender equality were achieved in the EU, then EU Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has the potential to grow by 27 per cent. The Swedish study estimates that the impact in Ireland could be an increase of 35 per cent in GDP.

79. The low numbers of women in decision-making positions represent a vast pool of untapped potential and under-utilisation of talent. Recent studies<sup>20</sup> suggest that organisations with a good gender-balance in senior positions tend to perform better than those who do not. Women in senior decision-making positions are also thought to be more risk-averse than their male counterparts. This moderating influence may also have a positive impact on the organisation's performance.
80. As an example, there are no women in any of the top positions in all of the EU Central Banks, the European Central Bank, the European Investment Fund and the European Investment Bank. Relatively few women make it into senior positions in the financial services industry and other economic roles, either nationally or internationally. Despite the benefits of a gender balanced board having been recognised in international studies, this has not yet been implemented to any great extent. Indeed it has been suggested<sup>21</sup> that because of this lack of gender diversity in corporate boardrooms the financial crisis which has had global repercussions could thus be said to be a “man”-made crisis. The international media have reported extensively that the only financial institution to survive the banking crash in Iceland was established shortly before the crisis emerged by two women who are quoted as saying that their success in this regard comes from the fact that they were “risk aware”.
81. A Report published by the European Commission in January 2010 entitled *'More women in senior positions: Key to economic stability and growth'* cites the example of a Finnish survey of 13,000 limited companies with more than ten employees which found

*"...that firms with a female CEO were in practice around 10 percent more profitable than comparable firms with a male CEO. A similar effect was found for companies with gender balanced boards compared to those with all male boards".*
82. A similar study, also mentioned in the European Commission's report, of companies from the French CAC40 (the stock market index that includes 40 of the top 100 French listed companies by market capitalisation) found that those companies with the highest number of women in management positions had their stock market value affected the least during the economic crisis. The study highlights the example of BNP-Paribas, which had nearly 39% female managers and saw its stock decline in value by 20% during the period studied, compared to Credit Agricole, which had only 16% women managers and suffered a fall of 50% in its market value over the same time.
83. *The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity - The International Evidence (2007)* reviews a wide range of research evidence on the relationship between equality/diversity (including the promotion of gender equality) and organisational performance. The report was commissioned by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and the Equality Authority and extracts from the study note the costs of ignoring diversity:
  - Retention costs associated with the loss of knowledge and skills of employees who leave because of discrimination and lack of opportunities;
  - Absenteeism costs - if employees feel undervalued or experience discrimination, harassment and bullying;
  - Legal costs where employees take a case, plus damage to corporate reputation;

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<sup>19</sup> 'Gender equality, economic growth and employment', Asa Lofstrom, financed by the Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.

<sup>20</sup> 'The Bottom Line: Corporate performance and women's representation on boards', Catalyst, New York, 2007

<sup>21</sup> 'Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver', McKinsey & Company, France 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

- Productivity reductions due to increased employee turnover and absenteeism;
  - Increased conflict within the workplace;
  - Increased management costs; and
  - Poor internal communications.
84. In 2008, a study of 130 top companies in Ireland, confirmed a strong link between business performance and the use of High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) in the workplace. HPWS relate to strategic human resource management in the company, workplace partnership, diversity and equality management (including an awareness of gender equality) and flexible working systems. *New Models of High Performance Work Systems* was commissioned by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and the Equality Authority. The research team conducting the survey was charged with measuring the per capita labour productivity of the companies in question, as well as their workforce innovation and employee retention rates and of quantifying the preparation of these that could be attributed to the use of HPWS. In this sample of companies, a broad model of High Performance Work Systems (incorporating strategic human resource management, workplace partnership, diversity and equality systems and flexible work systems) was found to be associated with:
- 14.8% improvement in labour productivity;
  - 12.2% improvement in workforce innovation; and
  - 7.7% reduction in employee turnover.
85. The need to rebuild and restructure the Irish economy to cope with the new economic realities, together with the imperative of Europe 2020 to maximise the economic output of all members of the EU, male and female to ensure ongoing competitiveness and economic growth presents an opportunity to create a new, and more gender equal society, with greater participation of women in decision-making roles for the benefit of all.

### **Possible Solutions**

86. Some of the levers which can be used to increase the number of women in decision-making roles include:
- Men who are committed to fairness and change and will be willing to champion the issue;
  - Women's performance in education in Ireland is significantly ahead of males but this is not reflected in the workplace and in the positioning of women. The advantage gained by this highly educated female population is being moderated significantly by other factors; and
  - A focus on the issue, particularly on the proven achievements which emerge from the international scene.

### ***Recruitment Policies/Practices:***

- Traditional recruitment policies and practices can limit the pool of applicants and result in skills shortages and a workforce that may not be representative of its consumer base.
- To ensure a representative, diverse and effective workforce, companies may need to review their recruitment practices to ensure that they are as inviting to women as they are to men. For some companies this might involve broadening their advertising base to encompass publications more popular with female readers or re-examining the criteria listed for a particular job to ensure that the job description is fair and does not discourage one sex from applying.

- Ensuring that interview boards have at least one representative of each gender can help to promote an inclusive policy in candidate selection. Training for interview board members in gender and diversity issues would also be beneficial. Companies could also consider gender-proofing their interview questions to ensure that candidates of each sex have a fair chance of selection.

#### ***Retention Policies:***

- Work/Life balance policies within organisations are also an important incentive in attracting and retaining a diverse and flexible workforce. Organisations should ensure that these initiatives are available to employees at all levels and should be promoted as initiatives for both men and women to encourage a more equal sharing of care responsibilities. Consideration should be given to funding for a National Work/Life Balance Day, as has been done previously. Organisations should support and promote National Work/Life Balance Day within their companies to encourage employees to explore their options for flexible working and to raise the profile of flexible working within the organisation.
- The Equality Authority commissioned the ESRI to undertake a study entitled ***Equality at Work? - Workplace Equality Policies, Flexible Working Arrangements and the Quality of Work*** (2005). The study draws on a national representative survey of over 5,000 employees. It examines the impact of equality policies (inclusive of gender equality) and flexible working arrangements on workers' well-being, on their attitudes to their jobs and employers and on job quality. The study found that about three quarters of all employees work in organisations where there is a formal explicit policy on equal opportunities. A key implication of the study is that equality policies are likely to have a positive impact on organisational performance and hence be of benefit to employers. Hence the business case for equality has been proven. Moreover, the presence of a formal policy on equality (inclusive of gender) in the workplace is strongly associated with lower levels of work stress and higher levels of both job satisfaction and organisational commitment.
- In November 2011, the Equality Authority and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) jointly published ***Workplace Equality in the Recession? The Incidence and Impact of Equality Policies and Flexible Working***<sup>22</sup>. The study draws on data from the National Workplace Survey 2009, collected after Ireland had entered a deep recession. The data can be compared with those of a similar study carried out in 2003. The study found that, between 2003 and 2009, there was a marked increase in the proportion of companies with equality policies and flexible working arrangements in place, particularly in the private sector. The study reports that this finding holds even after accounting for changes in the composition of jobs and the composition of the workforce. These results suggest that the growing employer commitment to workplace equality seen in earlier years has been sustained, despite the very changed situation in the Irish economy and labour market. The study also found that the adoption by companies of a formal equality policy impacts positively on their employees' perceptions of workplace fairness, on workers' well-being and on organisational outcomes, including higher levels of organisational commitment and output innovation. The availability of more flexible working arrangements in an organisation is associated with higher job satisfaction and increased output innovation. Flexible working arrangements have mixed effects for participants – not all promote work-life balance and on occasion may be associated with trade-offs in terms of rewards and autonomy.

#### ***Staff Training and Development***

- Training programmes are vital for enabling individuals to progress along their chosen career paths and for ensuring that the organisation has a workforce sufficiently skilled to grow the business. The high percentage of women working on a part-time basis, due to family commitments or otherwise; has the potential to exclude women from formal training arrangements. Organisations need to be mindful of part-time workers when organising their training schedules.

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<sup>22</sup> *Workplace Equality in the Recession? The Incidence and Impact of Equality Policies and Flexible Working*, Helen Russell and Frances McGinnity, 2011.

- The provision of dedicated leadership training programmes for women with the potential to move forward into senior management positions can help to build confidence among female employees regarding their ability to progress into top management and decision-making roles.
- The establishment of formal networks within organisations would lessen the potentially negative effects of informal networks which women often find themselves excluded from. This formal networking can also be more time efficient by maximising the use of ICT networking through the organisation's website, intranet or newsletter. This formal networking would also expand the range of individuals within the organisation which an employee could come into contact with and would move away from the traditional female only networks.
- Re-entry training courses or programmes for employees returning after an extended period out of the workforce, for example after maternity leave or a career break, can also be beneficial in retaining skilled individuals.

***Mentoring/Role Models:***

- The lack of female role models in decision-making positions can influence self-selection among other women who perceive that there are few opportunities for women in senior management and so exclude themselves from going forward for promotion or training programmes.
- Conversely, successful female role models can inspire other women to push themselves to attain positions in senior management, on company boards and in politics.
- Mentoring programmes can have a positive impact in supporting career progression and professional development, particularly for women. The relationship between mentor and mentee should be based on mutual trust and it is therefore important that mentors and mentees should not be in a managing relationship.
- Mentoring schemes can also help to identify training needs and to set career goals. Identifying potential female mentees can also help to make promising female employees more visible to senior management.

**Next steps**

87. Having identified the main barriers and obstacles to increasing the numbers of women in decision-making roles and having outlined the economic, social and cultural reasons why it is imperative that remedial action be taken, in the chapters to follow we will individually examine the decision-making sectors contained in the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee (Women in Senior Management Positions in Private and Public Sector Employment; Women on Boards (both State Boards and Corporate Boards); Women in Politics; Women in the Diplomatic Service; and Women in the Judiciary).
88. In the course of its deliberations the Sub-Committee has examined the international literature and good practice in each of the decision-making sectors, and having regard to this, a number of recommendations have been proposed in this report with the aim of increasing the numbers of women in top level positions. The recommendations proposed for increasing the numbers of women in senior management positions in employment (both private and public sectors) are, where relevant, equally applicable to increasing the numbers of women in decision-making roles in civil society, including in the community and voluntary sector.





## CHAPTER 4

### WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT ROLES

#### Women in the Labour Market

89. Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that the number of women in Ireland engaged in the labour market has increased significantly over the last twenty years.
90. In 1991, 458,219 women were recorded as being in employment. Figures released by the CSO<sup>23</sup> for the second quarter of 2013 show that there were 864,300 women recorded as being in employment. Of those currently in employment, 49.8 per cent of women (430,200 women) are recorded as working at least thirty-five hours per week and can therefore be regarded as being fully attached to the labour market.
91. Female employment had previously peaked at some 925,000 before the economic downturn. To date, male employment has been affected to a much greater extent during the recession due to their high concentration of employment in the construction sector. Between 2007 and Q2/ 2013, the number of men in employment has fallen by 222,600, while the number of women in employment fell by 59,400 over the same period. However, it is worth mentioning that the CSO also records that the annual increase in employment between Q1/2012 and Q1/2013 (+20,500) was almost exclusively male, with male employment increasing by 19,400, while female employment increased by just 1,100. This suggests that women may find it more difficult to re-engage with the labour market following an absence.
92. In Q2/2013, just under 36 per cent of women in employment are classed as part-time workers (308,600 women). Ireland has a lower rate of female part-time employment than some of the EU Member States with traditionally high levels of female employment. This suggests that women in Ireland may have a greater attachment to the labour market than some of their EU counterparts and reflects the dual-earner model which had become the norm in households across Ireland prior to the economic downturn and is the family employment model now advocated by the OECD.
93. Figures from the CSO for Q2/2013 show that over 54 per cent of all married women in Ireland are classed as being in employment with a labour force participation rate of 54.3 per cent, representing an increase of 9 percentage points in a decade.
94. In education, girls continue to outperform boys at all levels. In 2011, 50.3 per cent of students sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations were female, with just over two-thirds (66.5 per cent) of girls taking English at higher level compared with 54 per cent of boys. In 2008, women represented 56.3 per cent of all third-level graduates in Ireland. By 2010, this had increased to over 58 per cent. Almost 33 per cent of these female graduates had received their qualifications in the fields of social sciences, business and law. In 2010, 84.5 per cent of eighteen-year-old women were students compared with 79.2 per cent of eighteen-year-old men.
95. The number of women employed as managers and administrators has increased significantly over the last decade. Between 1998 and the end of 2010, the CSO reports an increase of 47.4 per cent in the number of women employed as managers and administrators. However, at the end of Q2/2013, women accounted for almost 31 per cent of all managers, directors and senior officials.
96. While this may appear positive at first glance, a review of the “National Employment Survey” published by the CSO<sup>24</sup> shows that there is an unadjusted gender pay gap of 23 per cent for full time managers and senior administrators which suggests that women are still not being appointed to the most lucrative positions. Indeed, with a difference of €8.07 per hour, the male manager or administrator working a typical 40 hour week will earn more than €15,000 more

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<sup>23</sup> CSO: Quarterly National Household Survey Q2/2013

<sup>24</sup> CSO: National Employment Survey 2008 and 2009: published August 2011

than his female counterpart in a year. The impact on life time career earnings and pension expectations is self evident.

97. A similar increase has been noted in the number of women employed as professionals, where women now outnumber men. Between 1998 and the end of 2010, the number of women employed as professionals increased by over one hundred per cent (100.2 per cent). In this instance, the gender pay gap is less significant at 6.1 per cent. However, this may well mask inequalities between women and men in a range of economic sectors as the gender pay gap for full-time workers in the education sector exceeds 25 per cent, while it is 22 per cent in the human health and social work fields. This probably arises because there are likely still to be fewer women in senior positions in these sectors, including school principalships, third level educational leadership posts, medical consultancy posts, etc. while most of the junior posts such as Special Needs Assistants in education for example are filled by women.
98. Accordingly, and despite their significantly increased participation in the labour market and high educational attainment, women continue to be grossly under-represented in decision-making roles in employment, which impacts on the balanced quality of decision-making in the workplace, together with its negative impact on the career long earnings of women and on the maximisation of the output being gained by the highly educated female work force.

## **WOMEN WORKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

99. As mentioned in para 95 above, the number of women employed as managers and administrators has increased significantly over the last decade, with women accounting for under 31 per cent of all managers, directors and senior officials by the end of Q2/2013. However, women are not advancing into the highest levels of decision-making roles in employment in similar numbers.
100. Within the private sector, women in Ireland are under-represented in senior management roles and on company boards. A publication produced by the ESRI on behalf of the Equality Authority entitled *A Woman's Place: Female Participation in the Irish Labour Market*, based on 2003 data, calculates that at that stage, in the private sector, 21 per cent of men occupied senior or middle management positions compared to 9 per cent of women<sup>25</sup>.
101. In addition to their low numbers in decision-making roles, women working full-time in the private sector at all levels are subject to a greater gender pay gap than their public sector counterparts. While the overall gender pay gap for full time workers in the public sector in 2009 was 9.9 per cent, it increased to 17.3 per cent in the private sector<sup>26</sup>. It is possible that the lack of pay transparency, collective bargaining and some women's lack of experience in negotiation skills can leave them at a financial disadvantage when compared to some of their male colleagues.
102. At European level, women account for less than one-third (32.8 per cent) of leaders of EU businesses<sup>27</sup>, but the situation varies greatly between countries. In Ireland women account for just over one-fifth (21.5 per cent) of leaders of businesses. In 2010, fewer than 3 per cent of CEOs of the largest companies in the EU were women.
103. In 2012, Eurostat (the statistical office of the EU) measured gender segregation in occupations<sup>28</sup> for Ireland at 26.3 per cent. Gender segregation in economic sectors<sup>29</sup> was measured at 20.7 per cent in Ireland; only ten of the twenty-seven Member States recorded a higher percentage. This

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<sup>25</sup> These data are taken from the 2003 Changing Workplace Employee Survey - a nationally representative survey of 5,000 employees in the Republic of Ireland commissioned by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and conducted by the ESRI (O'Connell et al, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> CSO 'National Employment Survey 2008 and 2009' published August 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Leaders of business classed as Directors, CEOs and SME managers. 'Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010 – The Gender Balance in Business Leadership' European Commission.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

suggests that women in employment in Ireland may be being placed in “softer roles” or career cul-de-sacs which may limit their opportunities for promotion.

### **Literature on Women in Private Sector Management**

104. In 2010, the European Commission (EC) published a report entitled ‘*More women in senior positions: Key to economic growth and stability*’. The report examines the current situation and recent trends regarding gender balance in key decision-making positions across Europe.
105. The timing of the report (in the midst of the economic and financial crisis) has brought the low numbers of women in decision-making into sharper focus. The report notes that in 2009, the central banks of the EU Member States all had male governors. A similar situation is noted in the financial institutions of the EU. The report cites a 2009 study of the financial sector in the UK<sup>30</sup> which found that women employed in the financial sector are under-represented and disadvantaged compared to men and that the sector was characterised by a greater occupational gender segregation than was seen in the economy as a whole.
106. The EC report highlights the fact that recovery from the economic and financial crisis can provide an opportunity for increasing the numbers of women in the highest decision-making roles. The report makes the link between a number of recent studies which show that gender diversity has a positive effect on corporate performance and corporate governance.
107. The Commission report outlines the main barriers to female advancement into top management positions, including:
  - Persistent gender stereotypical attitudes – strong leadership and business skills are still equated with male characteristics;
  - A lack of female role models;
  - A lack of mentoring for female employees;
  - The traditional division of labour – women still have primary responsibility for caring duties and face the double burden of reconciling work and family life; and
  - Women tending to be pigeon-holed into certain occupational roles and sectors of employment which may exclude them from management positions.
108. The report also examines what some companies are already doing to promote gender equality. The report cites a 2007 study<sup>31</sup> which identified four phases within which the different initiatives can be grouped. The four identified phases are:
  - Creating awareness of the situation in the company by implementing continuous monitoring of all human resources issues from a gender perspective, including the setting of targets against which progress can be measured;
  - Ensuring that the company implements and facilitates work life balance policies for all employees to allow them to actively participate in family life without sacrificing career development;
  - Implementing initiatives to support career development, including mentoring, coaching and networks; and
  - Implementing specific actions to help women to be prepared for leadership positions including appropriate training and hands-on experience.

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<sup>30</sup> Employment and Earnings in the Finance Sector: A gender analysis: Hilary Metcalf and Heather Rolfe, National Institute of Economic and Social Research. Commissioned and published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, UK, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> *Inspiring women: Corporate Best Practice in Europe*, The Lehman Brothers Centre for Women in Business, London Business School, 2007.

109. These actions appear to offer guidance to employers and are likely to be as relevant to the public sector as they are to the private sector.
110. The Austrian Institute for SME Research also published a '*Study on non-legislative initiatives for companies to promote gender equality at the workplace*' which looks at initiatives beyond the legal requirements to promote gender equality in employment. A total of 133 initiatives were identified and analysed for the report. The analysis has revealed different types of interventions, including:
- **Recruitment** – when recruiting to formulate job advertisements in such a way as to attract both male and female applicants. Positive action can also be used in recruitment by actively expressing an interest for female applicants in advertisements, presenting female role models at job fairs or by using anonymous application forms where gender is unknown;
  - **Reconciliation** – promoting work life balance arrangements for parents, including flexible working, e-working, video conferencing and creche facilities;
  - **Retention** – including offering reconciliation policies, career development opportunities, training and networking arrangements; and
  - **Communication** – Imparting clear and concise communication, both internally and externally, about a company's gender and diversity policy is important for corporate identity and values.
111. The Report identifies a number of key success factors which contribute to the acceptance of the initiatives and as a result to the achievement of their goals, namely:
- A flexible and tailored approach;
  - Adaptation of the initiative;
  - Gender equality as a dynamic process;
  - Professional organisation;
  - Clear monitoring and evaluation criteria;
  - Publicity; and
  - The creation of binding commitments.
112. The potential benefits for a company in implementing gender equality initiatives include: a positive corporate image; greater recognition for the company (particularly if the company is awarded a quality mark); positive internal effects on employees; and a tool for internal and external communication.
113. In 2007, McKinsey & Company (an international management consulting firm) conducted a study entitled '*Women Matter – Gender Diversity a Corporate Performance Driver*' as part of their global partnership with the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society. The key message from the study is that companies where women are most strongly represented at board or top-management level are also the companies that perform best. The study strongly links female representation at the highest level of decision-making with enhanced corporate performance.
114. The McKinsey study highlights the need to address the root causes of the problem and the barriers faced by women. The study identifies two main problems and identified some key features on which their suppositions are based:

***The corporate model is male oriented***

- “Double-burden syndrome” – work and domestic/caring responsibilities – on average European women spend twice as long on domestic tasks as men.
- “Anytime, anywhere” – availability and geographical mobility.
- A linear career path with no career breaks.
- A masculine model for upward mobility – women can often minimise their workplace contribution.

***Women have difficulties in identifying with success***

- An absence of female role models;
- Difficulty for female employees in finding a mentor.

115. It will be recalled that the McKinsey study also recognises that the inclusion of more women in business is an imperative for corporate competitiveness, including addressing the demographic challenge. It notes that Europe is facing a shortfall of workers in the coming decades, especially at senior management level, due to the ageing profile of the population. To offset this there is a need to make full use of the underutilised talents of women. The study notes that if the female employment rate in Europe remains constant, Europe can expect a shortfall of twenty-four million people active in the workforce by 2040. The study estimates that if the female employment rate increased to that of male employment, the projected shortfall drops to three million.
116. McKinsey suggests that increasing the number of women in decision-making positions is also important for consumer confidence. The study notes that women are the driving force behind 70 per cent of household purchases in Europe, despite only accounting for 51 per cent of the population. There is a need to integrate more women into decision-making processes so as to adequately reflect the consumer base of a company.
117. The study conducted two types of research to examine:

***Women’s positive impact on organisational performance:***

- The study measured the organisational excellence of a company against nine criteria: leadership, direction, accountability, coordination and control, innovation, external orientation, capability, motivation, work environment and values, and found that the companies ranked most highly against the nine criteria tended to have operating margins and market capitalisation twice as high as those of the lower-ranked companies.
- The research also showed that companies with three or more women in senior management functions scored more highly, on average, for each organisational criteria than companies with no women at the top.
- McKinsey therefore argues that performance increases significantly once critical mass is achieved, namely at least three women on management committees for an average membership of ten people.

***Women’s positive impact on financial performance:***

- The study selected the eighty-nine European listed companies with the highest level of gender diversity in top management posts with a stock market capitalisation of over €150 million. They then analysed the financial performance of these companies relative to the average for their sector. The results show that these companies outperform their sector in terms of:
  - Return on equity (11.4 per cent Vs. an average of 10.3 per cent);

- Operating result (EBIT<sup>32</sup> 11.1 per cent Vs. an average of 5.8 per cent); and
  - Stock price growth (64 per cent vs. 47 per cent over the period 2005-2007).
118. The McKinsey study identifies four best practices for achieving gender diversity in a company:
- **Create transparency by implementing gender diversity key performance indicators** – create and monitor gender diversity indicators to raise awareness of gender gaps to be closed and to serve as a tool for defining and directing priorities for action.
  - **Implement measures to facilitate work-life balance** – flexible working hours to form part of the company’s business model for both male and female employees and career flexibility and support during breaks throughout a career.
  - **Adapt the human resources management process** – companies should ensure that their recruitment, appraisal and career management systems do not hold women back in their professional development. Gender diversity training should also be provided for recruiters and operational managers.
  - **Help women master the dominant codes, nurture their ambition** – coaching, networking and mentoring are effective tools in raising women’s awareness of the limitations they impose on themselves and enables them to manage their careers in a male-centric environment.
119. Accordingly, the literature shows evidence that increased female participation in decision-making roles in private sector senior management positions would have a positive impact on organisational performance, both in terms of profitability and in terms of organisational excellence. The barriers to increased participation by women in senior positions can be overcome through targeted workplace policies, such as training, mentoring and work life balance initiatives. A culture change within the organisation is also needed to move beyond the male oriented business model and to promote an awareness of gender, to create the necessary environment for female advancement. This can be achieved through the implementation of an equality policy, to include gender, within the workplace and the monitoring and assessment of human resources policies including recruitment from a gender perspective.

#### **Good Practice in Ireland in the Private Sector**

120. IBEC, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, has been proactive for a number of years in fostering the advancement of women in the workplace, which is central to the advancement of women into decision making roles. Among the initiatives undertaken are the following:
- *The development of a Maternity and Parenting Toolkit* (Funded by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund 2007-2013 and by the Equality Authority). This work focused on women in employment and pregnancy. It resulted in a toolkit produced to assist employers in proactively and positively managing and supporting their workforce during pregnancy, maternity leave and helping them to reintegrate upon return from maternity leave. The toolkit covers topics such as business planning for maternity leave, advice on what managers can communicate with pregnant employees, training for line managers, workshops for new father’s and for reintegrating women back into the organisation following maternity leave.
  - *Examining the feasibility of a gender Q mark/award/standard*: IBEC explored the feasibility of developing a quality award or standard for organisations that had achieved a level of proficiency in equality and diversity. They examined the market for such an initiative in Ireland and researched international standards and quality marks and engaged with organisations that develop standards to assess the feasibility of developing such a standard in Ireland. Consultations and focus groups were held with a range of

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<sup>32</sup> Earnings Before Interest and Taxes.

organisations to identify interest levels in participating in such an award/standard and their preferred focus and structure. However, significant issues were raised regarding the criteria, the responsibility, the cost and credibility of such an award or standard, including who would be responsible for the award.

- *Examining the feasibility of gender pay audits:* (Funded by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund 2007-2013 and by the Equality Authority). IBEC has developed a template for an equal pay audit, the focus of which is gender, but which can also be examined under a range of equality lenses to ascertain whether a gap exists, investigating the causes of any pay gaps and planning to address and close any gaps that are discriminatory. It is the most effective way of establishing whether an organisation is providing equal pay and rewarding employees equitably in practice and bringing any issues clearly to the forefront to be dealt with.
  - IBEC held a highly interactive debate and networking event entitled ‘Should business be doing more to achieve gender balance at the top of organisations’. The event, which was addressed by the Minister of State with responsibility for Equality, Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., brought together leaders, policy makers, HR managers and senior executives from the business and political sphere and took leadership in opening the debate on measures to increase the number of women in top jobs.
  - *Best practice in diversity and equality* (funded by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund 2007-2013 and by the Equality Authority): In 2011, IBEC hosted a seminar featuring examples of organisations that are using various initiatives, policies and practices to address gender balance within their organisations.
  - A number of IBEC member organisations are very engaged in working on gender balance and the increase of women in decision-making positions. Various initiatives have been undertaken by employers to further this agenda including awareness training, leadership skills training specifically targeted at female employees, mentoring and women’s networks.
  - IBEC had also actively supported and facilitated the Leadership Initiative for a number of years, with financial support from inter alia the European Social Fund and the Department of Justice and Equality. The Leadership Initiative had three main areas of activity:
    - **The Future Leaders Programme** – a 12 day programme for women in middle management. The programme had three cycles and was taken on by IBEC.
    - **Leader’s Conversations** – targeted at the leading person in the organisation. This took the form of a structured conversation.
    - A training programme on DVD/CD for employers.
121. IBEC also facilitated the Sub-Committee by furnishing information on good practices undertaken by a number of major employers in Ireland. These included:
- Electricity Supply Board (ESB):**
122. To facilitate the growth and development of women in the organisation, ESB has launched a female learning and development programme called ‘Empowering women with 2020 vision’ as part of ESB’s 2020 Strategy. The aim of the programme is to enhance women’s personal and professional growth by providing knowledge and learning in areas such as communication, self-awareness and goal setting, while also providing coaching and role models.
123. Work-life balance initiatives in ESB range from employee assistance programmes, education support and bursaries, childcare, retirement planning, health screening and promotion and flexible working and leave arrangements. To ensure the relevance and utility of the diversity initiatives, an annual staff attitude survey to inform management is carried out to examine

respect and dignity, disability, discrimination, pressure of the job, work-life balance and equality in career progression.

124. ESB is also working on a range of proactive approaches to support women on maternity leave and to keep them engaged with the organisation which include a number of ‘maternity positive’ initiatives focusing on ‘Preparing to go on maternity leave’ and ‘Returning to work after maternity leave’ checklists. A network is being set up to enable the women to stay connected to what is going on in the organisation, and to access information on organisation changes, promotion opportunities, etc. A ‘Parenting with Confidence’ programme is currently being piloted to support parents and equip them with information and confidence in their parenting abilities so they are more effective personally and professionally.
125. Encouraging more females into non-traditional roles such as engineering and apprenticeships is also a key focus for ESB. This includes schools’ programmes to raise awareness and to provide encouragement to female students to consider non-traditional career options. The schools programmes offer insights into career options, on-the-job shadowing and experience. Ongoing contact is maintained with students which can include further work experience if students are genuinely interested in pursuing studies and careers in these areas.

**Accenture:**

126. Accenture, the global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, employs 70,000 women, representing a third of its global workforce. Accenture conducted a global research study entitled ‘*Reinvent Opportunity: Looking Through a New Lens*’ to further dialogue on the issues affecting women in employment. The research was released as part of Accenture’s annual celebration of International Women’s Day in 2011.
127. The company has a range of programmes to support female employees to further its commitment as a diverse and inclusive workplace, including:
- Developing High Performance Women – a course directed at developing women leaders. Female role models help managers to evaluate requirements to reach the next stage in their careers. To date, more than 550 women from 23 countries have participated in the programme;
  - Women’s Mentoring Programme, which pairs female executives with senior executive mentors. The Programme includes virtual workshops and provides networking tips;
  - The Accenture Women’s Network – a global intranet connecting women across the company and provides access to resources available both at Accenture and externally.
  - Local Women’s Networks – to drive initiatives and to support women at the location to build strong networks. Accenture Ireland has a local women’s network.

**Dell:**

128. Gender has always been a key part of Dell’s diversity strategy. To identify the obstacles or challenges to their career success, Dell surveyed its female managers to identify what the company needs to do to ensure that there is a culture of learning, inclusion and development to support, attract and retain women in executive roles.
129. The results led to the implementation of various initiatives, such as the work-life focus, assigning mentors from among male and female senior managers and women’s network groups. Sixteen women’s networks across EMEA<sup>33</sup> host networking events and lunches with visiting Vice-Presidents/senior leaders. For example, two of the top five men in the company met eighteen senior management and director level women from a UK network and listened to their concerns and issues. This is not just a women’s issue and many networks have both male and female senior sponsors. This helps to give role models to future executives and to change culture. Dell Ireland replicates this work.

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<sup>33</sup> Europe, the Middle East and Africa.



130. One of the most successful initiatives involves two learning and development programmes called 'Taking the stage' and 'Embracing the stage'. The 'Taking the Stage' programme highlights some of the challenges many women face while en-route to senior management and how to overcome them. This programme was delivered by senior female managers and directors and 700 women across Europe were trained. The programme encouraged women to:
- consider whether they wanted to 'take the stage' and what being a leader entailed;
  - examine how they used their voice and contributed in groups;
  - consider the language they use and how to come across as a leader;
  - learn how to have a dynamic presence.
131. Based on the success of 'Taking the Stage' and feedback from participants, Dell developed its follow up programme – 'Embracing the Stage' which focuses on how individuals can continue to take the stage in their careers through their influencing skills, and the importance of building relationships and networking. Dell created DVDs for the programme by filming their own senior people answering questions such as, 'how did you get to where you are?' 'what helped you to succeed?' and 'how has networking helped you in your career?'.
132. Fifty senior females have been trained to deliver the programme across Europe with ten trainers in Ireland. This programme will be rolled out across Europe and will be open to both men and women. The commitment to diversity and inclusion in Dell comes directly from the top and the CEO personally reviews diversity data and annual targets are monitored. Diversity is seen to be as important if not even more relevant today than before as the benefits of creativity and innovation it offers, help businesses to grow.
133. Following a global staff survey, Dell employees indicated the need for flexibility in working arrangements including telecommuting and remote working, which have now been implemented for eligible employees. To promote work-life balance Dell Ireland holds a week of activities and information sessions to outline the benefits and work-life policies available to staff.

**Citi:**

134. Citi have a range of initiatives in place to support and develop women in reaching decision-making positions in the organisation. This includes:
- the 'Women Leading Citi' programme which is designed for high performing female participants who have the potential to assume significant leadership positions. It is designed to promote and accelerate advancement through initiatives which enhance leadership skills by supporting individual development and identifying networking opportunities. A participant has the support of her manager, a talent professional and a senior manager advocate; and
  - 'Coaching for Success', a long standing development program targeted for mid-level women. The programme is delivered through a series of workshops and engages senior management as coaches. One of its goals is to improve retention and increase promotion and opportunities for internal mobility among participants.
135. Citi Women is a network that supports the formal and informal programmes and initiatives and provides additional development and mentoring programmes and offers networking opportunities.
136. Citi Parents Ireland was established in 2008 to support parents both within the workplace and at home. From mid-2008, the network has run a number of workshops for women returning to work following maternity leave, designed to improve the understanding and experience of maternity leave in the workplace. These workshops focus on the key issues faced by women around transition, work, parenting, self-image and support. The network has also facilitated a workshop for managers of employees who are pregnant or have just returned from maternity leave. A workshop for new and expectant fathers looked at how fathers can balance their work

with their parental responsibilities, explored their new identity as a dad and how to manage the expectations of dual-career families.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

137. In making the following recommendations to increase the number of women in senior management roles in the Private Sector, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

138. **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That steps be taken to promulgate the business case for gender equality as an instrument for economic growth;**
- **That steps be taken to broaden the understanding of the persisting cultural barriers to the advancement of women and the maximisation of their potential contribution to the achievement of corporate goals;**
- **That employers and employer organisations be encouraged to collaborate on the development and implementation of a ‘Women into leadership’ training course in consultation with the Women in Enterprise Group, to be widely disseminated as a best practice model;**
- **That employers and employer organisations be encouraged to collaborate on the development and implementation of a mentoring programme for female employees identified as having leadership potential;**
- **That consideration be given to including a new category of award in the ‘Best Workplaces in Ireland’<sup>34</sup> award on ‘Best Workplaces for Women in Ireland’. Criteria might include employers who offer leadership training, mentoring, coaching and flexible working for female staff. The award could be displayed on company websites/advertising etc.;**
- **That steps be taken to broaden the understanding of the persisting structural barriers to the advancement of women and the maximisation of their potential contribution to the achievement of corporate goals;**
- **That companies be encouraged to implement an equality policy and periodic equality audits and to report on actions taken in respect of these policies in their annual reports;**
- **That employers be encouraged to implement work/life balance policies for both male and female employees and to actively encourage their male employees to avail of and to share family leaves; and**
- **That IBEC continue to disseminate and promote its Maternity and Parenting Toolkit.**

#### **WOMEN WORKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

139. The Public Sector has traditionally been a key employer of women in Ireland. The CSO *Women and Men in Ireland* Annual Report for 2011 notes that in 2010, the education and health sectors employed more than a third (35 per cent) of all female employees in Ireland, compared with an EU average of 29.5 per cent. Historically, the Civil Service has also been an employer of choice for women, many of whom moved to Dublin from more rural areas for a few years prior to marriage. Civil Servants were not permitted to work after marriage prior to 1973 and the effects of the so-called marriage bar on the numbers of women remaining in the Service after marriage

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<sup>34</sup> Great Place to Work Ireland in association with the Irish Independent newspaper

is only now beginning to work its way fully out of the system as those who were in service prior to the elimination of the marriage bar move into retirement.

140. Within the Civil Service, staff are differentiated into “general service” and “professional and technical” grades. Those in the general service grades may have joined as school leavers or young graduates and aspire to a career rising up through the service. The technical and professional grades are varied – it is said that there are over 1200 different job descriptions and the different job groupings have diverse opportunities for advancement. In more recent years there are increased opportunities for suitably qualified persons in the professional and technical grades to compete for advancement in the general Civil Service.
141. As table 2 below shows, in mid- 2011 and measured as whole time equivalent staff (WTE), some 63 per cent of the General Civil Service and 43 per cent of posts in the technical and professional Civil Service were filled by women. However a more detailed examination of the table will show that the structure is largely pyramidal with relatively few women rising to senior positions.

**TABLE 2  
GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH CIVIL SERVANTS BY GRADE AND TYPE**

	General Service Grades			Professional and Technical Grades		
	Female	Male	Female as % of Total	Female	Male	Female as % of Total
	WTE	WTE	%	WTE	WTE	%
Secretary General/Equiv.	4	17	19.0	4	9	30.8
Dep and Assistant Secretary/Equiv.	27	123	18.0	23	60	27.7
Principal/Equiv.	192	456	29.6	183	389	32.0
Assistant Principal/Equiv.	703	1,145	38.0	640	974	39.7
Higher Executive Off/Equiv.	1,566	1,617	49.2	125	232	35.0
Administrative Off/Equiv.	142	101	58.4	725	1,040	41.1
Executive Off/Equiv/ Staff Off/Equiv.	3,321	1,755	65.4	292	830	26.0
Clerical Off/Equiv.	1,139	342	76.9	71	30	70.3
Services Off/Assist/Equiv	7,498	2,432	75.5	856	520	62.2
Other	75	640	10.5	220	208	51.4
	-	-	0.0	116	34	77.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,667</b>	<b>8,628</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>4,326</b>	<b>42.9</b>

Source:adapted from material provided by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

142. Concentrating on the General Civil Service, the main grades are broken into four categories, clerical, executive/junior management, senior management and top management. Progression is possible right through all the ranks. However, an examination of Table 2 shows that three out of 4 clerical staff (COs and SOs) are women. Moving to the next grouping, while 2 out of every three Executive Officers are women, only half of their next promotional grade are women. Accordingly the men have already established an advantage.
143. Advancement into the lower of the two senior management ranks is open to both HEOs and AOs but here again, as in all further grades, men establish a significant advantage. Although more than half of the feeder grades are women, only 38 per cent of APs are female. This ratio contracts further at the higher levels with under 30 per cent of PO posts and fewer than 20 per cent of the top positions filled by women.
144. It must be acknowledged that there has been considerable progress in regard to the role of women in the management grades in the Civil Service thanks to the efforts of the Department of Finance/Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which set specific targets for the PO and APO grades in the late 1990s. As a result, while in 1997 the percentage of female APs was just over 20 per cent, by the end of 2012, the figure had risen to 42 per cent, while the figure for POs at the end of 2012 was 34 per cent.

145. There has been a shift in thinking with regard to gender equality policy in the Civil Service over this period. In 2001, gender policy had focused on equality of opportunity between women and men working in the Civil Service. In 2013, in addition to the equal opportunities policy, gender policy is also about setting strategic objectives at Departmental level. HRM policy areas are now asked to incorporate gender equality in to their strategies. Guidance material has also been produced on affirmative action “*Making Gender Equality Happen: Guidance on Affirmative Action in Gender Equality*”. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is monitoring performance and considering greater accountability. The action previously undertaken in relation to disability is being used as good practice. In addition, “*A Positive Working Environment*”, which focuses on bullying and harassment, has been agreed with the Unions.
146. The Sub-Committee recognises that opportunities for both women and men in the Civil Service are limited at present due to the moratorium on recruitment and promotion. Women should be encouraged to use this time well to position themselves for advancement in the upturn.
147. The Women Managers Network, a forum for women managers at HEO level and above from across the Civil Service, has been established to allow women to engage with each other and to share information and ideas. The Women Managers Network is very active in building knowledge, awareness and capacity.

#### ***Women and Ambition in the Irish Civil Service***

148. In 2008, the Centre for Gender and Women’s Studies, Trinity College Dublin, published a report entitled ‘*Women and Ambition in the Irish Civil Service*’<sup>35</sup>. This Report was funded by the Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (now the Department of Justice and Equality).
149. The objective of the study was to analyse the barriers and the facilitators to the career ambitions of women. The study aimed to find out if women in the Civil Service were as ambitious as their male colleagues or if structural barriers in the system had caused them to downsize their ambition.
150. A pilot study was initially carried out in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform<sup>36</sup> in Autumn 2007 with the full study commencing in December 2007. The study encompassed a two strand methodology using both quantitative and qualitative research. An online survey was conducted of both women and men employed in management grades (from Higher Executive Officer/Administrative Officer and above) across the fifteen Government Departments. Interviews with a sample of both male and female employees from two selected Departments were undertaken in tandem with the online survey.
151. The study found that there were differences in the family structures of the senior managers: 86 per cent of the senior male managers were married and 86 per cent also had children while only 56 per cent of the female senior managers were married and 53 per cent of the cadre had children. This suggests that women at the top were making sacrifices in their personal life in order to reach senior management grades.
152. The researchers also concluded that the issue of child bearing, child rearing and work-life balance is of great importance in the context of the potential for women to advance in their careers. In the context of impact on career ambition, the researchers concluded that paternity leave, which is confined to 3 days of paid leave to fathers<sup>37</sup>, has very little impact on a man’s career but maternity leave or maternity leave coupled with unpaid leave was seen to have a negative effect on career progression.
153. A further review of material supplied by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform shown in Table 3 overleaf looks at the absolute number of staff in each general service grade by

<sup>35</sup> ‘*Women and Ambition in the Irish Civil Service*’, Centre for Gender and Women’s Studies, T.C.D., 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Following the 2011 General Election this is now the Department of Justice and Equality.

<sup>37</sup> There is no statutory entitlement to paid paternity leave in Ireland.

sex and compares this with the number of Whole Time Equivalent posts to offer a crude measure of attachment to the labour market by gender and grade.

**TABLE 3**  
**WORKPLACE ATTACHMENT OF MALE AND FEMALE GENERAL SERVICE CIVIL SERVANTS**

	Female			Male		
	WTE	No.	Workforce attachment %	WTE	No	Workforce attachment %
Secretary General/Equiv.	4	4	100.0	17	17	100.0
Dep and Assistant Secretary/Equiv.	27	27	100.0	123	123	100.0
Principal/Equiv.	192	196	98.0	456	457	99.8
Assistant Principal/Equiv.	703	755	93.1	1,145	1,152	99.4
Higher Executive Off/Equiv.	1,566	1,710	91.6	1,617	1,631	99.1
Administrative Off/Equiv.	142	146	97.3	101	102	99.0
Executive Off/Equiv/	3,321	3,665	90.6	1,755	1,775	98.9
Staff Off/Equiv.	1,139	1,256	90.7	340	342	99.4
Clerical Off/Equiv.	7,498	8,312	90.2	2,393	2,432	98.4
Services Off/Assist/Equiv	75	87	86.2	578	640	90.3
Other	-	-	0.0	-	-	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,667</b>	<b>16,158</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>8,525</b>	<b>8,671</b>	<b>98.3</b>

Source: adapted from material provided by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

154. Table 3 suggests that, within the Irish Civil Service, availing of family friendly work practices is almost exclusively confined to women. In the top three grades, work sharing is almost unheard of – some minor usage by women at PO grade.
155. Thereafter it becomes more common among women at roughly 90 per cent on average per grade (although the range of options for leave patterns is very wide and these data are likely to be understated). However, excluding the grade of service officer and assistant, men are highly unlikely to avail of short working time, with only, on average, a 0.6 per cent to 1.6 per cent differential between absolute numbers and whole time equivalents for men in all of the middle management, executive and clerical grades.
156. This suggests that persistent structural or attitudinal barriers to men availing of family friendly practices remain in the Irish Civil Service. This situation is disappointing as the Civil Service is regarded in Ireland as an employer which offers an excellent family friendly package. However, if this package is only availed of by one sex, the Civil Service is not adequately supporting the advancement of its female staff or indeed setting an example for other employers.
157. The EU has long advocated the need for parents to share family responsibilities for the advancement of both careers and to maximise the economic contribution of the female work force. Some EU Member States have addressed this issue by forcing parents to share or lose family leave. This has for example resulted in a number of male Government Ministers availing of extended periods of family friendly leave in some of the Scandinavian countries.
158. Reverting to the findings of the TCD Women and Ambition study, the research showed that both women and men appear to have a similar understanding of ambition. However, the perception of an ambitious person differs across the sexes. In male employees, ambition is seen as a positive and natural trait. In female employees, ambition was interpreted by some in a negative and harsh manner. This is also a cultural attitude which must be addressed.
159. A further point identified by the TCD team was that men are more likely than women to have a definite career plan. Men were also much more likely to go for promotion if they had only some of the candidate requirements, while women believed that they must meet all of the requirements

before applying. The research also found that women are aspiring to a lower grade than their male colleagues, both at the beginning of their careers as well as in their current grade.

160. The key issues identified in the TCD study were incorporated into its recommendations as follows:

- ***Mentoring***  
*We recommend the implementation of a formal mentoring programme for women and that mentors be both men and women. We also suggest that there be a structured programme to train mentors themselves to make them more effective.*
- ***Career Planning***  
*Through the PMDS system, we recommend that women are urged to make a career plan and to analyse periodically how well they are succeeding.*
- ***Leadership Courses***  
*We recommend that the Civil Service establish leadership courses for women or facilitate the participation of women in ongoing leadership courses to both encourage them into senior management levels and to provide the necessary information to achieve those levels.*
- ***Paternity Leave***  
*To undertake research to ascertain best practice in the provision of paternity leave on a 'use it or lose it' basis. This research would endeavour to find out what men want, what managers think would work best, and how it would effect career progression.*
- ***On-Ramps***  
*To undertake research on the feasibility of providing "on-ramps" for those who are on extended leave. "On-ramps" is a term coined to refer to mechanism used to engage those returning from extended leave, facilitating re-entry into their careers. A significant finding of this study highlights the fluid nature of ambition or the ebb and flow characteristic of ambition for some women and men. In addition, we recommend undertaking research on the ways in which this ebb and flow pattern can be accommodated so as to provide an opportunity for those who have been somewhat disengaged to re-engage.*
- ***Career Breaks***  
*That additional research be undertaken to ascertain more fully the effects of taking career breaks on career progression.*
- ***Clerical and Junior Grades in the Civil Service***  
*That research be undertaken specifically on the clerical and junior grades of the Civil Service on the question of women and ambition to ascertain if they need to be encouraged to aspire to higher positions. We have had some feedback/expression of interest that this study would be welcomed.*
- ***Male Middle Managers***  
*That additional research be undertaken to draw out the nuances of the issues arising in relation to ambition among male middle managers.*
- ***Research in the Private Sector***  
*The findings of this study pertain by and large to the Civil Service workplace culture. The small private sector sample who provided comparative data for this study demonstrated that cultural contexts are crucial for understanding the operation of ambition with career development. Extensive and more nuanced research on the area of women's ambition is required in the Irish private sector. There is a need to draw out the comparisons with the Civil Service in order to investigate the varying policies and workplace cultures of the private sector.*

161. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) was established in October 2004 under the remit of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004. The Public Appointments Service is the centralised provider of recruitment, assessment and selection services for the Civil Service. It also provides recruitment and related human resource advisory services to Local Authorities, the Health Service Executive, the National Economic and Social Forum, An Garda Síochána and other public bodies. The PAS possesses a Customer Charter which commits itself to comply “fully with all equality legislation”.
162. The Senior Public Service (SPS) was established in the Irish Civil Service in 2011. It comprises all serving and newly appointed staff at Secretary General, Deputy and Assistant Secretary levels as well as equivalent Departmental and professional grades. The SPS aims to strengthen public service management and leadership across the Civil Service, and ultimately the wider Public Service. It will provide training and development opportunities for individuals as well as removing barriers to mobility across the Public Service. Coaching and mentoring opportunities will also be developed.
163. Based on all of the evidence, the importance of mentoring, networking and career planning evidenced in the TCD report were judged by the Sub-Committee as being central to female advancement in the Public Sector and will be reflected in the recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

#### **Good Practice elsewhere**

164. The Sub-Committee reviewed a number of good practice examples from other countries on the topic of women in Public Sector senior management positions which are worthy of consideration in an Irish context.
165. Although now suspended as a cost saving measure, the British Civil Service’s National School of Government offered a number of positive action programmes and events for women managers and leaders in the UK Civil Service and in the wider public sector. (Women are under-represented in the UK Senior Civil Service (SCS) to much the same extent as they are in the Irish Civil Service.) Courses specifically tailored for female employees included:
  - **Career Planning for Senior Women** – a two day programme for senior women whose next promotion will be to the Senior Civil Service (SCS), which includes devising a personal career plan including short and long-term objectives;
  - **Leadership Development for Senior Women** – a four day programme for senior women managers in strategic roles in the UK Civil Service and wider public sector whose next promotion will be to SCS. The programme addresses the specific challenges that women face in a senior leadership role and covers issues such as influencing an organisation’s culture, raising your personal visibility in the organisation and developing political astuteness. The programme also teaches participants how to develop their leadership style;
  - **Personal Development and Career Planning for Women** – a four day programme for women in first line and middle management roles to assess their current level of interpersonal skills and needs and to analyse how these affect their relationships at work. To develop the skills of personal effectiveness, assertiveness and influence and to devise strategies for handling conflict more effectively;
  - **Leadership Challenges for Women in Middle Management** – a three day programme to allow women in middle management roles the opportunity to reflect on their leadership abilities and to identify career development strategies; and
  - **Management Skills and Personal Development for Women** – a three day programme for women in first line and middle management roles to look at their personal development and to work on specific management skills and competencies and to develop a personal action plan to move their professional development forward.

166. The UK School of Government also holds an annual International Women's Leadership Conference in London. The fifth such Conference took place on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010. The Conference theme was 'Leadership Legacy: No Time Like the Present'. The Conference featured five keynote speakers of national and international prominence and included a number of workshops. The most recent Conference aimed to:
- enable delegates to learn about the different leadership styles adopted by women who are already paving the way to the future;
  - provide workshops to increase delegates' understanding of ethics, economics and the environment as the foundations of a sustainable society;
  - support delegates to 'think big' and work towards aspirational leadership goals; and
  - offer a unique networking opportunity to bring together women in the UK and International Public Service roles.

### **Recommendations**

167. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in senior management roles in the Public Sector, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

168. **The Sub-Committee recommends:**

- **That new targets of 40 per cent be set for the senior management grades of APO and PO with immediate effect;**
- **That consideration be given to the desirability of establishing a specific leadership training course to foster the advancement of women into senior management roles in the public sector, including the Civil Service. In relation to the Civil Service, this might be developed in two tiers with a specific focus on women at Principal Officer level as a response to the comparatively low number of women at Assistant Secretary level from which pool Secretaries General are usually drawn;**
- **The Sub-Committee welcomes the establishment of the Senior Public Service and the commitment to networking, education, training and coaching, and mentoring opportunities for officials at Assistant Secretary level and above. However, as women only account for a very small percentage of senior officials, these opportunities will largely be afforded to male officers. Therefore, the Sub-Committee recommends that a formal mentoring scheme is established for female officers at Assistant Principal and Principal level in each Department. This scheme could have an Inter-Departmental focus with mentors/mentees coming from different Government Departments;**
- **That gender disaggregated statistics be provided for Local Government staff to allow for the monitoring of the number of female staff in senior management and director of services posts;**
- **That the profile of the Women Manager's Network be raised across all Departments. Each Personnel Unit to be asked to send an email to all staff at HEO/AO level and above advising them of the existence of the Network and encouraging their female staff to join. The Women Managers Network should continue to disseminate meeting documents/reports etc. to members who cannot attend due to geographical location, work commitments, work-sharing arrangements etc through their intranet facility;**
- **That Departments also be encouraged to establish their own network of women managers to meet regularly;**



- **That a biennial conference be organised by the Women Manager’s Network (in collaboration with the Gender Equality Division, D/J&E) to raise the profile of female managers across the Civil Service and to organise workshops/seminars etc for female officers (funding for this might be provided under the National Women’s Strategy);**
- **That Ministers remind Departments of their commitment regarding gender mainstreaming and the obligation of a gender impact assessment of policies and programmes contained in the Cabinet Handbook. Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality, undertakes to provide a guidance document for all Departments to be disseminated widely for use in this regard; and**
- **That gender-sensitivity training be provided for Personnel Officers and for all those involved in recruitment and in determining promotions (both internal and external).**

#### **WOMEN WORKING IN CIVIL SOCIETY, TRADE UNIONS, AND NGOS**

169. Women form a significant part of the work force in Irish Non-Governmental Organisations but, as in the public and private sectors, their presence in senior management positions is still relatively low.

#### **The Community and Voluntary Sector**

170. The Community and Voluntary (non profit) sector in Ireland is large, growing and dynamic comprising over 19,000 organisations, now employing over 45,000 people, benefiting from the voluntary contribution of over 50,000 more and with an estimated annual turnover of €2.5bn. More than half of the organisations in existence today have been formed since 1986, a dynamic which has created a sector comprising thousands of small, young organisations

171. The sector is now a significant player in Irish social and economic life. It is extremely diverse – from small local ‘social groups’ like retirement associations to large national umbrella organisations for organisations involved with women, people with disabilities, poverty, and homelessness. In the middle is a vast array of small, medium and large groups – radical and conservative, single issue and all-encompassing. Overall the sector is facing major challenges in the recession as sources of both government and private funding dry up. It has been well identified that participation in C&V groups in all their diversity adds significantly to social capital and personal wellbeing.

172. In 2006, the CSO<sup>38</sup> reported that 30 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women (almost one million people in total) were involved in voluntary and community groups, with 21 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women involved in some form of unpaid charitable work. With regard to civic participation, 9 per cent of both women and men aged fifteen or over were active in “taking action to solve a local problem or issue”. The report also highlighted that the people least likely to participate in community activity and decision-making are those most at risk of poverty, and those with the lowest health status.

173. With regard to women’s participation in decision making, the sector has four key roles.

- Firstly, through its work of empowerment, the sector works with women experiencing disadvantage, supporting them to participate in decision making activities that impact on their lives.
- Through this work, many women have taken on leadership roles within their communities. Research provided to the Sub-Committee has noted that the Community and Voluntary sector internationally offers women opportunities to take on leadership roles (in both paid and voluntary capacities).

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<sup>38</sup> *Community Involvement and Social Networks*, CSO, 2006.

- In addition, women gain experience on Boards via civil society organisations which will, in turn, benefit them in leadership positions in other sectors of society.
  - Within Ireland, a diversity of local, county, regional and national organisations exist where women take on influential roles, in many cases as company directors managing significant budgets. It is essential that the skill sets developed in this arena can be translated into wider decision-making arenas.
174. However, within Ireland, a drive for efficiency has resulted in the cohesion or amalgamation of many community groups, and the disbandment of their voluntary boards of directors such as for example, the establishment of the Local and Community Development Programme which resulted in the establishment of new forms of Local Development Companies.
175. Fifty-two local development companies were established from 2008 onwards to manage both rural development and social inclusion work on an area basis. Just 37 per cent of the CEOs of these development companies are female. Overall, there is a paucity of data on the roles and gender composition of employment within the sector, especially with regard to both horizontal and vertical segregation.
176. The inclusion of the Community and Voluntary sector as a social partner at both national and local levels has created opportunities for women in decision-making. County based Community and Voluntary Forums which act as umbrella organisations for C&V groups in a county have a role in nominating representatives to a range of bodies such as Strategic Policy Committees, County Development Boards etc. This has also provided opportunities for women to take on decision making roles, and to be mentored to do so.
177. There are no easily accessible gender disaggregated statistics available on female participation in these structures. However, significant barriers such as the timing and structure of meetings, a lack of facilities for dependent care, lack of financial support for transport and a lack of resources for mentoring can make it unattractive for women to avail of these opportunities.
178. Furthermore, as employers, research shows that organisations in this sector had 40,003 full time employees in 2005, which would correspond to 2.4 per cent of the full time labour force in 2005. Some 14,754 part-time staff were recorded, which represents 4.3% of total part-time staff nationally, while the NGO sector also includes a further 9,509 staff on state-supported employment schemes. Women outnumbered men by two to one in full-time employment and by four to one in part-time employment.
179. A more recent analysis of salaries in 2008 by 'The Wheel' indicates that the majority of workers in the survey are female (82%), as are more than eight out of ten (85%) part-time workers. (On further investigation by 'The Wheel', 63% of the responding organisations are headed up by a female).

### **The Trade Union Movement**

180. The trade union movement represents the biggest single civil society structure and its constituent membership is now skewed slightly in favour of women. As a movement it offers an opportunity to the Sub-Committee to consider what steps might be taken to strengthen women's leadership roles in other branches of civil society.
181. In 2010, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions had a total membership of 812,848, of whom 414,719 were women (51 per cent). For the first time in Congress' history, female members outnumber male members. However, this has not translated into increased numbers of women in the highest decision-making roles in ICTU.
182. In 2009, ICTU completed an Equality Audit with a particular focus on gender. Out of a total of fifty-two Unions, twenty completed the survey giving a total response rate of 37 per cent with almost all of the larger unions completing the survey, covering 82 per cent of trade union membership on the island of Ireland. The results of the Equality Audit show a significant gender divide both in relation to paid staff and officer roles within the unions, with a more equal

split at the level of shop steward. The results find that only 15 per cent of general secretaries and regional secretaries are women, only 22 per cent of deputy general secretaries are women and 33 per cent of trade union officials are women. In contrast, women account for 85 per cent of those providing administrative support to trade unions across the country.

183. At European level, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) represents more than 60 million workers across Europe, just over 40 per cent of whom are women. The ETUC has been actively working on gender initiatives for the last twenty years. While the recently appointed General Secretary of ETUC is female, only 17 per cent of the full members of the ETUC Executive Committee are women, with only 13 per cent female membership of the ETUC Steering Committee.
184. The ETUC Charter on Gender Mainstreaming was adopted by the Seville Congress in May 2007. In this Charter, ETUC and its affiliates confirmed their commitment to pursue gender equality as part of their broader agenda for social justice, social progress and sustainability in Europe. They will adopt a gender mainstreaming approach as an indispensable and integral element of all of their actions and activities. The Charter calls on both national and European members of the ETUC to eliminate the gender representation gap. Affiliate organisations committed to provide the ETUC with gender disaggregated data on their membership and representation in decision-making bodies for use in the annual *8<sup>th</sup> March Survey*<sup>39</sup>.
185. *From Membership to Leadership: Advancing women in trade unions (A resource guide)*<sup>40</sup> is a useful ETUC publication which serves as a practical resource for trade union leaders, officials and members in the trade union movement across Europe. It aims to enable them to put in place a more strategic approach to achieving gender balance in their decision-making structures. The publication has been compiled from the results of the 2010 8th March Survey and the outcomes from the ETUC Conference 'From Membership to Leadership: Advancing Women in Trade Unions' which was held in Luxembourg in March 2010. It uses good practice examples from trade unions to show what has been done to date to promote gender balance.
186. The resource guide outlines the barriers which prevent women from taking up leadership positions in trade unions. The three most important barriers identified in the 2010 *8<sup>th</sup> March Survey* are:
  - Work/life balance and the unequal sharing of family responsibilities;
  - Preconceived stereotyped ideas concerning the role of women leading to attempts to dissuade them from putting themselves forward for leadership positions; and
  - Lack of a specific policy within the trade union organisation.
187. The resource guide also highlights the male-oriented culture of unions. Men often have their own social networks which can exclude women. The long hours culture and the timing of meetings can impact on women's (and all parent's) participation.
188. The Irish Trade Union Movement implemented the Leadership for Females in Trade Unions (LIFT) Programme, which was financed under the EU EQUAL funding programme between January 2005 and December 2007. The aim of the LIFT programme was to support organisational change and to develop skills targeted towards addressing the under-representation and participation by women at leadership level in the trade union movement.
189. The Sub-Committee welcomes the initiatives taking place within Congress and the ETUC to address the under-representation of women in decision-making positions in the trade unions. Trade unions have a role to play in educating their members on gender equality issues and encouraging them to develop their careers.

## Other Key NGOs

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<sup>39</sup> '8 March Survey' European Trade Union Confederation, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> 'From Membership to Leadership: Advancing women in trade unions (A resource guide)' European Trade Union Confederation, 2010.

190. A number of other key NGOs have a crucial role to play in relation to the advancement of women in management. This includes the umbrella organisations for employers in Ireland. Business Europe has played a central role in discussion on the advancement of women in the labour market in recent years. While many of its views may not concur with those of the present Sub-Committee particularly in relation to quotas as opposed to voluntary actions, it is worth noting that, in a recent publication, Business Europe notes that

*Well-functioning and open labour markets, including a wider use of flexible working arrangements, are needed to improve the situation for women and men, and therefore tackle gender inequalities. BUSINESS EUROPE is concerned that labour markets are too rigid and that substantial differences exist in participation across European countries.*

*Further action must consist in improving the availability of childcare facilities, addressing cultural barriers (such as stereotypes and gender roles) and tackling gender segmentation. Taken together, such policies will not only help to further increase female labour market participation; they should also result in more gender equality in decision-making positions.*

*Companies in Europe are increasingly aware of this latter challenge and are taking positive and voluntary action.<sup>41</sup>*

191. Accordingly, bodies such as IBEC, ISME and the Small Firms Association are positioned to play a significant role in supporting their members' understanding of the benefits of a gender inclusive work force and of the economic benefits to be derived from maximising the development of their female workforce.
192. The National Women's Council of Ireland plays a key role in relation to the advancement of the members of its constituent organisations. As mentioned previously, the NWC lobbies for the improvement of the situation of its members but also provides a range of positive actions to support women with funding provided by the Exchequer and a significant contribution from a number of philanthropic bodies.

### **Recommendations of the Sub-Committee**

193. The Sub-Committee acknowledges and welcomes the significant role played by the community and voluntary sector and the various representative organisations in fostering awareness of gender equality issues and the advancement of women into leadership roles both within the sector and among women who interact with the sector. **Accordingly the Sub-Committee recommends that**
- **These organisations continue to prioritise the advancement of women as a key goal for the achievement of gender equality.**
  - **The umbrella organisations for this sector should be encouraged to gather gender disaggregated statistics on women's participation in decision-making in the Community and Voluntary sector, in both paid and voluntary capacities, periodically.**
  - **Furthermore, in their roles as employers, and often as employers of significant size, the Sub-Committee recommends that the community and voluntary sector and the umbrella organisations adopt the appropriate recommendations from among those listed earlier in this chapter to ensure that they also foster the advancement of women into decision-making roles within their own organisations.**

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<sup>41</sup> BUSINESS EUROPE: Towards Gender Balanced Labour Markets : May 2011

## CHAPTER 5

### WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON STATE AND CORPORATE BOARDS

#### WOMEN ON STATE BOARDS

##### Introduction

194. Following publication of the second report of the Commission on the Status of Women, the then Government decided in 1993 to set a target of 40 per cent for the representation of women on State Boards and Government Ministers were asked to consider gender when making appointments to these boards.
195. Since 2001, this data has been monitored and reported to Government on an annual basis. The exact definition of a State Board is somewhat ambiguous but the most recent data reflect some 265 Boards with a total membership of 3,426 persons. The most recent data show that women occupy just below 34 per cent of these posts and 21 per cent of the posts of Chair. The data have been fairly static at around 34 per cent for some years, despite the commitments of Ministers to achieve change. It is likely that a number of board members serve on more than one Board. A pattern has also emerged over the years from these statistics on State Boards. Women have been consistently under-represented in economic portfolios, with other certain types of portfolios earmarked for women – generally those associated with caring roles.
196. The Programme for Government, published in March 2011, states that the newly appointed Government “will take steps to ensure that all State Boards have at least 40 per cent of each gender”.
197. In April 2011, a proposal brought to Government by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform was approved to allow that future vacancies on State Boards be advertised on the website of the relevant Government Department. The public advertisements inviting applications contain the following line “In considering applications due regard will be given to Government policy on gender balance on State Boards”.
198. In order to increase women’s representation on boards, both corporate and State, it is essential that there is a pool of suitably qualified women who are willing to fulfil this role, together with an openness on the part of male board members to value and collaborate with the women members. This was evidenced in the discussion of the Sub-Committee referred to in Chapter 3.

##### Good Practice in Other Countries

199. The Sub-Committee reviewed a number of good practice examples from other countries on the topic of women on State Boards. Some of the key examples worthy of consideration are outlined below.
200. In New Zealand, the Ministry for Women’s Affairs has prioritised an increase in the number of women serving on governance boards and committees. A Nominations Service has been established to provide an avenue for women to register their interest in and availability to take up board positions, through the development of a Nominations Database, and as a place where Government officials and others seeking board candidates can get access to a professional service that will help them find the right woman for the job.
201. The Nominations Database is a talent bank of women from all sectors and professions who have the appropriate skills and experience to serve on boards and committees. The Database is maintained by the Ministry for Women’s Affairs. When a director position becomes available on state sector boards, a suitable woman is recommended from the Database based on the criteria specified by the agency responsible for the appointment. This nomination is then considered by the responsible agency. If the role is publicly advertised the Nominations Service will notify suitable women registered on the Database of the opportunity and invite them to apply directly

to the officials concerned. The Ministry for Women's Affairs also publishes an annual 'Gender Stocktake' of State Sector Boards and Committees to monitor the percentage of women.

202. The United Kingdom is working towards the achievement that, for all UK public appointments regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the aim is for 50% of the public appointees to be women. Equal Opportunities is included in the Commissioner's Code of Practice on public appointments. Equality of opportunity is promoted through regularly meeting and presenting information about public appointments to targeted groups including women, in order to encourage a wide range of people to apply to be considered for public appointments.
203. In Denmark *KVINFO* is a self governing institution under the Danish Ministry of Culture with its own board of management. Its expert Database promotes and makes visible the knowledge, experience and expertise of Danish women. With over 1000 profiles, it includes women from all areas of society. *KVINFO* has also used its expertise in this area to help set up similar databases in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

204. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women on State Boards, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.
205. **The Sub-Committee recommends:**
- **That a Talent Bank of women suitable for consideration for appointment to State Boards be developed and maintained by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality or its agent, in consultation with relevant organisations as appropriate. This talent bank should include a provision for self-nomination;**
  - **That active steps should be taken to identify suitably qualified professional women who can offer their expertise in particular to the more economically focused State Boards where there is a significant gender deficit at present;**
  - **Private Sector Employers should be encouraged to assist with the identification of suitably qualified women to serve on State Boards as part of their Corporate Responsibility effort;**
  - **That all Government Departments and nominating bodies be recommended to consult the Talent Bank in their selection processes and when making nominations to the relevant Minister, where the Minister is responsible for the appointment; and**
  - **That all Government Departments and the Agencies under their aegis be required to submit material on the steps they are taking to "ensure that all State Boards have at least 40 per cent of each gender" in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, as part of their annual return on State Board figures to the Gender Equality Division, Department of Justice and Equality. This material may be published.**

#### **WOMEN ON CORPORATE BOARDS**

206. The European Commission's *Report on Equality between Women and Men in 2010* notes that in 2010 the sex distribution of members of the highest decision-making body of the largest publicly quoted companies (also known as blue-chip companies) was overwhelmingly in favour of men, with the EU27 average 12 per cent female members to 88 per cent male members. Ireland fares even worse in these statistics with only 8 per cent female members to 92 per cent male members. Only six of the 27 EU Member States record a lower percentage than Ireland.
207. The share of female board members in the EU has increased by just over half a percentage point per year over the last seven years. If progress continues at this slow rate it would take

approximately fifty years before there is 40 per cent of each gender on corporate boards. At European level, only 3 per cent of the largest publicly quoted companies have a woman chairing the highest decision-making body. Ireland ranks slightly higher, but at just 5 per cent this figure is still disappointingly low.

208. The slow progress made in addressing the gender balance on corporate boards has fuelled debate across Europe to address the situation more quickly. Corporate Governance Codes that encourage companies to take action are increasingly used to promote gender equality on company boards.
209. A number of EU Member States have introduced charters that companies can sign voluntarily. In Sweden, a recommendation on gender-equal boards in the 2004 Corporate Governance Code has led to a significant increase in female board members in listed companies, from 18 per cent in 2003 to 28.6 per cent in 2009<sup>42</sup>. Likewise, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Denmark and the United Kingdom have also included clauses in their corporate governance codes concerning gender equality on company boards.
210. Slovenia makes an award to companies with more than 50 staff which have achieved a minimum of 30 per cent female representation in managerial and top decision-making roles. Denmark and the Netherlands both have Charters to advance the role of women at the top and each has seen considerable success. It is reported that 64 companies had signed the Danish Pledge in 2010 while the Dutch Charter has attracted over 180 signatories. A research paper prepared for the European Commission in Summer 2011 reports that the DAX 30 firms in Germany have promised to establish voluntary targets for women on their boards by end 2011 while a number of major companies, including Siemens, SAP, BASF, EON and Daimler have all taken concrete action to appoint women to their Boards in the last year.
211. In 2011, to address the gender imbalance on corporate boards, EU Vice-President and Justice Commissioner, Ms. Viviane Reding, called on publicly listed companies in the EU to take voluntary steps to increase women's participation on corporate boards to 30 per cent by 2015 and to 40 per cent by 2020. Commissioner Reding indicated that she would review the situation in March 2012 and if credible progress had not been made she would be ready to take the necessary legislative steps at EU level.
212. In order to advance this target, Commissioner Reding met with the chief executives and chairs of boards of publicly listed companies to discuss the under-representation of women on corporate boards. Commissioner Reding has also communicated with all Member States asking that Gender Equality Ministers proactively address this target.
213. She also invited all publicly listed companies in Europe to sign up to the "***Women on the Board Pledge for Europe***" to commit to reaching the voluntary targets above. To date, a number of high profile companies, including LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton and Guerlain, have signed up to the Pledge.
214. More recently Commissioner Reding met with a number of European business schools and used this event to recommend that the business schools take proactive steps to address attitudinal issues and create awareness of gender stereotyping among their students.
215. In March 2012, Commissioner Reding launched an EU-wide public consultation on gender imbalance on corporate boards, the results of which would inform any future European Commission proposal in this area.
216. In November 2012, the European Commission published its 'Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures'. Listed companies which do not have a presence of the under-represented sex of at least 40 per cent of non-executive directors are obliged under Article 4 of the proposed Directive to make the appointments to those positions on the basis of a comparative analysis of the qualifications of each candidate, by

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<sup>42</sup> 'Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010', European Commission, 2011

applying pre-established, clear, neutrally formulated and unambiguous criteria, in order to attain the said percentage at the latest by 1 January 2020. A shorter deadline for achieving the objective (1 January 2018) is set for listed companies which are public undertakings.

217. In the presence of equally qualified candidates of both sexes priority will be given to the candidate of the under-represented sex unless an objective assessment taking account of all criteria specific to the individual candidates tilts the balance in favour of the candidate of the other sex. This is necessary to ensure that the objectives of case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union concerning positive action. Article 6 obliges Member States to lay down rules on sanctions applicable in case of breach of this proposed Directive. The sanctions must be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
218. This dossier was brought forward for negotiation at the Social Questions Working Party during the Irish Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2013. Four meetings were held during the Irish Presidency and a progress report on the dossier was forwarded to the June EPSCO Council meeting. These negotiations are continuing under the Lithuanian Presidency. The European Parliament has recently (October 2013) published its views on the proposed legislation with the FEMM (Women's Rights and Gender Equality) and JURI (Legal Affairs) Committees adopting their joint report on the proposal by 40 votes to 9, with 2 abstentions. In the joint report, 298 amendments have been tabled to the European Commission's proposal.
219. The issue of women's participation on Corporate Boards has been the focus of considerable research and comment in recent years, fuelled latterly by a belief mentioned previously that the greater involvement of women in the corporate sector might have averted some of the decisions which led to economic and financial turmoil in the financial sector. Some of the findings and recommendations are summarised in the next section.

## Research review

### United Kingdom

220. The UK Corporate Governance Code contains a gender equality principle to the effect that all companies must "pay due regard for the benefits of diversity on the board, including gender" when making appointments. Good practice in the UK is of relevance to the Irish situation because of the proximity of Irish and British corporate governance and accountancy procedures.
221. As women made up only 12.5 per cent of the members of the corporate boards of UK FTSE<sup>43</sup> 100 companies and 7.8 per cent of directors of FTSE 50 companies, the new UK *Coalition Government Agreement* agreed to "look to promote gender equality on the boards of listed companies". Lord Davies, a banker, was invited to review the situation, identify the barriers preventing more women reaching the boardroom and to make recommendations for improvement. Lord Davies' Report '*Women on Boards*'<sup>44</sup> was published in February 2011.
222. The Report identified the following four key dimensions to the business case for gender equality:
  - Improving performance;
  - Accessing the widest talent pool;
  - Being more responsive to the market; and
  - Achieving better corporate governance.
223. The Lord Davies Report made a number of recommendations including that:
  - All Chairmen of FTSE 350 companies should set out the percentage of women they aim to have on their boards in 2013 and 2015 with a target of at least 25 per cent among FTSE

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<sup>43</sup> Financial Times and London Stock Exchange.

<sup>44</sup> Lord Davies' '*Women on Board*' Report, 2011, [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)



100 boards by 2015. Chief Executives should also forecast the percentage of women they aim to have on their Executive Committees in 2013 and 2015;

- Quoted companies should be required to disclose each year the proportion of women on the board, women in Senior Executive positions and female employees in the whole organisation;
  - The Financial Reporting Council should amend the UK Corporate Governance Code to require listed companies to establish a policy concerning boardroom diversity, including measurable objectives for implementing the policy, and disclose annually a summary of the policy and the progress made in achieving the objectives;
  - Companies should report on the matters in recommendations 1, 2 and 3 in their 2012 Corporate Governance Statement whether or not the underlying regulatory changes are in place. In addition, Chairmen will be encouraged to sign a charter supporting the recommendations;
  - In line with the UK Corporate Governance Code provision B2.4 “A separate section of the annual report should describe the work of the nomination committee, including the process it has used in relation to board appointments”. Chairmen should disclose meaningful information about the company’s appointment process and how it addresses diversity in the company’s annual report including a description of the search and nominations process;
  - Investors should pay close attention to recommendations 1-5 when considering company reporting and appointments to the board;
  - Companies should periodically advertise non-executive board positions to encourage greater diversity in applications;
  - Executive search firms should draw up a Voluntary Code of Conduct addressing gender diversity and best practice which covers the relevant search criteria and processes relating to FTSE 350 board level appointments.
224. In order to achieve these goals, the Davies Report recommends that recognition and development of two different populations of women who are well-qualified to be appointed to UK boards needs to be considered:
- Executives from within the corporate sector, for whom there are many different training and mentoring opportunities; and
  - Women from outside the corporate mainstream, including entrepreneurs, academics, civil servants and senior women with professional service backgrounds, for whom there are many fewer opportunities to take up corporate board positions.
225. Finally the Davies Report recommended that a combination of entrepreneurs, existing providers and individuals needed to come together to consolidate and improve the provision of training and development for potential board members; and that a steering board would be established and would meet every six months to consider progress against these measures and would report annually with an assessment of whether sufficient progress was being made.
226. The Lord Davies Report does not include a recommendation for legislated quotas initially but recommends that the UK government reserve the right to introduce more prescriptive measures if the business-led approach does not achieve significant progress.
227. The Head of the UK Government Equalities Office told a European Commission Conference in September 2011 that the publication of the Lord Davies Report had been very influential to date. In the intervening period 25 per cent of vacant Board positions were filled by women while the number of “men only” Boards had reduced by a third.

228. Since 1999, the UK Cranfield School of Management has prepared an annual report on gender balance on FTSE boards called the Female FTSE Board Report<sup>45</sup>. The Report provides a census of the number of female Directors, Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) and Chairs of FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 boards in the UK. Each year the report focuses on a specific topic relating to women on boards. The 2010 report is entitled 'Opening Up the Appointments Process'. The Report found that in 2010 that twenty-one FTSE 100 companies had no female directors. Approximately 53 per cent of FTSE 250 companies had no female directors.
229. Exploring similar themes, the 2010 Female FTSE Report, recommended that
- All Non-Executive Director positions should be advertised in the private sector;
  - Search consultants should be required to produce balanced candidate lists;
  - Continue to make the appointments process as rigorous and objective as possible through the use of skills audits; and
  - Peer-to-peer pressure from FTSE 100 Chairmen should be used to encourage FTSE 250 Chairmen to seek female candidates for their boards.

#### **Norway**

230. The most remarkable achievement in relation to women's presence of corporate boards was achieved in Norway where a specific target of 40 per cent participation by women was set and achieved within a relatively short time frame. This required a firm commitment on the part of the Norwegian firms and its success has been explained to an extent by noting that there has always been a tradition of full female labour market participation and good family supports in Norway, which now include readily accessible childcare and legislation which actively promotes the sharing by both partners of family leaves (the EU has actively fostered these family friendly initiatives for over a decade). As a result the imposition of this legal requirement that boards be more gender balanced was accepted by the whole society as a societal imperative. However, in addition to this societal understanding of gender equality in decision-making, it is understood that the Norwegian government also dedicated resources to promote its policy initiative.
231. In 2010, to further the debate taking place in Germany regarding the use of quotas to increase female participation on corporate boards, a policy analysis of gender quotas in Norway - '*Women on Board – The Norwegian Experience*'<sup>46</sup> – concluded that a legislative quota is key to the successful implementation of government policy as it creates the pressure needed for change and the trigger for public debate.
232. Norway first introduced a gender quota for women on boards in 2002; by 2009 the target of 40 per cent had been met. The German Report outlines the main lessons learnt from the experience of Norway, namely:
- Broad political support for quota legislation was in place;
  - There was intense political and public debate leading up to the parliamentary decision;
  - Successful implementation was largely due to sanctions, which included forced dissolution of non-compliant companies;
  - Databases were established for women to register with and for companies to search;
  - A Female Future Training programme was created by the Norwegian employers association.

#### **Recommendations of the Sub-Committee**

<sup>45</sup>Female FTSE Board Report 2010, International Centre for Women Leaders, Cranfield School of Management.

<sup>46</sup>Friedrich Ebert Stiftung '*Women on Board – The Norwegian Experience*', Aagorth Storvik and Mari Teigen, June 2010.

233. The literature highlights the importance of training programmes for women who are considered “board ready”. The Sub-Committee considers that the introduction of a training course, in conjunction with a mentoring programme, would be beneficial in an Irish context.
234. The Sub-Committee notes the debate from the literature review around the introduction of gender quotas. In particular, the experience of Norway, which has reached the 40 per cent target for women on corporate boards following the introduction of a legislative quota, shows that quotas can have a positive impact over a relatively short period of time when the appropriate supports are in place.
235. The Sub-Committee also supports Commissioner Reding’s “*Women on the Board Pledge for Europe*” and encourages its wide dissemination to all employers and decision-makers.
236. In this context the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries, discussed previously, and recommends:
- **That Ireland actively participate in and foster the implementation of the work on this topic being driven by the European Commission and its Commissioner for Justice, Citizenship and Fundamental Rights;**
  - **That major companies be encouraged to develop a Corporate Governance Code to include commitments on the percentage of women and men members at board level;**
  - **That failure to achieve targets within a reasonable time frame might lead to the introduction of mandatory targets in accordance with the work being undertaken in this regard by the European Union; and**
  - **That this Code would also contain recommendations on gender diversity at organisational level particularly in the senior decision-making echelon.**

#### **Training for Male and Female Board Members**

237. The Sub-Committee also considered that there is a special need to offer training to boards and board members, on both State Boards and Corporate Boards, to ensure that all new board members fully understand their responsibilities and are encouraged to maximise their contribution to the work of the Board. In this regard, it is recommended that the training include a module to raise awareness of gender differences and the need for women and men to collaborate and to understand and respect their individual strengths in order to ensure the efficient and effective workings of the Board and its organisation/company.
238. The Sub-Committee noted a mentoring programme developed in Canada which is designed to link Board Chairs and CEOs with talented, capable, executive women to enable these two groups to actively engage with each other to address the low representation of women on Canadian boards. Board Chairs and CEOs are invited to participate in the mentoring programme and to nominate a female employee who they have identified as having board potential. Each nominee is then paired with a mentor from another, non-competing company. Mentors and mentees meet approximately every three months with the mentor providing advice and guidance. At the end of the programme both mentors and mentees are evaluated. The objectives of the Women on Board Mentoring Programme are:
- To develop a cadre of women to add to the pool of potential women director candidates in Canada;
  - To develop connections that lead to opportunities for women on corporate boards; and
  - To reinforce the commitment of leading Canadian companies to the value of gender diversity on boards.

239. A somewhat similar programme known as the FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme was launched in 2003. Under the programme, CEOs and chairpersons of some of the UK's largest companies act as one-to-one mentors to female senior executives looking to secure board positions in major companies. Among the companies who have supported the Scheme are: the Bank of England, Shell UK, Tesco and National Grid. In February 2011, it was announced that the initiative is to be expanded to include heads of FTSE 250 firms.
240. A study commissioned by the Leadership Initiative in Ireland made similar recommendations in mid-2007.

#### **Recommendation on Training for Board Members**

241. The Sub-Committee believes that such training and development initiatives would help to both identify and foster women's participation on both State and corporate Boards and therefore recommends:
- **That a training course for "Board Ready" women and a mentoring programme be developed on a pilot basis through an established training mechanism and with the support of ISEQ and other large scale companies and the State Boards.**

## CHAPTER 6

### STRENGTHENING WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

#### Introduction

242. Women have been under-represented in Irish politics at both national and local levels throughout the life of the State. Despite a long history of political activism, both inside the formal structures of elected politics and in the less formal structures of civil society, through campaigning and advocacy, only 91 women have been elected to Dáil Éireann since 1918. Effectively there has been no significant increase in women's involvement in politics in more than 15 years. Again, despite considerable debate and advocacy on the matter in the media and in the Oireachtas in the eighteen month period before the most recent general election, these actions did not translate into any significant change.
243. Following the General Election in February 2011, the percentage of women elected to Dáil Éireann stood at 15 per cent, a slight increase on the pre-election figure of 13 per cent. Following the election of Deputy Helen McEntee in March 2013, there are 26 women elected to Dáil Éireann giving a female representation of 15.6 per cent. Statistics from the 2011 Seanad Éireann election are more positive with a return of 30 per cent female Senators, largely boosted by the appointment of seven women among the eleven nominees of the Taoiseach. The 2009 Local Elections had returned a disappointingly low percentage of female Councillors at just 16 per cent. Political representation by women from ethnic and other minority groups is even poorer.
244. Ireland now compares very poorly with other Member States in relation to women's representation in politics. Indeed this is one of Ireland's weakest gender equality indicators and is somewhat surprising, particularly for outsiders who are very familiar with our two outstanding female Presidents who have together given some 21 years of service.
245. The EU27 average in 2011 for national parliaments is 24 per cent, with eight Member States recording 30 per cent or higher. The internationally accepted figure for women to have influence in political decision-making is a minimum of 30 per cent. Ireland lies third from the bottom in the EU league table for parliamentary representation of women in the lower or single House. On the global front, Ireland lies at 89<sup>th</sup> place among 190 members in the International Parliamentary Union statistics on women's participation in national politics.
246. In the 2011 General Election, the percentage of women candidates was the lowest since 1989. An analysis of the results of the Election reveals that out of a total of 566 candidates who stood for election, just 86 were women (15.2 per cent). Out of the forty-three electoral constituencies, four offered no female candidate at all while the only female candidate(s) on the electoral roll in a further five constituencies were independent. A gender breakdown of the percentage of female candidates who ran for election by political party can be found in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of female candidates by Political Party**  
**in the 2011 General Election**

Political Party	Female candidates (%)	Male candidates (%)
Fianna Fail	14.7	85.3
Fine Gael	15.4	84.6
Labour	26.5	73.5
Greens	18.6	81.4
Sinn Féin	19.5	80.5
Independents	10.6	89.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	15.2	84.6
<b>n=</b>	86	480

247. The average success rate for both male and female candidates in the election was just over 29 per cent. This suggests that there is no gender bias by the electorate in favour of male or female candidates and if more female candidates were put forward by the political parties, particularly in winnable seats, a greater return of women to Dáil Éireann is achievable. However it is also noteworthy that 21 constituencies (just below half) currently have no female representation in Dáil Éireann. This includes a mix of urban and rural constituencies, including three Dublin constituencies and a further two located in the wider “commuter belt”. The only three constituencies with two female representatives are also located in Dublin.
248. Published since the present Sub-Committee was established, it is noteworthy that the Programme for Government, published in March 2011, contains the following commitments to increasing female participation in Irish politics:
- *We recognise that there needs to be a substantial increase in the number of women in politics. We will ask the Constitutional Convention, which is examining electoral reform, to make recommendations as to how the number of women in politics can be increased.*
  - *Public funding for political parties will be tied to the level of participation by women as candidates those parties achieve.*
249. In January 2012, the Minister of State with responsibility for Equality hosted an extremely successful cross-party conference entitled ‘How to Elect More Women?’ This event, which was potentially oversubscribed, brought together an audience of some 300 to hear the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, political and administrative leaders and elected representatives of all the key parties, together with speakers from France, the United Kingdom and the OSCE. The event got considerable media coverage and was a dynamic and well received event.
250. The conference was fortuitous in that it coincided with the publication of new legislation by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government entitled the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Bill 2011. This legislation includes a provision that political parties will lose half of their public funding if they do not put forward at least 30 per cent male and 30 per cent female candidates at the next general election. Seven years from the general election where this provision first applies, this will rise to 40 per cent commencing at the general election held next after that. In announcing these electoral reforms, the Minister said
- “This initiative is a groundbreaking political opportunity to incentivise a shift towards gender balance in Irish politics. Women make up 50% of our population and they are significantly underrepresented in our political institutions. This will have a positive impact on women’s participation in local elections also.”*
251. The Bill passed all stages of the Dáil on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012 and was enacted on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2012 as the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act, 2012.
252. It is expected that the Local and European elections, due to be held in 2014, will provide an opportunity for political parties to bring forward increased numbers of female candidates in advance of the next General Election, when the candidate quota of 30 per cent will apply.
253. The Second Report of the Convention on the Constitution on amending the clause on the role of women in the home and encouraging greater participation of women in public life, and increasing the participation of women in politics was published in May 2013. A constitutional provision to enhance women’s participation in public life and in politics was narrowly defeated in a vote of the Convention’s members; however, a significant majority (97 per cent) recommended more Government action in this area.

### **Drawing Lessons from Recent National Research**

254. Much of the debate on women and politics in recent times was influenced by the work of a Sub-Committee of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights – Report on ‘*Women’s Participation in Politics*’ which was published in September 2009.

255. The Report outlines the reasons for increasing women’s political representation:
- **A more representative democracy** –It is universally acknowledged that balanced participation by women and men in political decision-making leads to more truly representative and effective democracies and better and more efficient policy making.
  - **Advantages for political parties** – increasing women’s participation in political parties leads to the possibility of increasing the pool of talented candidates and of increasing the party’s national vote share.
  - **Public support** – In the Irish National Election Study of 2007, two-thirds of the public said that they wanted to see more women in politics.
  - **Increased choice for voters** – Voters should have a balanced choice of candidates. As mentioned previously, in a number of Irish constituencies at election time, no women candidates are fielded by the leading political parties, leading to reduced or restricted voter choice.
  - **International obligations and recommendations** – under international law, States are obliged to ensure equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making. In particular, the Council of Europe has adopted a Recommendation (Rec (2003)3) urging European States to ensure a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making. The Council has advised governments to adopt special measures, including positive action measures and legislative reforms, to advance women’s participation.
256. Based on a body of research and evidence from a group of former women TDs, the Report has grouped the main barriers identified as the main obstacles to women’s participation in Irish politics under the five ‘Cs’:
- **Childcare** – women are more likely to have this responsibility;
  - **Cash** – women have less access to resources than men;
  - **Confidence** – women are less likely to go forward for selection;
  - **Culture** – a gendered culture is prevalent in parties of all persuasions; and
  - **Candidate Selection Procedures** – the processes by which political parties select candidates has been identified as posing a significant obstacle to women’s political participation.
257. This report also includes a number of recommendations specific to each of these barriers. Some of these recommendations are based on experiences in other countries and most, such as the alteration of the working arrangements in the Oireachtas and the establishment of a database of potential candidates by a national NGO such as the NWCI lie strictly within the remit of either the political parties or the Houses of the Oireachtas and are therefore outside the direct scope of this Sub-Committee.
258. That said, it is noteworthy that all of the subsequent debate, which largely took place among politicians and the media, has fully endorsed these factors – the five “Cs” - as central to the increase of women into political decision-making. A Seanad debate on the topic gave politicians from all parties the opportunity to engage in frank discussion. It was acknowledged that, while a crèche is available to Oireachtas Members, long sitting hours, particularly in the Lower House; evening Party meetings; the clientelist nature of Irish politics which requires Members, Councillors and potential members to be available to their electorate day and night and to maintain a high profile at both local and national events are disadvantageous to family and personal life, for members of both sexes.

259. It is worth noting that in Germany, the meeting arrangements for the Bundestag enable all elected representatives to spend one week in every four in their constituency, which is somewhat more conducive to the support of family life, while the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies have also espoused more family friendly and high technology working practices.
260. While these challenges are central issues which must be addressed by the Oireachtas and the Parties, the Oireachtas Sub-Committee also looked at the issue of encouraging more women to participate. It examined the various types of initiatives which have been successful in other countries in achieving increased levels of female participation, including:
- Awareness raising campaigns;
  - Supports for women through mentoring, training and networking;
  - Voluntary positive action measures (political party quotas);
  - Mandatory outcome measures (reserved seat quotas); and
  - Mandatory opportunity measures (electoral gender quotas).
261. The Oireachtas Sub-Committee also identified a range of potential initiatives which could be adopted to facilitate the entry of more women into Irish politics:
- The education system should be used to encourage more women into politics through civic education programmes in secondary schools, for example;
  - Women should be encouraged to gain confidence through involvement in local issues and activism in local politics;
  - Political parties should assist women candidates with raising funds to run campaigns;
  - New technologies could be used to facilitate women (and men) who have family obligations to participate actively in political debates (e.g. through video conferencing);
  - Moral obligations and political pressure should be placed on political parties to change their structures to make space for women;
  - Political parties should embark on recruitment drives for more women members, and ‘head-hunt’ prominent women as candidates;
  - Political parties should offer mentoring for women members and prospective candidates to help them gain confidence; and
  - Legislation should be introduced, backed up by sanctions, for political parties to ensure that a certain proportion of women candidates emerge through their selection procedures.
262. In 2009/2010 the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Constitution was tasked to carry out a review of Article 16 of the Constitution and its subsequent report ‘*Review of the Electoral System for the Election of Members to Dáil Éireann*’ was published in July 2010, again sparking much public debate. The Report makes a number of recommendations for increasing the representation of women in Irish politics, including:
- That political parties pursue positive measures to promote gender equality in its membership, including in the selection of candidates for election;
  - That political parties be required, as one of the conditions for public funding, to submit an annual statement to the new Electoral Commission, for publication, setting out in detail the policies and actions being pursued by them to promote gender equality in their electoral candidates and parliamentary representation.



## International Research on Women and Politics

263. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have published research and issued recommendations in relation to women's increased participation in politics in recent years.
264. The European Commission for Democracy Through Law (also known as the Venice Commission) operates under the Council of Europe. In 2009 the Commission published their '*Report of the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Politics*'. The Report notes that socio-economic, cultural and political factors can either hamper or facilitate the election of women to national parliaments.
- Socio-economic factors include: the overall development of the country, an extended welfare state, the socio-economic status of women, levels of female education and the proportion of women in employment.
  - Cultural factors include: gender differences in political socialisation, adult gender roles and the role of religion or cultural traditions.
  - Political influences include: the institutional features of democracies including the electoral system, the development of parties and party systems, the degree of party support for women's engagement and the strength of women's movements and networks.
265. Previously, Council of Europe Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making recommended that where member states' electoral systems are found to have a negative impact on the political representation of women on elected bodies, member states should adjust or reform those systems to promote gender balanced representation.
266. The Venice Commission Report cites proportional representation in multi-member districts (MMDs), where a number of parliamentarians are elected per constituency, as the electoral system with the most favourable outcome for female candidates. Ireland has a PR-STV system – proportional representation with the single transferable vote. The Report notes that if the PR system is used only in small districts, as is the case in Ireland, it can be just as disadvantageous to women as single member districts (SMDs) where only one parliamentarian is elected per constituency.
267. In this regard, it worth noting that analysis of the 2011 Irish general election suggests that constituency size may have influenced gender based candidate selection. Overall, women accounted for 14 per cent of party candidates in constituencies with three seats, 19 per cent of those with four seats and 22 per cent of those with five seats. The research literature shows that larger constituencies give parties more room to run women candidates without having to displace the (usually male) incumbent.
268. The Venice Commission Report also examines the issue of gender quotas. It notes that ten Council of Europe member states have introduced legal gender quotas for elections, including Belgium, France, Portugal and Spain. The Report states that the successful adoption and implementation of legal quotas requires strict placement mandates, effective enforcement mechanisms and the commitment of political parties.
269. In examining the issue of voluntary party quotas, the Venice Commission document notes that successful outcomes have been achieved in Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany. However, the Report emphasises that the larger the parties that apply the voluntary quotas the greater the impact.
270. The Report also recognises the importance of the political parties in increasing female representation in politics as the gatekeepers to the nomination of candidates for election. The nomination process is noted as the most critical area for women's access to parliament. An active female branch inside the party and female representation in party leadership are seen as important factors for influencing more women to consider a career in politics and for exerting pressure within the party to run more female candidates at elections.

271. A 2011 study commissioned by the OSCE<sup>47</sup> Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) entitled '*Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six Point Action Plan*'<sup>48</sup> also notes the important role of the political parties in increasing the participation of women in politics:

*“Political parties are often referred to as the gatekeepers of democracy. As gatekeepers, political parties can influence the level of women’s political participation as members as well as candidates, thereby directly contributing to more representative political processes. Direct or indirect gender-based discrimination in political party legislation as well as in internal party procedures can create a barrier to women’s participation. This is particularly so where such provisions impact on women’s opportunities to be nominated as candidates and elected as representatives, or affect women’s access to internal political party decision-making, campaign financing or other party resources. Where political parties fail to embrace women as valuable political actors in their own right, women’s chances of gaining higher elected office become even more remote”.*

272. The study identifies six strategic interventions which can contribute towards the attainment of gender equality in elected office, four of which are particularly relevant in an Irish context, namely:

- Legal quotas;
- Party rules;
- Capacity development; and
- Gender-sensitive rules and procedures in elected office.

273. The ODIHR report notes that legal quotas require all parties by law to nominate a stipulated percentage of female candidates for election. According to the study, gender quotas (either as reserved seats, legal quotas or party quotas) are now in place in more than one hundred countries worldwide. Legal quotas vary greatly between countries in how they are implemented with some having sanctions for non-compliance and oversight by external bodies such as Electoral Commissions.

274. In relation to party rules, the ODIHR notes that these refer to the procedures for the recruitment and selection of candidates for elected office. Party quotas can increase the number of female candidates while measures to increase the representation of women in internal party bodies can lead to a greater gender balance on selection boards and committees responsible for nominating candidates. The development by parties of internal gender equality programmes, strategies and action plans can guide the process of achieving greater gender balance, particularly within decision-making structures. In order to be most effective, plans should include timeframes, responsibilities and targets.

275. Capacity development is referred to in the ODIHR study as a multifaceted approach to focus on encouraging women to put themselves forward as candidates, in undermining the stereotypes that maintain patterns of gender inequality and in highlighting the party structures that facilitate women’s candidacies. The interventions can be broadly categorised into three areas:

- *Equal opportunity initiatives* – including candidate training, recruitment initiatives and knowledge networks;
- *Initiatives to combat stereotypes and raise awareness* – including media campaigns, media training and citizen education; and

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<sup>47</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Ireland is a participating OSCE State.

<sup>48</sup> '*Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six Point Action Plan*', Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook, Harvard University and Washington University in St. Louis, commissioned by the OSCE/ODIHR, 2011.

- *Political party initiatives* – including women’s sections, fundraising and women’s parties.
276. Gender-sensitive rules and procedures in elected office refer to reforming the rules and internal procedures within parliament to ensure that there are gender-sensitive policies in place. Initiatives might include considering the hours of parliamentary sittings, the recruitment to leadership positions within the legislature and the provision of childcare and maternal facilities.
277. The study makes it clear that
- “These strategies are necessary not because women lack the skills and qualifications to hold political office, but rather because women as a group have not had the same opportunities as men to access a political career”.*

### **Achieving Change in Women’s Representation in Irish Politics**

278. The literature also makes it clear that political will is needed to effect change and that the political parties themselves have a greater role to play in encouraging more women to put themselves forward as candidates and in selecting more women to run for election. The National Women’s Strategy specifically notes the central roles to be played by the political parties if change is to be achieved.
279. International evidence also suggests that achieving change would probably take a number of electoral cycles after the introduction of targeted measures.
280. The Sub-Committee notes the steps announced recently by the Government which propose to link public funding for political parties with enhanced gender balance. However, the Sub-Committee is of the view that if the targets are not reached in the number of female candidates put forward for the next general election, the Government should consider the introduction of a legislative quota, as opposed to a candidate quota, in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission. As observed in the 2009 Oireachtas report, this may require a constitutional amendment.
281. If there is to be success on the issue of women’s political engagement in Ireland, the literature and evidence to date suggest that a combination of approaches are needed:
- Firstly, the political parties must take initiatives to encourage more women to participate.
  - Secondly, the Houses of the Oireachtas must become more family friendly in order to enhance the working lives of its Members, both male and female.
  - Thirdly it is necessary to ensure that suitably qualified women are encouraged to join the suitably qualified men as candidates for selection at local and national levels.
  - In this regard there may be an onus on the political system to look inwards to determine whether the current clientelist model of constant accessibility is most suitable at the present time when much of the emphasis internationally is on the double income family and the sharing of family responsibilities to sustain economic growth.
282. The engagement of greater numbers of women in politics may well require the political parties to move outside their current memberships and to explore new sources of members. The Community and Voluntary sector and some of the key professions are peopled by significant numbers of talented women whose work related skills offer an excellent preparation for the work required of a politician both as a public representative and as a public lawmaker. This will require initiative on the part of the political parties.

## Irish Initiatives to Support Women's Engagement in Politics

283. A series of initiatives has been implemented over the past forty years in order to enhance women's representation in politics in Ireland. A long history of political activism by women both inside the formal structures of elected politics and the 'informal' structures of civil society (particularly through advocacy and campaigning.) Numerous initiatives have aspired to create a shift in the unequal representation of women – for example, the Women's Political Association provided a cross-party forum where women could share experiences and set political and policy objectives.
284. More recently the NWCI has sourced funding to undertake a number of projects on women in politics. This work includes the **“Put More Women in the Picture” exhibition** - a life-size photographic exhibition depicting the gender composition of key statutory bodies at national and regional levels. The exhibition was displayed in a wide range of settings from locally based community centres to libraries and county buildings in 2002. It clearly depicted the severe under-representation of women in decision-making and acts as an important tool for reflection, debate and analysis of this issue.
285. Secondly, the **“Irish Politics, Jobs for the Boys”** research, produced by the NWCI in November 2002, examined the levels of women's participation in local and national politics on State Boards, regional authorities and NDP monitoring committees and outlined the barriers to women's participation on decision making bodies and the reasons why Government and political parties should take action to reverse the under-representation of women. The NWCI continue to develop projects on the issue of women and politics, often with philanthropic support, including in 2011 a new 'Women's Equality in Politics' project aimed at addressing the barriers preventing women's participation in political life, involving public information, communications and local/national campaign work.
286. One recent example of good practice is the work being undertaken by the Longford Women's Manifesto Group, which was established just over two years ago and prior to the local elections. It is a member organisation of the NWCI. This innovative project had two key aims: to create a greater understanding of the political system for local women and to explore the barriers that exist to women's participation in politics. The Group attended County Council meetings to show that local women had a contribution to make on all issues.
287. In advance of the General Election in February 2011, the NWCI and Longford Women's Link co-hosted a meeting in Longford. Several political women were invited to the event. One candidate had told the meeting of her obvious qualifications including a previous family engagement and her experience in canvassing but despite this the Party had approached her two brothers before asking her to stand. The need to break down such barriers to women's engagement is self-evident.
288. This local model of effective engagement developed by Longford Women's Link is a local, practical initiative to engage women in politics. Increasing the representation of women in politics would require a multi-faceted approach to include grassroots level organisations. The Group continues to provide a forum for women to engage in greater understanding of how the political system works. Such local initiatives are of particular importance and relevance to the Irish political situation and local politics in Ireland as they :
- Frequently act as an entry point or platform for national politics (for both women and men) who can make an impact and gain prominence locally while building networks;
  - Provide women with an opportunity to influence policy at a local level; and
  - Act as a training ground on the mechanics of political campaigning and policy formulation which is a useful preparation for the national stage.

## The Issue of Quotas

289. As mentioned previously, the use of quotas in relation to women's participation in politics has been cited in much of the literature and is already used in a number of countries. Media discussion in Ireland on the topic in Summer 2010 was quite heated. Due to a series of concerns, the Oireachtas Sub-Committee recommended in favour of candidate quotas as opposed to seat quotas and this is the approach adopted in the current legislation.
290. The experience in other EU countries is noteworthy. Belgium has actively addressed gender equality deficits on a number of key issues in the past decade, with a strong body of legislation and active promotion achieved through a dedicated Institute for Gender Equality. In relation to politics, the Smet-Tobback law was introduced in Belgium in 1994, placing a maximum limit on candidates of each gender. Parties are penalised if more than two-thirds of their candidates are of one gender. As a temporary measure at least 25 per cent of candidates are to be female. In 2002, Belgium introduced the Gender Quotas Act which stipulated that women would occupy half of the positions on each party's electoral list, including at least one of the top two positions. If any party fails to comply their entire list is rejected by the electoral commission. As a result, women now account for 40 per cent of elected representatives in the Belgian national parliament, a substantial increase from 12.5 per cent of elected representatives when the Smet-Tobback law was first introduced.
291. The Spanish Government has also been proactive in addressing gender equality issues in the last decade, again with strengthened and targeted legislation. In 2004, the Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE), Spain's ruling party, appointed the first gender balanced government in Spain's history with an equal number of male and female Ministers. The PSOE also introduced an electoral gender quota legislation that stipulated a 60:40 gender provision for political posts. This legislation was amended in 2007 with the Equality Law (Ley de Igualdad), which introduced the "principle of balanced presence". Under this law all political parties are required to field no more than 60 per cent of one gender as candidates in all elections. Female representation in the Spanish national parliament has increased from 28 per cent in 2000 to 37 per cent in 2011. A further feature of the Spanish initiative to foster female engagement at the highest levels is the appointment by the Prime Minister of female Ministers to a number of Ministries which would have been regarded as male strongholds.
292. The French Parity Law was introduced in 2000. The law stipulates that 50 per cent of election candidates to regional and general elections be of either gender. A system of financial penalties is in place for non-compliant political parties, so that their level of public funding will be reduced accordingly. The law has had success at local level, where women's representation has increased from 26 per cent in 1995 to 49 per cent in 2008. The law has been less effective at national level, where parties have tended to place women lower than men on their national lists. In 2007, an amendment was made to the law which introduced a "zipping mechanism" to ensure that women candidates would be placed at every second or third position on the list.
293. The outcomes have been less positive in France and female representation in the French National Assembly has risen from 12.3 per cent in 2002 to 19 per cent in 2011. There is some anecdotal evidence that the political parties have been prepared to pay the penalties rather than foster women candidates.
294. Sweden differs from the examples provided by Belgium, Spain and France in that it provides an example of an effective system of voluntary quotas applied by the political parties themselves. Sweden currently has the highest percentage of women in parliament in Europe at 46 per cent and is positioned second in the world tables. In 1979, the Swedish political parties introduced the 40-60 principle, whereby all political parties had to nominate candidates of at least 40 per cent of each gender for all elections. In 1994, the Swedish Socialist Democratic Party first introduced a "zipped" nominations list, whereby women and men candidates were alternated in terms of their placement on the list. This practice is now common amongst all the main political parties in Sweden.

295. Most recently Poland introduced a mandatory quota of 35 per cent of each gender for electoral lists in January 2011.

#### **Recommendations of the Sub-Committee**

296. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in Irish politics, the Sub-Committee is mindful of its review of international literature and of good practice developed in other countries.

- **The Sub-Committee notes the new Government legislation linking public funding to political parties to the selection of female candidates for election. If the 30 per cent target is not reached at the next general election, this Sub-Committee asks the Government to consider adopting a legislative quota for party candidates whereby each party would be required to submit the names of equal numbers of men and women in each constituency;**
- **The recommendations in this Report should also apply as appropriate to local and European elections;**
- **Political parties in receipt of public funding should implement a formal training and mentoring programme for female party members identified as having leadership potential;**
- **Political parties in receipt of public funding should establish an active female committee structure inside the party at both central and regional levels as appropriate with a view to influencing more women to consider a career in politics and for exerting pressure within the party to select more female candidates for elections;**
- **Political parties in receipt of public funding should establish a dedicated women's network;**
- **Female T.D.s on maternity leave should be entitled to an automatic pairing<sup>49</sup> arrangement for a minimum of 18 weeks (the EU recommended period of maternity leave) and that their male counterparts receive automatic pairing for up to a week following the birth of a child; and**
- **Further informed consideration should be given to the need to transform the Irish political system including the operation of the Houses of the Oireachtas to make it more responsive to the family needs and responsibilities of its Members to facilitate the greater participation of women in politics in Ireland.**

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<sup>49</sup> Pairing – an arrangement where a T.D. of one party agrees with a T.D. of an opposing party not to vote in a particular division, giving both T.D.s the opportunity to be elsewhere.

## CHAPTER 7

### WOMEN IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

#### Introduction

297. The inclusion of women as representatives of their country at the international level is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
298. Despite this commitment, to which all Council of Europe countries and almost all UN countries are signatories, the Council of Europe (CoE) report *'Parity Democracy - a far cry from reality'*<sup>50</sup>, published in 2009, shows that across the CoE member states the percentage of women in the highest levels of the diplomatic services has decreased between 2005 and 2008. In 2008, no CoE member state had reached the recommended forty per cent representation of women at Ambassadorial level. Sweden had the highest percentage at 29.4 per cent.
299. Recent statistics (January 2013) from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are shown in Table 5 below. It will be noted that, for the more junior diplomatic grade, this breakdown by gender does not differ significantly from the breakdown by grade for the general civil service grades. There have been improvements in the representation of women at Counsellor level and equivalent from 18 per cent in 2010 to 27 per cent in 2013, with a recent promotion competition resulting in a 50:50 distribution of promotions. However, women are still very much under represented at the most senior levels within D/FA&T.

**TABLE 5**  
**WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE IRISH DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

GRADE	FEMALE	MALE
Secretary General, Second Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary and equivalent	8.0%	92%
Counsellor/Principal Officer and equivalent	27%	73%
First Secretary/Assistant Principal and equivalent	43%	57%
Third Secretary/Administrative Officer/Higher Executive Officer and equivalent	60%	40%
Executive Officer and equivalent	75%	25%
Staff Officer	63%	37%
Clerical Officer	72%	28%
Service Officer/Nightwatchperson/Cleaner	36%	64%

300. The Irish Diplomatic Network is made up of 73 overseas Missions, in addition to offices in Armagh and Belfast. The Network consists of 56 Embassies, 7 multilateral missions and 10 Consulates General and other offices overseas. In July 2011, 10 women or 15 per cent of the total were assigned to Ambassador ranked posts. Including Consulates and other offices, a total of 14 women or 18 per cent of the total, from various Civil Service grades, were assigned to Head of Mission or equivalent posts. This is in line with the reported average from figures available across the EU Member States.

#### Issues Specific to the Advancement of Women in the Diplomatic Service

301. The Council of Europe Report on Parity in Democracy also notes that cultural and social difficulties may prevent more women from being appointed to the highest diplomatic posts. These factors are linked to stereotyped views of women's and men's roles and responsibilities

<sup>50</sup> Council of Europe *'Parity Democracy - a far cry from reality'*, CDEG 2009.

which still persist. The difficulty of reconciling a diplomatic career with family life is also noted as a barrier to female progression.

302. This latter issue is now a concern for diplomats of both genders. The role of diplomat, particularly while on overseas postings, places considerable pressure on personal life at all levels. Partners are frequently required by the system to sacrifice or suspend their careers in order to support the diplomat, not just as a life partner but often also as an unremunerated work partner on the diplomatic circuit. This role becomes ever more demanding as the career diplomat advances, particularly to ambassadorial level. For those on home postings, work related international travel can also disrupt family life, although this challenge is not confined to the diplomatic service, with ever increasing multilateral meetings necessitating attendance by Irish officials.
303. A conference held by the Council of Europe in 2004 identified a number of the key issues affecting the need to advance women in the diplomatic service. This followed the adoption by the Council of Europe Council of Ministers of a resolution<sup>51</sup> inviting governments to:
- Take the necessary measures to ensure that women have an equal opportunity to reach all levels in the diplomatic service;
  - Increase the number of women candidates to high-level decision-making posts in international organisations;
  - Ensure that women are involved in all stages of conflict prevention, conflict settlement and reconstruction, including mediation and peace negotiations; and
  - Take the necessary measures to train mediators involved in conflict settlement, peace missions and peace support organisations to apply a gender perspective to their work.
304. The key issues which emerged from the Conference do not differ significantly from the key issues affecting the advancement of women in other roles. The Conference raised the following points:
- The efforts of both women and men are needed to promote gender equality. Change will not happen without the participation of men;
  - The need to remove persisting stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men and for measures to promote the reconciliation of work and family life for diplomats;
  - Greater access for women to diplomatic training and education; and
  - A strengthening of cooperation between female diplomats is one of the main means of promoting gender equality in diplomacy.
305. Ireland's National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2011) makes a number of commitments with regard to the participation and representation of women in decision-making. A key objective of the plan is to increase women's meaningful participation in UN and other international missions relating to peace and security as well as peace processes and negotiations.
306. In recent years, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has proactively addressed the issue of female advancement in the Irish diplomatic service. It has also sought to increase the placement of female Irish diplomats in other overseas services such as the European External Action Service (EEAS), the newly strengthened diplomatic service of the EU, established in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty.

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<sup>51</sup> Resolution on the roles of women and men in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict democratic processes – a gender perspective (CM (2003)58).



307. One of the challenges facing the Department in addressing this issue was the low numbers of eligible women who were putting themselves forward for promotion, although this improved substantially in internal Departmental promotion competitions held in 2012. Information from other foreign ministries suggested that the situation was replicated in many countries at head of mission posts, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries. Although the competition was open to men and women from all Member States, and the selection procedures are clear that due regard is to be had to gender balance, only 15.1% of the total numbers of applicants for positions in the EEAS were female.
308. It appeared from internal research carried out in 2009 in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that women in the Department had not been advancing from First Secretary to Counsellor level. The Department sought to proactively address this issue and the Department had held focus groups and consultations with staff. Some contributors noted a perception of a male focus in the culture of the Department. These responses included a perceived negative attitude towards work/life balance; the expectation of presenteeism; and assignment issues including a perception that women were placed in 'softer' roles while male officers were engaged in strategic planning towards their next advancement. (In this regard, the comment of the TCD researchers in relation to the greater need for all women to recognise the need for career planning is pertinent – see paras. 161 and 162 of this report). As noted in para. 298, an internal promotion competition in 2012 resulted in a 50:50 balance in promotion from First Secretary to Counsellor.
309. The female input into this work by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade identified the family difficulties such as the rotation of posts both at home and abroad and the large amount of travel associated with Dublin posts, sometimes for long periods which had been identified as a barrier for the diplomatic service by the Council of Europe. This places considerable disruption on life, including on a spouse or partner's career and on children's schooling.
310. In response, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has launched a Women's Network as an online intranet forum on gender equality which also allows overseas officers to remain in touch. On an ad hoc basis, a number of speakers have shared their expertise on gender equality issues. The Network is now moving to a new phase with more structured meetings being held at regular intervals. A pilot mentoring scheme was launched in 2010 for both genders. The next round of the mentoring programme will endeavour to allow all mentees more input into their choice of mentor, including in terms of gender, and a panel of senior female mentors, supplemented from outside the Department, where necessary, will be established.
311. In July 2012, the Department established a sub-committee of the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) on Gender Equality. The sub-committee is chaired by two members of the MAC and is open to all officials in the Department. The MAC sub-committee on Gender Equality is committed to develop a Gender Equality Human Resources Strategy and a related Action Plan, which will be prepared through a Gender Audit led by the Department's Evaluation and Audit Unit and supported through external expertise. Part of the work of the Audit and of the sub-committee is to improve data collection and to examine best practice from other public and private sector bodies in Ireland and overseas.
312. In December 2012, the D/FA&T MAC broadened its membership both to benefit from the input of other senior grades in management deliberations and also to improve gender balance on the MAC which had been affected by recent retirements. Four additional members, three of whom are women, were appointed in May 2013 to serve with the existing nine members. The Department is also seeking to ensure its gender equality commitments are adequately reflected in a range of reform processes underway including in drafting a new Human Resources Strategy and in improving Knowledge Management.
313. The Department has announced that its Women's Network (previously mentioned at 310 above) will be formally launched later in 2013 and that contacts are already underway with other interested Government Departments regarding collaborative sessions, including the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

314. The Department is aware that support for spouses is a significant issue. A number of countries give an allowance towards the pension of a spouse who gave up their job to accompany a diplomat abroad. Ireland currently is not in a position to make such a contribution.

#### **Good Practice in Other Jurisdictions**

315. A literature review suggests that a number of EU Member States have also proactively addressed the special needs of diplomats in order to encourage increased numbers in the profession and to enhance women's participation.
316. In 1993, Austria adopted the Federal Equal Treatment Act for Civil Servants and Employees. The Act also established the Federal Equal Treatment Commission, a specialised complaint board for the federal civil service. Each Ministry has an appointed Equal Treatment Commissioner. Each Ministry has to report regularly on the progress it has made in implementing the principle of equal treatment. Each Ministry has issued regulations on the advancement of women into decision-making positions.
317. Emerging from this work, the regulations of the Austrian Foreign Ministry provide that a woman who is applying for a post who is equally qualified with a male candidate must be awarded the post until a target of 40 per cent of women in senior positions is achieved. The percentage of women in senior positions in the Austrian Foreign Ministry has increased from 10 per cent in 1994 to 32.7 per cent in 2009, with women accounting for 48.4 per cent of all staff in the Foreign Ministry in 2009. This has been enhanced in part by a decision whereby partners who accompany their spouses on an overseas posting are paid up to 50 per cent of their pension premium and are entitled to receive up to a maximum of €200 per month if they have given up their job to do so.

#### **Recommendations of the Sub-Committee**

318. In issuing the following recommendations to advance the number of women in the diplomatic service, the Sub-Committee acknowledges the work which is already underway in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to address the specific issues that arise in relation to the foreign services. It is also acknowledged that the recommendations in relation to women working in the public sector (in Chapter 4 of this report) would also apply to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Sub-Committee recommends:
- **That the pilot mentoring scheme currently under way in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade be extended to include a female only mentoring scheme to specifically address the under-representation of women in decision-making roles in the diplomatic service; and**
  - **That the Women's Network in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade be facilitated in enhancing discussion and engagement with the female Heads of Mission to highlight the importance of female role models in encouraging more female officers to apply for top level posts. This should include consideration of a targeted conference.**
319. While recognising the special circumstances which apply to and commitment made by families who accompany spouses working abroad, this circumstance is not confined to the membership of the diplomatic service. Many employees, both male and female, in international firms and organisations, are called upon to interrupt their careers in a similar manner. In some jurisdictions, accompanying spouses are precluded from engaging in the labour market. This also applies to diplomatic spouses, where the nature of the role requires them to engage in unpaid work to support their partner.
320. The sub-committee is of the view
- **That consideration should be given to the establishment of a process whereby accompanying spouses of both genders might be facilitated to preserve and/or**

**enhance their pension entitlements including both State and private pensions while they are engaged in an unremunerated accompaniment role abroad.**



## CHAPTER 8

### WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY

#### Introduction

321. Women's participation in the judiciary represents the final group of decision-makers which are monitored regularly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. In Ireland the independent role of the judiciary is enshrined in the Constitution. Article 36 of the Constitution enables the regulation by law of the number, remuneration, age of retirement and pensions of judges of the Supreme and High Courts and the numbers and terms of appointments of judges of all other Courts. Accordingly there is no provision whereby the gender composition of the judiciary can be influenced through quotas at this time.
322. In July 2011, the President of Ireland appointed the first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Ireland while in March 2011 a female Attorney General was appointed for the first time. These appointments are made by the President on the nomination of the Taoiseach. As a result and for the first time in the history of the State, the two most senior legal positions in the State are held by women, while the President of the District Court is also a woman. The first female Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) was appointed in November 2011.
323. Within the Irish Judicial system, women account for almost 32 per cent of the total number of Judges in all of the Courts. Table 6 below shows the gender breakdown by Court.

**TABLE 6**  
**GENDER BREAKDOWN OF IRISH JUDGES BY COURT**

<b>Court</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>
Supreme Court	30.0	70.0
High Court	12.1	87.9
Circuit Court	41.9	58.1
District Court	37.2	62.8

*Source: Courts Service at end December 2013*

324. The percentage of female Judges is 30 per cent or higher in the Supreme, the Circuit and the District Courts. The High Court has a female representation rate of just over 12 per cent, following the appointments of two female judges to the Supreme Court. Their vacancies in the High Court are yet to be filled. It is clear from the statistics that women are reaching the highest levels in the Judiciary to a much greater extent than in any of the other decision-making areas in Ireland, however, these statistics still fall short of the 40 per cent target for balanced representation of women and men. At European level, eight of the twenty-seven EU Member States have more than 40 per cent female representation at Supreme Court level, the EU-27 average is 34 per cent.
325. In June 2013, under the provisions of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012, the Government nominated six persons for appointment by the President as Specialist Judges of the Circuit Court. Of the six persons nominated, four were female (66.7 per cent).
326. In Ireland, applications are invited from suitably qualified barristers and solicitors for appointment to all Courts and these are screened by the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board. During 2012, six female candidates made application for appointment to the High Court, representing 31.6 per cent of applicants; 56 female applicants made application for appointment to the Circuit Court, representing 37.6 per cent of applicants; while 133 women made application for appointment to the District Court, representing 38.2 per cent of the candidates. The JAAB Annual Report advises that during 2012, four of the six nominees it proposed for appointment to the Circuit Court were women, which helps to sustain the gender balance.
327. The Judicial Appointments Advisory Board was established under the Courts and Court Officers Act, 1995. The purpose of the Board is to identify persons and inform the Government of the suitability of those persons for appointment to judicial office. While the Government is not obliged to appoint a person who is on the list of names recommended by the Board, it has been

the case that Governments have chosen from those recommended. The Board currently<sup>52</sup> has five female members out of a total of eleven members.

328. For some time, women have continued to dominate undergraduates and post-graduates in the field of law. As table 7 below shows, women now represent two thirds of primary graduates in law, an increase of over 3 per cent since 2005. Among post-graduates, women represent almost 60 per cent at Masters level and have shown a considerable increase among those achieving a doctorate. This suggests that there is a pool of well educated women lawyers in Ireland who are available to serve in higher office.

**Table 7**  
**Graduates and Post-Graduates in Law 2005 and 2009**

Study level	2005			2009		
	Male	Female	Female as % of total	Male	Female	Female as % of total
Primary Degree	210	366	63.5	323	647	66.7
Masters	184	268	59.3	184	267	59.2
PhD	2	0	0.0	17	8	32.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>63.8</b>

Source: HEA

### Relevant Research

329. This is one field in relation to which there is not a significant amount of research. In 2003, Trinity College Dublin Law School published a report on women in the legal professions entitled '*Gender Injustice - Feminising the Legal Profession?*'<sup>53</sup> The Report was funded under the Equality for Women Measure 2000-2007. The Report made a total of fifty recommendations for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in the legal professions. The following recommendations were made in relation to judicial appointments:
- Gender balance should be sought when members are appointed to the Board<sup>54</sup>. Increased participation by laypersons on the Board should also be considered, in accordance with the Ontario judicial appointments model;
  - All vacancies for judicial office should be widely advertised by the Board;
  - The Minister should no longer have discretion to appoint a person who is not on the panel of names recommended by the Board, since the retention of this power has the potential to undermine the entire consultation process;
  - The Board should have a role in all judicial appointments, even where an existing judge is promoted. The Board must also be given the power to recommend candidates in order of preference, so as to make its input more meaningful, particularly where there are a small number of candidates for one vacancy;
  - The criteria for appointment themselves should be reviewed, since they are ill defined and open to an overly subjective interpretation at present. Considerations like 'character' and

<sup>52</sup> October 2013

<sup>53</sup> '*Gender Injustice - Feminising the Legal Profession?*': 2003, Trinity College Dublin Law School, co-authors: Ivana Bacik, Cathryn Costello and Eileen Drew.

<sup>54</sup> All references to the "Board" in this section refer to the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board which was established to identify persons and to inform the Government of the suitability of those persons for appointment to judicial office.

- ‘temperament’ should be replaced with criteria or competencies that are transparently meritocratic (like those adopted in the Ontario model, and as recommended by the N.I. Commissioner for Judicial Appointments), in order to guard against gender bias;
- Consideration should be given to making judicial appointments from among the Bar without requiring that applicants be Senior Counsel; and
  - The appointment of judges on a part-time basis should also be considered as a way of ensuring better gender balance.
330. The methodology in Ontario referred to in the TCD study relates to Ontario’s Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee (JAAC) which was established in 1995 by an amendment in 1994 to the Courts of Justice Act, 1990. This legislation requires that the composition of the Committee reflects the diversity of Ontario’s population including gender (four of the current thirteen member Committee are female). Following its establishment, the JAAC undertook a programme of public information to tell interested people how the appointment process works.
331. In advertising judicial vacancies, the JAAC explicitly states that applications are encouraged from women and minority groups and further states that “*The Judiciary of the Ontario Court of Justice should reasonably reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Applications from members of equality-seeking groups are encouraged*”. Following completion of the application form, applications are reviewed by the Committee and a shortlist is prepared. The Committee selects candidates for interview from the shortlist and following interviews sends a ranked list of its recommendations to the Attorney General. The Attorney General is required to make an appointment from that list.
332. In 2011, women accounted for 53 per cent of all new applications for judicial positions in the Ontario Court of Justice.
333. In New Zealand, appointments to judicial positions are made by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Attorney General. The Attorney General mentions appointments at Cabinet after they have been determined; they are not discussed or approved by Cabinet. Candidates for appointment are assessed by reference to a range of clearly defined, transparent and publicly announced criteria. These cover legal ability, qualities of character, personal technical skills and reflection of society.
334. A consultation process is an integral part of the appointments process. A range of groups and people are consulted so as to ensure a sufficiently broad perspective is obtained as to prospective candidates. The list of parties who may be contacted includes the Women’s Consultative Group of the New Zealand Law Society and women lawyers’ associations.
335. In the United Kingdom, the judicial appointments process is overseen by the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC). In July 2011, a House of Lords’ enquiry into the judicial appointments process was launched. One of the questions asked by the House of Lords Constitution Committee was ‘Do we have a sufficiently diverse Judiciary?’
336. The Judiciary of England and Wales is trying to attract more women to become Judges by holding recruitment road shows across the UK and by offering a work shadowing scheme whereby solicitors and barristers receive a judicial work experience placement. In 2010, 59 per cent of the 600 applicants for the work experience scheme were female.
337. In 2010, an independent advisory panel, chaired by Lady Neuberger, on judicial diversity was commissioned by the UK government. The panel made fifty-three recommendations including:
- Judges should engage with schools and colleges;
  - Law firms should regard part-time judicial service as positive for their practice;
  - Flexible working arrangements should be encouraged;

- The concept of a “judicial career” should be promoted;
  - The creation of a Judicial Diversity Taskforce to oversee the initiatives arising from the report; and
  - There should not be diversity quotas or specific targets for judicial appointments.
338. The Judicial Diversity Taskforce, which is chaired by the Minister for Equality and Diversity at the UK Ministry for Justice, met for the first time in March 2010 and published its first annual report in May 2011 on progress made in implementing the fifty-three Neuberger recommendations. The 2010 Report shows progress made across all of the recommendations and notes that a mentoring scheme for deputy district judges has been established in England and Wales and an informal mentoring scheme for new appointees to the High Court has also been set up. Schools and colleges have also been invited to visit courts with mock trials being held with members of the judiciary. The Judicial Office also piloted an outreach project in Birmingham aimed at women lawyers to encourage them to consider a judicial career. Judges from several levels of the judiciary took part in the panel and spoke about their experiences of becoming and being a Judge. Similar events are planned for the future. The Judicial College, which will offer training across the judiciary, was established on 1 April 2011.

### **Recommendations**

339. In issuing the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in the judiciary, the Sub-Committee is mindful of the special place of the judiciary in the Constitution.
340. **The Sub-Committee recommends:**
- **That in the public advertisement of judicial vacancies, the JAAB Notice should explicitly state that it welcomes applications from women;**
  - **That a job shadowing scheme for female solicitors, barristers and senior counsel be established by the President of the High Court to address the under-representation of female Judges in the High Court; and**
  - **That the functions of the JAAB be extended to include responsibility for promoting diversity within the judiciary and for promoting the judiciary as a career option.**



## CHAPTER 9

### IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Steps needed to achieve the Recommendations

341. In addressing the issue of the advancement of women into leadership roles the Sub-Committee has addressed six key sectors, but within these broad sectors there is a much wider set of fields, from large scale public to small scale private employers, from the smallest State Boards to the corporate Boards of multi-national giants, from the small number of judges who serve on our Supreme and High Courts to the much broader Circuit and District Courts.
342. Accordingly, the achievement of the overall goal of increasing women's representation in decision-making will require a commitment from a wide and diverse body of stakeholders.
343. Much of this commitment requires changes of attitude and changes of approach rather than financial investment. At a time when financial considerations are paramount, the implementation of initiatives which can achieve tangible benefits without any or with minimal cost is to be encouraged. In common with the whole population, the gender equality NGOs have experienced the challenges perpetrated by the economic downturn. These challenges may well have stemmed the creative processes for those working in the NGOs and the evidence of the implementation of the recommendations being made in this report would provide a significant outcome in achieving de facto gender equality in Ireland.
344. This is evidenced by the significant number of UN Member States which alluded to Ireland's comparatively poor record with regard to gender and decision-making during Ireland's UPR<sup>55</sup> on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.
345. The implementation of this Report requires a promotion of awareness of the benefits of more balanced representation and more balanced decision-making. Such awareness-raising must target a broad audience including the Government, the current leadership in each field, the pool of potential female leadership candidates and the public. This can be achieved by political leadership, and indeed would build upon the commitments in relation to gender and the role of women already enshrined in the Programme for Government. It can also be fostered through the equality machinery, the NWCI and its member organisations, other umbrella organisations and the NGOs that address gender issues and other Civil Society players.
346. In some instances, mentoring programmes have been recommended as possible solutions by the Sub-Committee. Mentoring programmes may have some small opportunity cost, but there is evidence to suggest that mentees benefit from mentoring programmes to a significant extent. Furthermore mentoring sessions may become productive fora for the stimulation of innovative thinking. Accordingly, the total outcome for an organisation through the implementation of a mentoring programme may be a "win win" situation.
347. It may be appropriate to establish some good practice models for training and development courses for particular sectors, such as for example, the Civil or Public service or for the private sector, and for further initiatives to support women's advancement in politics.
348. The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality has successfully applied for grant funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), under the EU's PROGRESS Programme, to implement some of the recommendations contained in this report, including the development of best practice leadership training and mentoring programmes, and the establishment of a talent bank/database of women suitably qualified and experienced to serve on State and on Corporate Boards.

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<sup>55</sup> Universal Periodic Review

349. The outcomes to be achieved through the implementation of the Recommendations of the Sub-Committee are tangible and measurable. Indeed most are already routinely measured by the European Commission. The NWS includes a monitoring process and it is essential that progress in the achievement of greater female involvement in leadership roles through the implementation of the recommendations of this Sub-Committee is also monitored regularly.
350. **Accordingly the Sub-Committee recommends that the Annual Progress Report on implementation of the NWS should henceforth include up to date data on women in leadership roles, while progress on this topic should be discussed at each meeting of the NWS Monitoring Committee until the deficits have been removed.**
351. **The Sub-Committee also recommends that the national equality machinery and all relevant civil society bodies continue to encourage the active engagement of women in all decision-making roles among their memberships.**
352. Finally in preparing this Report, the Sub-Committee experienced difficulty with regard to the availability of both gender disaggregated data and time series of comparable data. While many data series will offer one simple breakdown of the data population by gender, it offers no further gender disaggregation of the variables, making it impossible to determine the impact of the individual variables on men and on women.
353. **Accordingly the Sub-Committee recommends that all relevant data sets funded by the State include full gender disaggregation, in accordance with international good practice.**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Terms of Reference agreed by the NWS Monitoring Committee for the Sub-Committee are as follows:

- Identify and propose key strategies which could be pursued to advance the aim of increasing the role of women as decision-makers in politics, the judiciary, the public sector, including State Boards, the diplomatic service, private sector enterprise, including corporate decision making and corporate boards;
- Review the existing situation and international comparators;
- Examine literature and models of good practice in the promotion of women in decision-making in Ireland and abroad, for example from EU Institutions and the Council of Europe;
- Undertake a focused consultation process as necessary;
- Examine the recommendations of the Oireachtas Sub Committee on Women in Politics and recommendations from the Council of Europe in relation to female participation in the democratic process and propose ways forward, where appropriate, in advancing these recommendations;
- Based on literature review and experience in other countries, develop recommendations suitable for the Irish political structure, bearing in mind the current review of the Irish political structure being undertaken by the Constitution Review Group;
- In relation to other fields, and based on good international practice, propose recommendations for the advancement of women as appropriate;
- Consider the development of a talent bank of suitable female candidates for consideration for decision-making roles on State Boards;
- Report regularly on progress to National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee; and
- Complete work within a year of first meeting.



## APPENDIX 2

### MEMBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

#### Chairpersons

Ms. Mary White, T.D.	Minister of State for Equality to March 2011
Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D.	Minister of State for Equality from March 2011

#### Government Departments

Ms. Pauline Moreau	Dept. of Justice and Equality
Ms. Caitriona O'Brien	Dept. of Education and Skills
Ms. Orla Keane	Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Ms Clare Brosnan (alternate)	Do.
Ms. Mary McKeon	Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform
Mr. Gerry Quinlan (alternate)	Do.

#### Social Partners

Ms. Carol Baxter	The Equality Authority
Ms. Sara Bourke	Community and Voluntary Pillar
Mr. David Joyce	ICTU
Ms. Kara McGann	IBEC
Ms. Susan McKay	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms. Rachel Doyle	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms. Tess Murphy	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms. Tara Farrell (alternate)	Do.

#### Secretariat

Ms. Louise Sandom	Dept. of Justice and Equality (Secretary)
Mr. Patrick O'Leary	Dept. of Justice and Equality
Mr. Paul Laycock	Dept. of Justice and Equality



### APPENDIX 3

#### PERSONS WHO MADE PRESENTATIONS TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE

<b>Ms. Kara McGann</b>	<b>Executive in the Industrial Relations and HR Services Division in IBEC – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the topic of women in senior management roles in Private Sector employment.</b>
<b>Mr. David Joyce</b>	<b>Equality Officer in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the topic of women in senior decision-making roles in the Trade Union Movement.</b>
<b>Ms. Jane Williams</b>	<b>CEO of the Shia Management Group Ltd, experienced State Board Chair/member – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the subject of women on State and Corporate Boards.</b>
<b>Ms. Mary McKeon</b>	<b>Principal Officer, the Equality Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the subject of women in senior management positions in the Irish Civil Service.</b>
<b>Ms. Deirdre Garvey</b>	<b>CEO of The Wheel and Chair of The Leadership Initiative – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the work of The Leadership Initiative.</b>
<b>Ms. Susan McKay</b>	<b>CEO of the National Women’s Council of Ireland – made a joint presentation to the Sub-Committee on the topic of Women in Politics.</b>
<b>Ms. Tara Farrell</b>	<b>Head of Services at Longford Women’s Link – made a joint presentation to the Sub-Committee on the topic of Women in Politics.</b>
<b>Ms. Marie Cross</b>	<b>Assistant Secretary, Head of The Strategy and Performance Unit at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – made a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the subject of Women in the Diplomatic Service.</b>

