EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

Title: Gender Impact Assessment - Ireland
Country: Ireland
Authors(): Ursula Barry

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Gender Impact Assessment

Ireland

Ursula Barry

October 2000
Introduction

This Report was prepared for the Gender and Employment Research Network attached to the Equality Office of the European Commission. It is one of a series of Reports carried out on Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) in each European Union (EU) Member State under the co-ordination of Professor Jill Rubery of School of Management, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) in the U.K. The objectives of the Network are to carry out a comparative assessment of the development of Gender Impact Assessment policies, procedures and practices in each Member State and to highlight specific examples of Gender Impact Assessment which have been carried out in relation to employment policies. By looking at examples of Gender Impact Assessment in practice, it is intended to both highlight examples of 'best practice' and also to identify the potential for further development of the gender impact assessment process in selected employment policy arenas.

For the purposes of the work of the Gender and Employment Network and for this Report the definition of Gender Impact Assessment, taken from European Community Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines is: “to compare and assess, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy”. In Ireland Gender Impact Assessment is at an early stage of development and while a number of important new initiatives have been taken and these are discussed in detail in the Report, examples of practical applications of newly adopted GIA guidelines are not yet in the public domain. Other relevant evaluations, which have considered the gender impact of specific policies are analysed however, and two specific policy measures are selected to which the principles and stages of gender impact assessment have been applied.
Section 1 Development of Gender Impact Assessment in Ireland

Over the last two years a number of significant developments have taken place in Ireland with regard to Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) resulting in a much greater emphasis on GIA across the policy-making process and also in a more systematic application of a common approach to GIA in different policy fields. GIA is still at the early stages of development in Ireland, however. Up until 1999, GIA was carried out in relation to specific policy initiatives and proposals coming before Cabinet. In the absence of any agreed framework for carrying out gender impact assessment or of common criteria or stages in the GIA process, the process tended to be highly uneven, ad hoc and inadequate. In addition, where GIA was carried out on proposals coming to Cabinet they were covered by 'cabinet confidentiality' and consequently were not publicly available or subject to critical scrutiny.

The newly adopted GIA guidelines operate at national level under the co-ordination of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The apply to the vast majority of policies and areas of expenditure under the Irish National Development Plan, including those aspects funded by Structural Funds as well as those funded exclusively from national resources. Guidelines for the application of GIA at local level, in disadvantaged areas through the activities of Area Based Partnerships, are currently being developed by Area Development Management (ADM - the management structure for the 38 Local Area Partnerships) and will be applied to the local development programme. Following regional and local training session a Gender Mainstreaming Manual is currently being produced by ADM for use in each of the Partnership Areas.

1.2 Overview of Gender Impact Assessment in Ireland

There are a number of different elements that can be considered to together make up the Irish system for Gender Impact Assessment:

2. Establishment of Gender Equality Unit within Dept of Justice Equality and Law Reform with a specific brief to facilitate and support the mainstreaming of gender equality across the Irish National Development Plan.
3. The existence of a Gender Monitoring Committee with responsibility for reviewing the implementation of the Recommendations of the Second Commission on the Status of Women (which reported in 1993 making 147 recommendations for legal and policy changes aimed at improving the status of women which were subsequently accepted by the Irish government). The Gender Monitoring Committee is also responsible for reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
4. Decision taken in late 1999 that gender equality would be a horizontal principle across the Irish National Development Plan and that gender equality objectives were to be built into each policy measure within the plan as well as to act as a criterion in the project selection process.
6. Programme of Training and Awareness on gender mainstreaming involving middle and higher level policy makers across government departments and statutory agencies.
7. Commissioning of a gender dis-aggregated data base to feed into Gender Impact Assessment in different policy areas.
8. Commissioning of research on gender equality structures and procedures in Ireland (ongoing).
9. Resourcing of programme of gender mainstreaming (including Gender Impact Assessment) at local development level, particularly with area-based partnerships aimed at tackling long-term unemployment and social exclusion. This programme is being co-ordinated by Area Development Management Ltd.
10. Representation of gender equality interests and commitment to gender balance on all monitoring committees with respect to EU Structural Funds and the NDP. Commitment to establishment of specific Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee in respect of NDP and Structural Fund expenditure.
11. Establishment of a Gender Equality Co-ordinating Committee within the civil service to ensure that gender equality in relation to staff and service delivery is built into the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) process at departmental level.
12. Passage into law of new equality legislation including the setting up of the Equality Authority. A specific budget line under the Equality Authority (funded under the NDP) involves the carrying out of and the facilitation of Equality Audits at company and organisational level.
13. Commitment under the new Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (new national agreement) to the development of equality proofing across the policy making process, linking gender equality and other proofing issues (e.g. equality proofing and poverty proofing). This commitment is to be realised through an initial learning phase based on the implementation of integrated equality proofing in a number of selected priority policy arenas, including a selected aspect of employment policy.
14. Specification of gender equality as a criterion for the assessment of the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Gender Impact Assessment and the Irish National Development Plan

The single most important development in Gender Impact Assessment in Ireland has been the adoption of Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines by the Irish Cabinet in March 2000. These guidelines were adopted as part of a process of putting into practice a decision made in late 1999 that gender equality would be one of four horizontal principles in the Irish National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP is a comprehensive statement of social and economic policy and resource allocation covering the period 2000-2006. The NDP also constituted the document submitted by the Irish government in relation to accessing EU Structural Funds. The implementation of the Plan is significantly funded by EU Structural Funds although the majority of resources are national.
The Plan comprises six Operational Programmes (Economic and Social Infrastructure, Productive Sector, Employment and Human Resources Development, Co-operation with Northern Ireland, and two Regional Programmes.). The Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme encompasses a detailed statement of Irish employment policy cross-referenced to, and substantially over-lapping with, the Irish Employment Action Plan. EU Structural Funds provide a significant proportion (%) of the funding for the Irish National Development Plan (NDP) and consequently regulations governing gender mainstreaming in EU Structural Fund expenditure apply. The Irish government has, however, gone beyond the strict requirements of EU Structural Funds and made a decision that gender equality is to be mainstreamed across the entire plan, including those aspects funded solely from national resources. This means that Irish employment policy, as articulated within the NDP, is to be subject to a new system of gender mainstreaming over the period 2000-2006, a process that affects both current and future Irish Employment Action Plans.

**The achievement of equal opportunities between women and men has been defined as a horizontal principle in the Irish National Development Plan** (paragraph 13.20, NDP).

In support of this commitment the NDP provides for the following elements:

Equal opportunities between men and women is specified as a core objective and central element of different Programmes and Sub-Programmes:

- Equal opportunities is identified as an objective of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (paragraph 5.20, NDP) and also as a core element of the Social Inclusion Sub-Programme within the two Regional Programmes (paragraphs 7.64 and 8.63 and 10.23 NDP).

- The acknowledgement of the impact of equal opportunities between women and men in spending on infrastructure and productive investment (paragraphs 4.124/5, 6.115, NDP).

A range of different mechanisms (see below) for implementing this commitment to gender equality have been provided for within the NDP and these are reinforced by the adoption in March 2000 of Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines which have been translated into Gender Impact Assessment Forms. GIA Guidelines and Forms have to be applied and completed in respect of the overwhelming majority of measures funded under the NDP.

Equal Opportunities commitments and initiatives within the Irish Employment Action Plan 2000 (EAP 2000) are clearly placed in the context of these important NDP provisions and in its statement of Irish employment strategy this is clearly acknowledged:

“*The strategy for 2000 also re-affirms the commitment in national policy to the provision of equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged categories in education, training and employment…The achievement of equal*
opportunities between women and men is a horizontal principle of the national Development Plan. As an aid to the implementation of the commitments on gender equality set out in the NDP, the Government adopted Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines in March 2000 for application across NDP measures. Accordingly the completion of the Gender Impact Assessment Form will be required in relation to actions in the Employment Action Plan which are funded through the NDP. ”


Mechanisms for implementing gender impact assessment and mainstreaming

A range of important new mechanisms for implementing gender impact assessment and mainstreaming have been introduced in the context of Ireland's commitment to gender mainstreaming within the National Development Plan (NDP) (which also apply to actions under the Irish National Employment Action Plan funded by the NDP). These mechanisms comprise project selection procedures and criteria, sex differentiated indicators, requirements for gender balance and representation of equal opportunities interests on all monitoring committees and are specified in the following manner:

- The requirement that the impact on gender equality be explicitly incorporated into the project selection procedures of all implementing bodies under the National Development Plan (paragraph 12.14, NDP);

- The intention that indicators will require sex differentiated outcomes ‘where the nature of the assistance permits’ (paragraph 12.12, NDP);

- The commitment to promote gender balance on all Monitoring Committees (paragraph 12.8, NDP);

- The commitment to include representation of the equal opportunities interest on all Monitoring Committees and the CSF, to be drawn from a relevant Government Department or appropriate statutory body (paragraph 12.8, NDP);

- It will be mandatory to include equal opportunities among the project selection criteria for all measures (paragraph 13.37, NDP);

Specific new structures and processes have been established to co-ordinate the implementation of gender impact assessment and mainstreaming within the National Development Plan:

1. A Gender Equality Unit has been established under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to monitor gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming generally and to advise on the development of appropriate indicators in this regard. This Unit acts as a reference point for data sources and is in the process of compiling a list of the main sources of gender dis-aggregated data
for Departments and implementing agencies. It is intended that gender dis-aggregated data will be made publicly available through a new Web Site. This Unit has an advisory, information and training role as well as its monitoring function. (paragraph 13.37, NDP).

2. An Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordination Committee, chaired by the Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is being set up to co-ordinate the achievement of equality objectives in the different areas of the NDP. (paragraph 13.37, NDP).

3. To aid Departments and implementing bodies in incorporating equal opportunities into the policy framework of the NDP, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform funded a preliminary Programme of Training and Awareness during 1999/2000 for policy makers on gender impact assessment and mainstreaming. A second stage Training Programme is currently being commissioned by the Department.

4. A Databank of gender disaggregated statistics in the context of EU Structural Funds has been commissioned by the Dept of Justice Equality and Law Reform the aim of which is to facilitate and feed into the gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming processes.

1.2 Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines

Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines were adopted by the Irish Cabinet in March 2000 and are to be applied to the Operational Programmes and Measures under the Irish National Development Plan. The following steps/questions are to be completed with respect to almost every area of expenditure under the NDP:

**Step One: Outline the current position of men and women in the area which this expenditure activity will address.**

a) Who are the current beneficiaries of this area of expenditure activity? (Beneficiaries include users of the facility, or participants) ?

b) How many are women? How many are men ?

c) What data source did you use to determine these figures?

**Step Two: What factors lead to women and men being affected differentially in the area being addressed by this expenditure activity?**

a) Identify the factors which lead to the differential impact on women and men.

**Step Three : How can the factors which lead to women or men being affected differentially be addressed and changed?**
a) How can the policy proposal/measure respond to the factors identified in Step 2 above?
b) Where considered appropriate, what actions do you propose in this regard?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING THE GUIDELINES</th>
<th>(Name of organisation)</th>
<th>(Name of organisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Organisation</td>
<td>Gender Equality Unit within central government department - Dept of Justice, Equality &amp; Law Reform</td>
<td>Area Development Management Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of responsibility</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The broad responsibility of the organisation (e.g. national employment policy, assessment of ESF projects)</td>
<td>Responsible for Justice (law and policy) and equality (law and policy). Specific responsibility for gender mainstreaming in National Development Plan</td>
<td>Local Development Programme of NDP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE GUIDELINES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name or title of guidelines</td>
<td>Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines</td>
<td>Being developed – not yet available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date when the guidelines were issued or adopted</td>
<td>Adopted by Cabinet in March 2000</td>
<td>Being developed – not yet available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and objectives of the guidelines</td>
<td>To provide a framework for gender impact assessment of measures under the National Development Plan</td>
<td>To provide guidelines for mainstreaming gender equality in local development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of implementation</td>
<td>Completion of a gender impact assessment form in respect of each individual measure of the NDP</td>
<td>Currently being developed – not yet available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>Operational Programme Monitoring Committees currently being established</td>
<td>Will be subject to evaluation by ADM and Monitoring system of NDP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles which may limit the effectiveness of the policy</td>
<td>Key problems include lack of resources, uneven availability of data, lack of specific line of responsibility, weak commitment within institutional system.</td>
<td>Key problems include lack of resources &amp; expertise, limited availability of data, link between gender mainstreaming and other social inclusion objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of contents of the guidelines</td>
<td>Three specific questions 1)Current situation of women and men 2)Differences/inequalities between women &amp; men 3) measures to address differences.</td>
<td>Being developed – not yet available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are a number of comments which can be made about the specific GIA Guidelines which have been adopted in Ireland:

- The Guidelines have been adopted as a government Memo and, as such, are subject to the rules governing Cabinet confidentiality. In effect, this means that there is no public access to completed GIA Forms and therefore no process of public accountability in relation to their content.

- There is no indication of the level of detail required by departments and implementing agencies when completing GIA Forms.

- The emphasis in the guidelines is very much on the compilation of quantitative data on the situation of women and men in relation to specific policy areas. Broader, more qualitative issues, concerning for example how norms and values might impact or act on the situation of women and men are not considered.

- Availability continues to be a key issue affecting the carrying out of gender impact assessments in Ireland. Significant gaps exist in the availability of data on income, earnings and wealth, for example as well as on access to and use of care services.

- There is no provision in the three steps specified under the Guidelines for the setting of definite objectives, targets and appropriate timescales in carrying out actions aimed at addressing gender inequalities.

- When GIA Forms are completed, there is no requirement for departments and other agencies to set in place a system of monitoring and review of the implementation of gender equality relevant policy measures.

- No additional resources or areas of responsibility have been established as part of the process of implementing gender impact assessment.

- No specific provisions have been put in place to ensure effective consultation with affected groups and sectors.

### 1.3 Evaluations of Gender Impact Assessment in the Public Domain

Because Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines have only been adopted in Ireland six months ago and because of confidentiality issues, there are no specific gender impact assessments of employment or other policies within the public domain. For the purposes of this Report sample of two completed gender impact assessment forms have been made available by the Dept of Justice equality and Law Reform and these are included as an appendix. It is evident from these examples that the level of detail on anticipated gender impact is very limited and that there is likely to be enormous variation in the way in which such forms are being completed. There is also no
specific processes in place to ensure effective consultation with affected groups and sectors.

While there is no direct public access to gender impact assessment, there are a number of assessments and reports in the public domain which are very relevant to the Gender Impact Assessment process, and these are looked at below. In 1999 an Evaluation of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the European Social Fund in Ireland was carried out by the European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit in Ireland. In the course of this Evaluation, progress towards greater gender equality in relation to employment policy and practice was assessed. This evaluation reached a number of key conclusions:

- EU developments have played a central role in progressing equal opportunities policies in Ireland.

- Significant development in the legislative framework for equality have taken place but deep-rooted attitudes and behaviour need to be changed for equality to be achieved.

- The issue of childcare has dominated discussion on equal opportunities, arising partly from the strength of labour market demand for women workers. Additional resources have been put in place, but largely to pilot projects and the Report comments “The background to the current high profile being accorded to the childcare issue is a litany of government reports since the early 1980’s and very little action…..The danger is, however, that action on the childcare issue, however welcome, will allow policy makers to think that equal opportunities have been achieved.” (European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit 1999)

- Analysing equal opportunities issues in relation to Structural Funds and the Irish Employment Action Plan, the Evaluation Reports takes a highly critical position, particularly in relation to the lack of, and the poor definition of, indicators. “The 1999 Action Plan contains no indicators at all in relation to equal opportunities, suggesting that much work needs to be done if the promotion of equal opportunities is to become an important national policy objective.” (European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit 1999)

- The lack of rigorous gender proofing policies in relation to ESF supported education and training initiatives is also highlighted in this Evaluation Report. Data relevant to equal opportunities was gathered, it was not collated or analysed and not made available to Monitoring Committees – a consequence partially of the lack of dedicated resources. “It is recognised that the implementation of gender proofing policies would introduce extra work for the design and delivery of programmes. A process of gender proofing is all the more important in the context of the gender imbalance in the membership of the current Monitoring Committees, which reflects the low numbers of women in senior positions in the Statutory sector in particular.” (European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit 1999)

In contrast to the focus on gender equality issues in the evaluation of social fund expenditure, a related Report on the European Social Fund and the Local Urban and
Rural Development Operational Programme paid little attention to gender equality. (European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit 1999) Other than a recognition of the serious under-representation of women on Boards of Local Area Partnerships (32% of the total – a breach of government guidelines of 40% minimum of each gender) and a reference to the lack of a ‘welcoming approach’ to women in County Enterprise Boards, this Report appears to operate on the basis that local development is gender neutral in its policies and practices. Given that ADM, the management company for the Partnerships developed gender equality guidelines and reviewed their implementation it is all the more surprising that the ESF Evaluation all but ignores gender equality issues. (ADM 1997, Barry 1998)

Another Report which is highly relevant to Gender Impact Assessment was produced in July 2000 and concerns an evaluation of the availability of gender disaggregated statistics relevant to EU Structural Fund monitoring. This Report summarised existing gender disaggregated data availability and identified key gaps (Fitzpatrick Associates 2000):

- housing: gender breakdowns of housing occupancy across different areas and types of housing units.
- transport: gender breakdowns public and private transport usage, including car ownership and usage, gender patterns of usage of public transport systems.
- Enterprise start-ups: gender breakdowns of people starting new businesses, access to finance and other business services.
- in-company/on-the-job training: gender breakdowns of participation levels and time spent on job training.
- flexible working arrangements/family friendly policies: gender breakdowns of levels of participation in different initiatives in both the public and private sectors.
- time use: gender breakdown of unwaged work, domestic labour, sharing of family responsibilities.
- progression of individuals over time: gender breakdowns of flow data tracking people through education, training, employment and care.
- data on other forms of equality: gender breakdowns of situation of sectors vulnerable to nine grounds of discrimination covered by equality legislation. (Fitzpatrick Associates 2000)

Of direct relevance also to gender impact assessment in Ireland is a Report produced in August 2000 which assessed the preliminary Training and Awareness Programme on Gender Mainstreaming and the NDP. (WERRC 2000) As part of this Programme policy-makers were asked to identify obstacles to the implementation of gender impact assessment guidelines and gender mainstreaming in practice.

The Report details the main obstacles identified as follows:

“When asked to identify the main obstacles to applying gender mainstreaming in practice, participants frequently cited the following:

- lack of readily available and appropriate data
- lack of resources
- lack of staff
- shortness of timeframe
- insufficient commitment by senior management
- lack of authority to implement
- meeting stringent EU requirements
- level of detail required
- lack of awareness among colleagues
- time management issues
- lack of organisational commitment
- insufficient training
- lack of experience and expertise “ (WERRC 2000)

Overall conclusions to the Report on this Programme of Training and Awareness highlighted some overall weaknesses and priorities for change in relation to the Irish gender impact assessment and mainstreaming processes:

“This preliminary Training and Awareness Programme revealed a high level of interest in availing of training opportunities in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The content of the training sessions themselves met with a strongly positive response, reflected in a definite sense of increased awareness and knowledge as well as a desire for further, more specialised, training opportunities. The Programme also highlighted the poor level of awareness across the policy-making system of the concept of gender mainstreaming and of the kind of processes and mechanisms necessary to successfully implement the specific gender mainstreaming requirements of the National Development Plan. The importance of a strong awareness and commitment on behalf of senior management was repeatedly emphasised as well as the need to develop specialised expertise and to adequately resource the process. In particular, the importance of a clear allocation of responsibility for gender mainstreaming, the need for accessible and user-friendly data, the need to develop skills in data analysis and for a co-ordinated approach to the development of indicators of progress emerged as key issues during the programme.” (WERRC 2000)

The whole question of equality proofing and equality impact assessment within the policy-making system in Ireland was comprehensively addressed in the Report of Partnership 2000 Working Group on Equality Proofing (Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2000). Equality Impact Assessment would involve the exploration of the impact of policies not just on gender but on all nine grounds covered by equality legislation in Ireland, for example race, disability, age, sexual orientation etc. The Working Group, which comprised representatives from the social partners, statutory agencies, government departments and the voluntary & community sector (set up under the terms of the Partnership 2000 national agreement which covered the period 1997-2000), put forward a position in favour of placing equality proofing on a legal or statutory basis (similar to the situation in Northern Ireland).

A model for Equality Impact Assessment is also put forward in this Report encompassing nine stages, including the initial identification of strategic priorities, identifying the key questions or issues to be investigated as part of Equality Impact Assessment and a process
of consultation with affected groups and sectors. Its recommendations include the setting up of an inter-agency Working Group on Equality Proofing Issues (including broad social partner representation), the initiation of pilot projects, the development of training programmes and training materials, the integration of equality and poverty proofing, the establishment of equality proofing as an explicit principle of the Strategic Management Initiative in the civil service and the development of an adequate database to support Equality Impact Assessment. (Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2000).

1.4 Assessment of Gender Impact Assessment in Ireland

New institutional arrangements for mainstreaming gender equality are at a very early stage of implementation in Ireland and it will take some time to consider their impact. There are however a number of immediate and important concerns from a gender equality perspective:

1. At the present time there are no arrangements or systems in place for public access to the outcome of gender impact assessment or mainstreaming processes. Gender impact guidelines are being applied by different government departments and relevant agencies but the contents of this process are not available in the public domain. Women’s organisations, researchers, policy interests and other non-governmental organisations and individuals with an interest in gender impact assessment are consequently not in a position to comment on or assess the application of the guidelines in practice. This issue has been highlighted by the National Women’s Council of Ireland:

   “This invisibility of gender in official assessments clearly demonstrates the virtual failing of objectives targeting equal opportunities between men and women, and the lack of awareness and inadequacy of tools by which outcomes of equal opportunities actions are measured.” (National Women’s Council of Ireland 1999)

2. Gender impact assessment guidelines were only adopted AFTER the National Development Plan had already been adopted – at least mid-way through the policy process. This means that it is only at Programme Complement stage (translation of NDP’s objectives and general measures into specific measures and projects) that gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming are being carried out. Effectively core policy design has taken place without specification of the gender assessment process.

3. The Gender Equality Unit within the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform is seriously under-resourced in its capacity to provide the necessary data and advice which could adequately service the gender mainstreaming process across the entire policy-making system.

4. Insufficient investment has been made to date in the development of an appropriate body of expertise across the policy-making system which would enable gender mainstreaming to be fully and properly implemented.
5. While the decision to specify equal opportunities as a core horizontal principle in economic and social policy making, this commitment is likely to remain more theoretical and aspirational than practical without the requisite resources.

1.5 Recommendations

1. Priority needs to be given to the allocation of specific resources, included dedicated budget lines, within departments and agencies to ensure that the process of gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming is systematically and comprehensively carried out.

2. An evaluation and monitoring system for gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming needs to be immediately put in place which would provide for ongoing review and assessment of the process and which would set the terms of reference for a mid-term review in 2003.

3. Responsibility for gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming needs to be clearly allocated within departments, agencies and organisations and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should play a central role in establishing the commitment to gender mainstreaming at senior level.

4. Consideration should immediately be given to a co-ordinated approach to the proofing processes associated with the National Development Plan. For example certain common approaches may be possible where gender proofing, poverty proofing and rural proofing have each to be carried out with respect to specific measures. Given the commitment to establishing an Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Monitoring Committee, such a co-ordinated approach is particularly appropriate.

6. Greater attention is urgently needed to be applied to the development of indicators which would act as reference points against which progress towards greater gender equality could be assessed.

7. A written guide or handbook in relation to gender impact assessment and mainstreaming and the National Development Plan should be produced and circulated by the Department. Consideration should also be given to the development of an Outreach Training Manual on gender mainstreaming which could be used by teams within departments and local and regional organisations involved in the wider process.

8. The commitment in the new national agreement ‘Programme for Prosperity and Fairness’ to new pilot initiatives on integrated equality proofing should be immediately implemented, including its application to a selected area of employment policy.

9. Gender Impact Assessment and gender mainstreaming needs to be built into ALL stages of the policy-making process: design, implementation and review.
Section 2 Gender Impact Assessment of Selected Employment Policies

This section of the Report selects two employment policy measures from the Irish Employment Action Plan 2000 (EAP 2000) and carries out a preliminary analysis of each policy applying Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines.

2.1 Pillar 1 Employability (EU Employment Guidelines 1 & 2)

Measure: Long-term Unemployment Preventative Strategy

The stated aim of the preventative strategy towards long-term unemployment is to prevent the drift into long-term unemployment of those already on the Live Register. The Irish EAP 2000 outlines a strategic objective as:

“the promotion of social inclusion with particular reference to the re-integration of the socially excluded and, in particular, the long term unemployed into the open labour market… The most significant new dimension of policy has been the implementation of the preventative strategy of engaging systematically with persons, at an early stage of the unemployment spell”.

The ‘Employability Pillar’ receives priority resource allocation within the Irish EAP 2000, accounting for over half of the IR£14 billion specified in the Plan for the period 2000-2006. Within that Pillar, the preventative strategy is described as the most important new policy initiative. The preventative strategy commenced in September 1998 targeting under 25 year olds who were about to become unemployed for a period of time greater than six months. It was extended to young unemployed as they crossed 18 months of unemployment in March 1999 and to 25-34 year olds as they crossed 12 months unemployment in May 1999. It is to be extended to the remaining groups of adult unemployed over the year 2000. A key element to the preventative strategy is the establishment of a Local Employment Service with the objective of ‘systematic engagement’ with those at risk of, or already experiencing, long-term unemployment.

GIA Step 1: Position of women and men prior to policy development

Registered long-term unemployment affects a large portion of the unemployed and was running at a level of 2.1% of the labour force at the end of 1999. While there is very little difference in the recorded unemployment rates among Irish women and men, women’s rate of registered long-term unemployment 1.4% is lower than the male rate of 2.5%.

Table 1 Long-term Unemployment (LTU) by Gender 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>All Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers LTU</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate LTU</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of LTU</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women experience significant labour market disadvantage in Ireland that is only partially reflected in their position on the Live Register of unemployment. A majority of women are not on the formal labour market due largely to their carrying the responsibilities of carers and homemakers and also to the household nature of the social welfare system (based predominantly on single male claimants). Consequently women are strongly under-represented among the unemployed, and particularly the registered long-term unemployed, accounting for just 27.6% of the 36,000 of the total in 1999 (see Table 1 above). Irish women tend to slip off the unemployment register categorising themselves as ‘engaged in home duties’ even when many would like and/or are seeking paid employment. The inappropriateness of the Live Register as the central measure for measuring labour market disadvantage was recognised in the Irish Employment Action Plan 1998.

“In targeting resources, the live register (of unemployment) has been widely used as a means of identifying those perceived to be in greatest need, but it has drawbacks from a gender perspective as a gateway for labour market intervention programmes.” (EAP 98)

Lack of support services is a key factor in the significant gender gap in employment rates in Ireland between women and men - over twenty percentage points in 1999. Childcare and other care services are in a situation of acute crisis due to the strong increase in women’s participation in paid employment, education and training and the related demand for childcare. Publicly funded childcare has increased to an important degree over recent years, concentrated mainly in disadvantaged areas, but the level of unmet demand is extremely high. Childcare costs are also extremely high and Ireland has emerged as the country within the EU in which the highest percentage, 20% of parent’s income, goes on childcare services (compared to an 8% average across the EU). Goodbodies Economic Consultants 1998.

Data from the Quarterly National Household Survey indicates that a large number of women, over 70,000 who had previously held a regular job had given it up for domestic or family reasons. (Central Statistics Office QNHS, 1998 Q2). Domestic and family responsibilities constitutes the most frequently cited reason women give for leaving a regular job, for not looking for a job (among those who want a job) and for working part-time (by part-time women workers). (Dept of Social Community and Family Affairs 2000, Central Statistics Office QNHS, 1998 Q2).

“Significant numbers of women seem to make choices about the nature of their participation in the labour market based on what may either be a need or a desire to combine such participation with family responsibilities. In a situation where there is a lack of adequate and affordable childcare provision, such decisions may have to be made on the basis of need even where the desire might be otherwise. The acknowledged unavailability of affordable childcare in Ireland therefore represents a significant barrier to the full and equal participation by women in the labour market, and by extension in labour market programmes.” Dept of Social Community and Family Affairs, 2000.
On a more general level, women with low levels of educational attainment in low to middle income households experience definite disadvantage on the labour market and have a very low labour force participation rate. Lone parents (of whom about 87% are women) also have a low participation rate although this has increased in recent years, due largely to improved access to labour market schemes. Significant labour market disadvantage is also experienced by women with three or more children. For many women who are categorised as ‘economically inactive’ access to education, training and employment schemes can be problematic due to the eligibility criteria (including unemployment registration), inflexibility in course delivery and lack of support services.

**Step 2 : Trends in women’s and men’s position prior to policy development**

From a traditional position of a comparatively low rate of participation on the formal labour market, Irish women’s employment rate has risen dramatically over the last decade now reaching the EU average rate of female employment. In the early 1980s only just over one-third of working-age women in Ireland were on the formal labour market – by 1999 46% of women of working age were in the labour force. Two out of five of those in employment today are women.

Women’s participation rate has grown at a much faster rate than men’s resulting in a narrowing of the gender gap. Women’s participation rate rose from 39.7 in 1995 to 46.0 in 1999 while men’s rate rose from 68.0 to 70.2. This has brought about a significant narrowing of the traditionally wide gap between women’s and men’s labour force participation in the Irish economy from 28.3 in 1995 to 25.8 in 1997 and to 24.2 in 1999. At the same time the gender gap in the employment rate of women and men has reduced from 24.9 in 1995 to 23.1 in 1997 to 22.7 in 1999. Despite this significant narrowing of the gender gap it remains wide. Irish women’s employment rate at 70% of men’s ranks Ireland in 11th position among the EU fifteen Member States in relation to the ratio of female to male employment rates. (NESF 2000) While the significance of the narrowing of the gender gap should not be underestimated, it is evident that women’s latent or potential labour market supply remains considerable and under appropriate conditions women’s employment rate could rise much higher than its current 43.4% level.

**Table 2 Labour Market Trends 1995-1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
<th>Employment Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source : National Economic and Social Forum (2000)  
Ratios calculated on basis of population of 15+*
Registered unemployment levels have fallen off dramatically in Ireland over the second half of the 1990’s, from a level of 12.2% in 1995 to 5.7% in 1999. At the same time employment growth has been extremely rapid averaging at around 5% per annum over the same time period. Women’s and men’s unemployment rates have remained at similar levels, while women have consistently been under-represented among the registered long-term unemployed.

The nature of employment in Ireland continues to change. One-third of the net addition to employment between 1992 and 1998 consisted of part-time jobs. One in six of those in the labour force are in part-time employment and over 70% of these are women. Given that women account for just over 40% of the labour force, their representation among part-timers is extremely high. Part-time employment has more than doubled among women and men over this period, but among men the increase was from a much lower base.

**Step 3 : Priority attached to policies actively promoting gender equality**

There has been increasing recognition over recent years that the Live Register is not a gender neutral approach to labour market disadvantage and that women are severely underrepresented among the registered long-term unemployed. Despite this recognition, this long-term unemployment preventative strategy policy measure makes no reference to the potential or actual gender discrimination inherent in its policy design.

This policy measure places its emphasis on tackling and preventing the drift towards long-term unemployment through a local employment service, and related programmes targeted at early school leavers and older unemployed workers. There is no specific reference made within this strategy to the many, overwhelmingly women, who have been off the labour market for a prolonged period of time due largely to care responsibilities and under-provision of care services. While there is a clear concern to mobilise additional labour supply there is no direct connection made to women’s substantial latent labour supply. Preventing the drift into long-term labour market disadvantage would provide a policy framework which would give much greater priority to gender equality without lessening the targeted nature of the measure. For example, educational qualifications are crucial to women’s access to the labour market (Report 2000, Women’s Education Initiative).

**Step 4 : Impact of policy**

The core feature of the preventative approach, initially targeted at those who had been registered as unemployed for a period of six months, has been referral for an interview aimed at matching each individual with potential training or employment opportunities. 16,492 left the Live Register by end of January 2000 following referral for interview and/or interview attendance representing 16% of the 104,700 unemployed and 46% of the 36,000 long-term unemployed at the end of 1999. Those under twenty-five years of age made up the majority of those referred for interview and leaving the Live Register. 47% of those who left the Live Register by the end of January 2000 were women - 78% were under 25 years of age -. Up to one third of
those referred left the Live Register without attending for interview – the percentages are very similar for both women and men. (Irish EAP 2000)

Women accounted for about 45% of the total under 25 year old referred for interview by end of January 2000. In the older age group 25-34 women accounted for the majority (55%) of those referred. A similar percentage (53%) of young women and men were placed in jobs or training following interviews, although more young men were placed in jobs (32%) compared to young women (26%). Similar patterns were evident among the 25-34 age groups. 44% of men aged 25-34 and 40% of women were placed in jobs or training. Within this age group 24% of men were placed in jobs compared to 18% of women. Of those placed onto training men were far more likely (16%) to go onto FAS skills-based training whereas only 4% of women were placed on this kind of training. (Irish EAP 2000)

An important criticism of the impact of the preventative strategy is that it has frequently being perceived as more focused on the issue of benefit fraud than on the securing of skills and employment for the long-term unemployed. In its Report on the Local Employment Service, the National Economic and Social Forum argues that “while recognising the achievements of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) thus far, …considers that the Plan does not give sufficient emphasis to the objective of re-employing the long-term unemployed. This objective should constitute a key Guideline under the Plan.” (NESF 2000)

While women account for a minority of the long-term unemployed they account for almost half of those targeted under the preventative strategy. To the extent that this has facilitated the securing of employment and training this is a positive outcome for women and has the potential to narrow the gender gap in employment. What is less evident is the nature of the training and employment opportunities arising from this strategy. To effectively assess the impact of the policy an analysis of the nature of those opportunities is critical, together with longer term research tracking the situation of the targeted groups over time – information necessary for such an analysis is not currently available.

Despite the new EU guideline on mainstreaming gender equality, the objectives of the preventative strategy (the key new policy under the Employability Pillar) give rise to a number of concerns from a gender equality perspective. The exclusive focus on the long-term unemployed, among whom women have been, and continue to be, under-represented leaves significant groups of labour market disadvantaged women marginalised. In fact it can be argued that the main thrust of the strategy is to shift the current high rate of employment growth taking place in the Irish economy towards the long-term unemployed and away from women returners. Such an objective is in danger of negatively impact on women’s rising employment rate and on the potential growth in the overall employment rate. The disproportionate targeting of women under this strategy to date, however, has ensured that such an outcome has not occurred.

**Step 5 : Impact of policy on specific groups of women**
This policy has had a positive impact on women registered as long-term unemployed. The extent of that positive impact will need to be measured over time as the nature of increased training and employment opportunities are analysed. Important groups of women are, however marginalised by this strategy:

1. women partners of the long-term unemployed – 30,000 in total of whom 11,000 have three or more dependants
2. women in low income households outside the labour market who are not on Live Register married to, or cohabiting with, partners who are employed in low paid work (exception of Return to Work and Enterprise Training).
3. women lone parents, disabled women and others who are dependent on welfare but are not registered as unemployed and are claiming an alternative welfare payment such as the One Parent Family Payment or Disability Benefit.

Step 6: Indirect impact of policy on gender equality

By strengthening women employment and skill base, this strategy has the potential to increase women’s economic independence.

The focus in policy language and design continues to favour the traditional male unemployed over women who have experienced long-term absence and disadvantage on the labour market.

Due to increased level of women’s economic activity, children and others who have depended on women’s unpaid care work, will be increasingly reliant on over-stretched and under-resourced caring services.

Step 7: Potential to redesign policy to promoted greater gender equality

Women entering paid employment have accounted for the majority of the increase in the Irish employment rate over recent years yet Irish employment strategy rarely favours women and others that experience more complex and diverse forms of labour market disadvantage. Targeting women’s labour market disadvantage requires a much more complex and flexible targeting strategy than is reflected in the preventative strategy. A definite strategy towards women’s latent labour supply also needs to be articulated and applied consistently.

This policy should be redesigned to target different groups of women and men experiencing labour market disadvantage including the long-term unemployed. Provision should also immediately be made for tracking the training and employment outcomes of those who have been targeted by this policy to date to provide the means for comprehensive policy impact assessment.

2.2 Pillar 2 Entrepreneurship (EU Employment Guidelines 12 & 13)

Measure: Social Economy Programme
Following a Report from a Working Group on the Social Economy set up under Partnership 2000 (national wage and policy agreement), the Irish government approved the introduction of a Social Economy Programme with the objective of supporting enterprises meeting the demand for essential services in disadvantaged communities which might not otherwise have the resources to provide them. The stated aim of the Social Economy Programme is to:

“maximise the role of social economy enterprises in the regeneration of local economies within local disadvantaged areas, communities and within communities of interest experiencing disadvantage.”


A Social Economy Monitoring Committee has been established and a Framework Document outlining structures, procedures and criteria for eligibility onto the Programme has been produced. The Programme is intended to be driven at local level based on a partnership approach. At the launch of the Programme in September 2000, the Tanaiste Mary Harney specified that the aim of the Programme is to create 2,500 jobs by 2003 and allocated a total budget of IR£231 million (IR£41 million per annum) over the period of the National Development Plan – 2000-2006.

The social economy is envisaged as constituting a part of the economy, between the public and private sectors, which engages in economic activity to meet social objectives. A mix of enterprises providing services whether publicly or privately funded (or a mixture of both) such as waste recycling or meals-on-wheels are defined as part of the social economy. The kind of projects which it is anticipated will be funded under the programme include:

- **community businesses** – partially or, eventually, wholly funded from traded income,

- **deficient-demand social enterprises** – where demand for needed goods and services in disadvantaged communities is not matched by resources to pay (due to disadvantage or low population density)

- **enterprises based on public service contracts** – where public services in disadvantaged areas or to disadvantaged communities are sub-contracted to social economy enterprises.

Social economy enterprises deemed eligible for support will required to complete three-year Business Plans for which a IR£4,000 grant is available. Following the successful completion of this stage, social economy enterprises may receive grant supports for up to three years towards the cost of employment of workers and a manager, accountancy, training, capital, overheads costs etc. Participants on the social economy programme will be entitled to retain secondary benefits such as medical cards and rent subsidies.

Specific groups targeted as participants in social economy enterprises are those over thirty-five years who have been registered as unemployed or in receipt of One Parent Family Payment and Disability welfare payments. Spouses (over thirty-five years) of the long-term unemployed are also eligible. Members of the travelling community of all ages are also targeted under this Programme. In addition, there is a provision for 10% of
participants to be made up of disadvantaged persons who do not meet the other eligibility criteria.

GIA Step 1 : Position of women and men prior to policy development

Women in disadvantaged communities carry the burden of providing care and community services under conditions of economic, social and cultural disadvantage. There has traditionally been a lack of support within Irish employment policy for community enterprises and services which are located in the social economy - between the public and private sectors. In the past support has been concentrated on active labour market schemes, and while many of these schemes have benefited community enterprise and services, there has been no dedicated Programme to support the activities of the social economy.

The EU White Paper on ‘Growth Competitiveness and Employment’ published in 1993 estimated the job potential of the social economy across the EU at three million new jobs. The sources of these new jobs that they identified include local services (home help for older people, childcare, leisure and cultural facilities, and local shops in rural areas), improvements in the quality of life (renovation of old housing and local public transport services) and environmental protection (maintenance of natural areas, energy saving equipment and water purification). (EU 1993, Partnerships for Local Action Network 1999) It is immediate obvious from this description of the social economy that public support for these services and activities would be of particular significance to women, both as providers and as users of these services. Support for care services, local transport and shopping facilities, and many other activities within the social economy, has the potential to improve women’s lives in both urban and rural disadvantaged communities. While there is no systematic data on the social economy in Ireland, estimates suggest that women account for a high proportion, probably the majority, of those working in the social economy (Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Employment 1999).

This strong representation of women in the social economy contrasts sharply with the gender composition of employers and the self-employed generally on the Irish labour market, among whom women are strongly under-represented. Enterprise has traditionally been a male dominated economic arena. The overwhelming majority of Irish women on the labour market are employees. Only 7.6% of women in the labour force are either self-employed or employers compared to 19.9% of men. Women account for just 25.5% of all self-employed and employers on the Irish labour market - significantly less than their 41% representation across the labour force as whole. (Ruane and Sutherland 1999)

“Women are substantially under-represented among entrepreneurs in this country (Ireland). The LEI (European Network for Women’s Local Employment Initiatives) estimates that women account for only one in five enterprise creators here (in Ireland), compared to one in three in Germany. Further evidence of this is provided in the Survey of Micro Enterprise which found that 90% of entrepreneurs were men. One factor in this is that many women are precluded from signing on the Live Register...the key schemes
available for people to get into self-employment - the Area Enterprise Allowance and the Back to Work Allowance have Live Register criteria.” (National Economic and Social Forum 1997)

There is some evidence that women account for an increasing proportion of new business start-ups although Ireland is significantly below the EU average in this regard. Gender disaggregated data on business start-ups and enterprise generally has been recognised as one of the key gaps in current Irish data. (Fitzpatrick & Associates 2000)

Women have traditionally been under-represented on publicly funded enterprise support programmes in Ireland. Data on the Back to Work Allowance and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance reveal a severe under-representation of women, constituting only 14% of participants. During 1999 23,006 men and 3,827 women participated on these schemes. 68% of the women on these schemes were under 35 years of age in 1999. (Dept of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000). Restrictions of such programmes to those who are defined as registered Long Term Unemployed i.e. registered as unemployed for over one years, is one of the reasons for this chronic under-representation of women.

As has been seen in Example 1 above, women constitute a minority of the long-term unemployed (27.6% of the total) despite the fact that they represent 41% of the formal labour force. Among the LTU over thirty-five years, women are even more seriously under-represented due to the weaker labour market attachment of middle and older age groups of women. Women account for only 23% of the LTU over thirty-five years – a key target group of under the Irish Social Economy Programme.

Claimants of One Parent Family Payment are another key target group under the Social Economy programme but eligibility criteria restrict potential participants to those over thirty-five years of age. 98% of recipients of One Parent Family Payment were women in 1999 but the large majority 66% were under thirty-five years of age. Only a minority of OPFP claimants (34%) were in the requisite category for social economy eligibility in 1999.

Step 2 : Trends in women’s and men’s position prior to policy development

There has been a highly significant growth in self-employment and employer status among women on the Irish labour market over recent years. The rate at which women’s self-employment and employment status has been growing is greater than their already high rate of labour force participation growth and is also significantly above their rate of growth among men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988 000s</td>
<td>1996 000s</td>
<td>Change %</td>
<td>1988 000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>+22%</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>+13%</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Agricultural Self-Employed and Employer Status
With the increasing proportion of women on the Irish labour market, attitudes to women’s paid employment have changed, but traditional gender roles and lack of care infrastructure continue to limit and circumscribe women’s participation.

“Probably the most fundamental barrier to the participation of women in the labour force in general, and therefore also in management and entrepreneurship, is household organisation - the division of domestic labour, and particularly childcare. This is especially the case in Ireland where childcare services are very underdeveloped.” (Third Report of the Fourth Joint Oireachtas Committee on Women’s Rights 1996)

There is an increasing recognition with Irish employment policy of the importance of increasing women’s employment rate to the long-term sustainability of high growth rates. The lack of care services, particularly childcare but also elder care, have clearly been identified as a major barrier to women’s increased labour force participation. Strategies to increase the supply of childcare have been identified as crucial to address the chronic under-provision of services and the social economy has a crucial role to play in this regard in disadvantaged communities. (Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform 1999, Dept of Social, Community and Family Affairs 2000)

Step 3 : Priority attached to policies actively promoting gender equality

The promotion of equal opportunities between women and men is specified as one of four objectives of the social economy programme, alongside the objectives of a) supporting the social economy, b) maximising the potential of the social economy to generate sustainable employment and c) the regeneration of disadvantaged communities in both urban and rural areas.

Among the indicators for the Social Economy Programme a number of gender disaggregated indicators have been specified in the Social Economy Framework Document and these include:

**Indicators on nature and level of social economy activity:**

- Nature of project proposers and their legal structure by gender
- Levels of pay and quality of employment for persons in the social economy employment by gender
- Profiles of persons in social economy employment e.g. gender, communities of interest, urban/rural, employment status etc.
- Gender balance of the Local Working Group.

**Indicators on the range of potential benefits of social economy activity:**

- Contribution to local development strategy in terms of specific benefits – social inclusion, cultural, community, environmental, economic.
- Personal and life skills by gender to working in social economy enterprises.
• Nature and level of training provisions for persons in social economy employment by gender.
• Progression of persons funded under the Programme by gender into non-funded employment within social economy enterprises or other employment or other developmental opportunities.

What is clear from this Programme is that the need to monitor outcomes on a gender basis has been recognised and planned for from its inception. This recognition has not always been consistently applied, however. For example, one of the indicators specified is the ‘extent of the involvement of employees in the management of the enterprise’ without any reference to the need to analyse such data on a gender disaggregated basis.

The target groups specified under this Programme reflect the dominant emphasis in Irish employment strategy i.e. a reduction in the numbers on the Live Register. While there is some recognition that women are disadvantaged by this kind of exclusive emphasis – three years on the Live Register is a core aspect of the eligibility criteria – both directly for those on the register and indirectly in relation to spouses of the registered unemployed. Claimants of One Parent Family Payment (in Ireland about 97% female) are included as a target group but here again an over-thirty five stipulation is made which is not appropriate for Lone Parents. The majority of Lone Parents dependent on welfare are in the 15-35 age category and are effectively excluded from the programme in its current form. Although Lone Parents of all ages were a target group enterprise support schemes in the past, their actual take-up rate (2%) was abysmally low:

“Lone parents seeking to become entrepreneurs also face unique problems as they tend to lack the back-up of family which deprives them of the direct and indirect unpaid help that families offer. This also exacerbates some of the other barriers such as lack of affordable childcare facilities, particularly during unsociable hours. Although lone parents are one of the priority groups for access to the Back to Work and the Area Based Allowances Schemes, recent official figures show that there is only a 2 per cent take-up by lone parents of these Schemes.” (National Economic and Social Forum 1997)

The inclusion of a category allowing 10% of participants to be accounted for by persons not meeting the eligibility criteria is a partial recognition that many women will find it difficult or impossible to meet the criteria for eligibility. Its formulation, however, is negative rather than positive and the 10% limit is overly restrictive. From a gender perspective, eligibility for women in low income households would ensure that women in different situations (married or co-habiting with low paid worker, lone parents, young unemployed, absent from the formal labour market for an extended time period etc) would have direct eligibility. As it stands, such flexible eligibility is restricted to the residual 10% category.

Childcare and other care services are key services in disadvantaged communities with the potential to generate significant assisted employment places and also to contribute to the enhancement of community life. In a society where traditional gender roles continue to be entrenched and where care responsibilities are overwhelmingly carried
by women, it has a definite gender dimension. There is a definite danger that the Social Economy Programme as currently constituted will not be available to the many young to middle aged women working in childcare due to the restricted nature of the eligibility criteria.

**Step 4 : Impact of policy**

This Programme is at the very earliest stage of development – only one month from its formal launch. It represents an important recognition of the role of the social economy in provided much needed services within disadvantaged areas directly by those communities themselves. For the first time there is a dedicated programme of direct support for community businesses and activities which operate between the private and public sectors. Many of the business and activities likely to receive support under this programme will both directly and indirectly benefit women in disadvantaged communities. Childcare and other care and community based services and facilities are key areas of potential support under this Programme.

Some issues are already emerging as critical. From a general perspective, there is a danger that the programme is being seen as a replacement, or even displacement, of pre-existing employment schemes rather than an innovative new programme. There is also a concern that the support framework is too short-term and does not recognise that many of the businesses and activities which will be supported may need long-term public subsidisation.

There are also key issues concerning the eligibility criteria for this programme. The use of the Live Register as a core criterion of eligibility directly disadvantages significant numbers of women potential participants on this Programme. The restriction on Lone Parent eligibility to those over thirty-five years of age is likely to prove a definite obstacle to certain community enterprises, for example, those based in disadvantaged area with high concentrations of Lone Parents.

A Report on the Programme by Irish Rural Link identifies a number of concerns about the impact of the Programme:

- Lack of an/or contradictory information and timescales at local level
- Fear that this Programme will replace or displace the pre-existing community employment scheme
- Difficulty for projects in meeting eligibility criteria
- Need for integration between social economy and community development supports

(Irish Rural Link 2000)

**Step 5 : Impact of policy on specific groups of women**

This Programme is likely to have its most beneficial impact on women over thirty-five years of age in disadvantaged urban and rural areas who have been registered as unemployed or claiming One Parent Family Payment for a period of three years or more. Women travellers across the age groups are in a position to benefit from this Programme.
Younger unemployed or lone parent women and women returners will have difficulty participating in this Programme to any great degree. The extent to which the actual and potential benefits of this Programme are realised in practice will depend on the securing of recognition within the policy-making system of the need for long-term assistance to many social economy enterprises. Broader-based benefits to other groups of women are reliant on a recognition of the gendered significance of more flexible eligibility criteria. For example, in a report of a Conference on the Social Economy held in November 1998, the importance of the social economy for women returners was explicitly recognised:

“Although the participation of women in the labour force is increasingly rapidly in any event, the social economy may provide a useful and appropriate route back into employment for women who have spent time out of the formal labour force.” (Area Development Management Ltd 1998)

Unfortunately women returners, even in low income households, are not a target group of the Social Economy Programme.

In the recommendations contained in its Report, Irish Rural Link argue:

“The existing eligibility criteria are not suitable for rural areas. In particular, many existing Social Economy Enterprises are dependent on a female workforce who will not meet the Live Register criteria. The Social Economy should fully utilise the available workforce in rural areas including women not on the live register, smallholders and seasonal workers.” (Irish Rural Link, 2000)

**Step 6: Indirect impact of policy on gender equality**

Indirect benefits of this Programme from a perspective of gender equality lie in the greater resourcing of services at community level which have traditionally relied to a significant degree on women’s unpaid labour. Essential child and other care services in disadvantaged communities are a major example of the kind of services which can be supported under this Programme and which benefit women at community level. Public support for childcare, eldercare, local transport and shopping facilities as well as improved environmental management have significant potential benefits for those beneficiaries of services as well as their traditionally female unpaid or low paid providers. Children, in urban and rural disadvantaged area, will benefit from additional support to community-based childcare services. The social economy has the potential to create employment and improve services, contributing towards the economic, social and cultural development of disadvantaged communities in urban and rural areas.

**Step 7: Potential to redesign policy to promoted greater gender equality**

1. Greater flexibility of eligibility criteria has the potential to make this Programme of greater relevance to women:
- remove age threshold for lone parents
- establish eligibility for women in low income households
- specify women returners as target group

2. Extend range of indicators for programme to include

- gender breakdown of management of social economy enterprises
- provision of care services
- breakdown of participants by gender and also by additional categories – lone parents; returners; spouses of unemployed etc.
- gender composition of local committees

3. Greater recognition that social economy enterprises may require long-term public assistance.

4. Additional financial resources to extend this programme within targeted communities.

5. Support further research and data collection on the nature, scale, composition of participants and beneficiaries of the Social Economy.
Appendix

Examples of completed Gender Impact Assessment Forms

Example 1. Marine Tourism sub-measure – SE Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Programme</th>
<th>SE Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Programme</td>
<td>Local Enterprise Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Measure</td>
<td>Marine Tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measure Description**
Funding will be provided for projects, particularly those involving co-operation and partnership between the private and public sector, which are designed to build critical mass within the sector and to improve the quality and capacity of the resource within the Region in an environmentally sustainable way.

**Ex Ante Evaluation**

**Objectives**
The Marine Tourism Sub-Measure will support the NDP objectives of

- sustainable national economic and employment growth
- fostering balanced regional development

More specifically, as sub-measure of the Tourism Programme, it will contribute towards the achievement of these objectives by broadening the tourism base and enhancing the product range within the region.

The objectives of the Marine Tourism Sub-Measure itself are to support the development of the marine tourism sector by improving the quality and capacity of the resource in a way which is sustainable, environmentally, socially and economically. It will be specifically targeted to:

- improve marine tourism access infrastructure
- encourage integrated development and co-operative partnerships, particularly in relation to networks and clusters

**Gender Equality**
The marine leisure sector encompasses not only the active pursuits such as water sports, boating, and angling but also passive pursuits such as visits to beaches, swimming in the sea, coastal touring, pleasure boats and cruising, nature tourism, aquaria, maritime museums, etc. A 1996 ESRI survey suggested that 57% of males and 54% of females participate in some marine leisure activity, but participation is
higher for males in all activities except for trips to the beach, and is significantly higher in the areas of angling and water sports.

To promote greater equality of opportunity, the Measure will:

- encompass passive as well as active water-based activities
- in its application forms, request a paragraph on gender impact and targeted employment/participation figures on a gender disaggregated basis
- in its scoring system, give a high weighting to the provision of facilities for female and family participation, and to community partnership projects
- include a representative of women’s and community groups on the Project Assessment Committee
- take gender representation into account in membership of the Project Assessment Committee.

Example 2: Urban and Village Renewal Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Programme</th>
<th>BMW Regional OP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Programme</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Project Selection</td>
<td>Urban and village renewal projects will be selected by the relevant local authority and identified in an Urban and Village Renewal Strategy (UVRS) document. The UVRS will be assessed and approved by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. A Conservation Advisory Panel will advise the Department in relation to the selection of conservation projects.</td>
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Description of Measure

The Urban and Village Renewal Measure will stimulate environmental improvements by upgrading city, town and village locations to make them more attractive places in which to live and work, encourage social and economic development, and facilitate and support the development of tourism and tourism-related activity. Under the measure funding will be available for projects in the following areas:

City Regeneration: Support will be provided for specific areas of Galway City in need of physical, social and economic rejuvenation which will be identified, in a strategic plan, by Galway Corporation;
Urban and Village Renewal: Each local authority will identify, in a strategic plan, the priority urban and village areas in which there are specific needs and deficiencies, including disadvantaged blackspots; and

Architectural Conservation: Funding will be provided to local authorities and bodies such as civic trusts to upgrade public buildings of significant architectural and heritage merit.

**Ex Ante Evaluation**

**Objectives**
The Urban and Village Renewal Measure will support the following priorities of the CSF:
- Balanced Regional Development
- Development of Economic Infrastructure
- Rural Development and
- Social Inclusion

The specific objectives of the Measure are to:
- Upgrade urban and village locations to make them more attractive places in which to live and work
- Promote environmentally sustainable social and economic development within the areas with local community involvement
- Promote more balanced regional development
- Promote social inclusion in rural and urban areas
- Facilitate and support the development of tourism and tourism-related activity in the target areas
- Encourage high standards of urban design compatible with the character of the area, and
- Conserve and protect structures of significant architectural or heritage interest

**Equality:** The improvement of the physical environment of cities, towns and villages will have a positive impact for all. However, certain interventions such as the provision of dished footpaths, the improvement of public lighting and the provision and upgrading of children’s play areas will be of particular importance to women. In drawing up their Urban and Village Renewal Strategy documents local authorities will take account of the views of women’s bodies in relation to the rejuvenation of urban and village areas.

**Project Selection**

A comprehensive set of guidelines will be issued by the Implementing Body setting out the actions to be included by local authorities in the Urban and Village Renewal Strategy documents and the criteria to be used by them in selecting renewal projects to be funded under the Measure. The criteria will include, inter-alia:
- The potential to enhance the attractiveness of towns and villages as places in which to live, work and visit
- The potential of the proposed works to encourage investment, employment creation and social inclusion
The need to remedy infrastructure deficiencies in run-down urban and village areas and to improve the appearance of public areas

The capacity of the proposed works to assist in promoting the regeneration of urban areas in which a special need for urban renewal has been identified

The need to consult widely with the public, including, where appropriate, women’s groups, tidy towns committees, civic trusts, voluntary/community/resident groups, business and other interests

The promotion of sustainable development patterns

The impact that the strategy will have on the environment, gender equality, equal opportunities, rural development and poverty

Local authorities will submit Urban and Village Renewal Strategy documents for the period 2000-2006 to the Implementing Body. These strategy documents will be assessed and approved by the Implementing Body. In addition, urban and village renewal projects to be implemented each year will be identified by local authorities and submitted to the Implementing Body for assessment and approval. For planning purposes each local authority will be notified of an indicative resource allocation for each year of the Measure. This will facilitate local authorities in the preparation of their strategy documents and detailed plans. It is envisaged that the allocation of grants will be on the basis of broad population bands and the criteria to be set out in the guidelines. A proportion of available funding will be retained by the Implementing Body on an annual basis and this funding will be allocated on the basis of bids from the local authorities. In assessing the bids, the Implementing Body will take into account the quality of the plans received, standards in design and finish, etc. The Implementing Body will review the proposals from local authorities and decide on the schemes to be funded on the basis of their eligibility under the Measure and their contribution to Measure objectives. In relation to the Conservation Sub-Measure an advisory panel, comprising persons with relevant expertise in relation to conservation, will advise and assist the Department in selecting conservation projects for funding.

Eligible works under the Measure will include:

- Physical improvements to city, town and village centres, including street lighting and furniture, traffic calming, landscaping, etc.
- The development of focal points and riverside potential of cities, towns and villages
- Rendering sites non-derelict
- The development of facilities to promote enterprise creation, tourism and employment
- Conservation of architectural heritage

**Performance Indicators**

In addition to the above performance indicators [not listed here], data will be collected to capture, inter alia, the number of short-term jobs created, skills enhancement, etc. on a gender disaggregated basis.
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