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**Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women**

Pre-session working group

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Constitutio

Teachers in school completion programmes, Area Development Partnership education officers, psychologists, inspectors and increasingly education welfare officers, identify students at risk of dropping out of school early and facilitate their successful transfer to the Youthreach sector.

The Education Equality Initiative (EEI) was established by the Department of Education and Science to address educational disadvantage through the strategic allocation of funding (€4.44 million 2000-2006). The EEI is assisted under the European Social Fund. Its objective is to address gaps in the provision of education and training for educationally disadvantaged women and specific marginalized groups. Funding is intended to be used to support innovation and learning which will inform future practice, particularly in ensuring effective strategies for those who are most in need. It provides for education, training and supports to develop models of good practice and to promote community education models to disadvantaged adults.

EEI Phase 1 ran from 2000 to 2003 and forms part of a continuum from the Women's Education Initiative (WEI 1997 – 2000). EEI Phase 2 runs from 2004 to 2006. En
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School Completion Programme: Teenage Parenting Projects

From 2004, six Teenage Parenting Projects, in Galway, Waterford, Limerick, North Eastern Health Board, Coolock and Barnardos in Dublin, are being funded as a specific gender equality strand under the School Completion Programme. The young parents supported by the Teenage Parenting y

from the service, and 85% of all tuition was given by unpaid volunteers. Participation on adult literacy programmes has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to approx 30,000 at the end of December 2003.

Males accounted for 12,542 (40%) clients and females accounted for 18,093 (60%). English as a second or other language was provided to 5,928 participants and 12% of all literacy participants were asylum seekers/refugees.

In addition, a quality framework, nationally certified staff developmeft TD(u)Tj 25 0 TD(n)Tj on

The purpose of the Committee is to examine relevant research and reports and to make recommendations on strategies and initiatives which might be undertaken to increase the uptake by females of the physical sciences in the Leaving Certificate at second level and to increase the number of females choosing Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) courses at third level. The Committee is due to report to the Minister for Education and Science in autumn 2005. The report of the Committee will identify short, med

partnership structures and policy pr

In addition, the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science worked with the Curriculum Development Unit of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee to develop a publication for the Civil, Social and Political Education programme in second level schools called "VOTE: Gender Participation and Democracy". The publication deals with the electoral process at local, national and European levels and the Presidency and the importance of women's representation in political life.

The Civil Service Equality Unit, Department of Finance is responsible for monitoring the implementation of Gender Equality Policy in the employment of civil servants. During 2004 the Unit conducted a review of initiatives undertaken in Departments to support equality of opportunity. The review will form the basis of a report on best practise in achieving equality, including gender equality, in the Civil Service.

2005 is the target year for achieving one of the key objectives of the gender equality policy, namely, that 33% of Assistant Principal posts should be filled by women to meet the aim of creating larger pool of women candidates to compete for higher management posts. Present indications are that this target will be met.

In relation to the Irish Diplomatic Service, the Department of Foreign Affairs has set gender equality targets of 35% at First Secretary level and of 30% at Counsellor level. The achievement of these targets is monitored continually. The Department's Human Resources Strategy also provides for "equality proofing" of all new Human Resources policies being developed.

Since the introduction of a Government policy of a representation of a minimum of 40% of both genders on State Boards in 1993, the overall percentage of women on State boards has increased from 15% in 1992 to 33% at December 2004. Government and ministerial appointments had increased from 17% to 36% in the same period. Promotion of gender balance in decision-making bodies constitutes an important element of Government policy in relation to gender equality. The Government has made commitments in the Programme for Government and current Social Partnership agreement 'Sustaining Progress' to achieving the 40% gender balance target. However, as Government is responsible for just over 40% of all appointments to State Boards and Committees, with other nominating bodies having effective control over the remaining 60%, the Government decided in January 2005, that for the future, nominating bodies must nominate both men and women, so that Government can then choose from among those nominated in such a manner as to ensure that the overall target is met. It is expected that this decision will result in a further significant improvement in the situation.

Employment

14. As mentioned in Ireland's combined Fourth and Fifth Report, the fact that the Employment Equality Act (O'Donoghue, 2004) is a landmark in the history of Irish employment law is a significant achievement. The Act provides for a 22% target for women in the public sector and a 24% target for women in the private sector.

entitlements under the Part-time Workers and the Carer's Leave Acts which help them combine work and family responsibilities.

Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme: The achievements of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme to date include: 2,340 grants awarded to childcare providers and community groups up to end 2004; nearly 33,500 new childcare places will be created with funding committed to date; 28,839 new and existing places will be supported with their staffing costs; of these, 21,500 new places were in place at the end of June 2004. The Government recently provided an additional €90 million to expand this Programme further, bringing the total investment to the end of 2006 to €500 million.

Tables 4 and 5 illustrate relative income categories by gender and age.

- 16.** There are two measures of female employment. The first, the employment rate, covers women over 15 and under 64 years of age. This is the measure of employment used by the European Union and, for Ireland, the 2004 employment rate for women is 55.8%. This means that Ireland is on course to achieve the "Lisbon target" of 57% for 2005 and that female employment is above the EU average. The second measure is the labour market participation rate and this includes all women over 15 years. This rate has increased from 44.0% in 1998 to 49.4% in 2004. The corresponding figures for men were 69.5% in 1998 and 70.9% in 2004. [**Table 6**]

In 2004 the number of female employees as a proportion of the number of male employees was 89.3% [**Table 7**]. However, in 2004 self-employed women represented only 20.2% of the number of self-employed men. This was, nevertheless, an increase on the corresponding 1998 figure of 19.0%.

The labour force participation rate increased for women in all marital status categories between 1998 and 2004 [**Table 8**].

The number of women in employment increased in most economic sectors between 1998 and 2004 [**Table 9**]. There was a particularly sizeable increase in the *Health, Wholesale and Retail*, and *Financial* sectors. While the numbers of women employed in the *Construction* sector are relatively small, they almost doubled in the 1998-2004 period.

Table 10 shows the Numbers of women and men in Technology and Science Occupational Groups 1996-2002. **Table 11** shows females in employment by age 1999-2004.

- 17.** The Report of the Working Group on the Review and Improvement of the Maternity Protection Legislation, published in January 2001, made a series of unanimously agreed recommendations to improve maternity protection for employees. The recommendation to increase the periods of maternity leave attracting Maternity Benefit payment (from 14 weeks to 18 weeks) and additional unpaid maternity leave (from 4 weeks to 8 weeks) was implemented with effect from March 2001. In December 2000, the Government approved the implementation of the other recommendations of the Group by amendment of the existing legislation through Statutory Instrument or primary legislation as appropriate.

The **Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004** was passed by the Dáil and Seanad on 8 July, 2004 and was signed into law by the President on 19 July, 2004. The Act, which commenced on 18 October, 2004 implements the outstanding recommendations of the Maternity Review Group.

The **Adoptive Leave Bill 2004** will apply the appropriate recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the Review and Improvement of the Maternity Protection Legislation to the adoptive leave legislation. Enactment is expected by mid-2005.

The **Parental Leave Act 1998**, which came into effect on 3 December, 1998 provides an individual and non-transferable entitlement to both parents to 14 weeks unpaid leave from work to take care of young children. The leave must be taken before the child reaches 5 years of age, except in certain circumstances in the case of an adopted child.

On 16 December 2004, the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2004 was published. The Bill will enhance the entitlement of employees to take time off to care for their children by allowing the leave to be taken over a longer period of time and in a broken format and also extends the entitlement to persons acting *in loco parentis*. The main provisions of the Bill include the following:-

- Raising the maximum age of the eligible child from 5 to 8 years;
- An increase in the maximum age of the eligible child to 16 years in the case of children with disabilities;
- Extension of parental leave entitlements to persons acting *in loco parentis* in respect of an eligible child.
- A statutory entitlement to take the 14 weeks parental leave in separate blocks of a minimum of 6 continuous weeks, or more favourable terms with the agreement of the employer;
- That an employee who falls ill while on parental leave and as a result is unable to care for the child may suspend the parental leave for the duration of the illness following which period the parental leave recommences;
- Provision for statutory codes of practice on parental leave and *force majeure*.

The Bill is expected to be enacted by mid-2005.

- 18.** The second National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/Inclusion) covering the period 2003-2005 was submitted to the EU Commission on 31 July 2003. The plan incorporates the commitments made in the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) – Building an Inclusive Society 2002 to 2007, and the social partnership agreement, Sustaining Progress.

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/Inclusion) contain a range of targets in relation to women. Progress in relation to these targets has been reported on in the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) Annual Report 2003/2004 and will continue to be monitored and evaluated.

Key Targets

Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the numbers of women who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminate consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.

Increase the employment participation rate of women to an average of more than 60% in 2010, as envisaged under the National Employment Action Plan 2001.

Consistent Poverty

Consistent poverty measures those with less than 60% of average incomes and who suffer deprivation across a number of indicators. Data from the Economic and Social Research Institute's (ESRI) Living in Ireland Surveys provide information on consistent poverty levels from 1997 to 2001, the latest and last survey

Childcare Provision

Adequate childcare provision is a crucial element in any package of measures to help parents reconcile employment and family care and increase the employment participation of women, in general, and lone parents, in particular. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000 - 2006 aims to maintain and increase the supply of childcare facilities and places, improve the quality of and introduce a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services.

The benefits of the EOCP in supporting employment, education and training are clearly seen from the Annual Survey of Grant Beneficiaries. The 2003 Survey shows that, among 37,730

Health bodies should introduce appropriate standards for consultation with women, and for implementing the results of such consultation.

The perspectives offered by the Forum should be continued through official support for further collaboration and connection.

Another significant development was the establishment of Womens Health Advisory Committees in each of the health regions to draft and agree regional plans for women's health.

The Irish health system is currently undergoing a major structural reform programme. The Women's Health Council is in talks with the Department of Health and Children and the newly established Health Service Executive to progress the Forum's recommendations and to assist with their implementation.

- 20.** Family planning services for non-card holders can be accessed through a variety of means, including GP services, student health clinics, Well-Woman and Irish Family Planning Association centres.

Data from the Irish Contraception and Crisis Pregnancy Study (2004) indicate that most of those surveyed in representative sample of 3,000 members of the public said that they had always used a method of contraception or precaution when having sex in the last year. Level of contraceptive use was significantly related to gender, with 75% of men reporting always using contraception against 85% of women.

In 2003 the Crisis Pregnancy Agency launched its Strategy to Address the Issue of Crisis Pregnancy. One of its aims is the development of capacity within contraceptive service delivery through focusing both on GP and specialised services, as well as emphasising the importance of age-specific programmes.

The Agency seeks to ensure that Ireland has a network of contraceptive services, which is client-focussed and universally accessible to both men and women. The strategy addresses the issue of information, education and advice and contraception services.

- 21.** In relation to abortion and the Committee's recommendation in regard to a national dialogue on women's reproductive rights, it should be noted that the Irish people established (in 1983) and amended (in 1992) the present constitutional position. The Committee may also wish to note that, since 1983, Ireland has held five separate referenda on three separate occasions on the issue of abortion. It should also be noted that the Irish Constitution can be amended only through a referendum where the majority of the votes of the people are cast in favour of the Constitutional amendment concerned.

The Government, in implementing Article 12 of the Convention, has taken into account General Recommendation 24 in relation to provision of contraceptive services and prevention of crisis pregnancy.

The government set up the Crisis Pregnancy Agency in 2001. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA) is a planning and co-ordinating body established to formulate and implement a strategy to address crisis pregnancy in Ireland through:

- ! A reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies by the provision of education, advice and contraceptive services;
- ! A reduction in the number of women with crisis pregnancies who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive; and
- ! The provision of co

CEDAW/

Work commenced in autumn 2003 on developing a five-year Traveller Education Strategy. The Strategy will provide recommendations on the way forward in relation to Traveller education and will also recommend a phased implementation plan.

Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs)

Senior Traveller Training Centres operate on the same basis as Youthreach centres but there is no upper age limit. Particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents into the centres because of the impact this can have on their children's schooling. Females represent the largest proportion (80% +) of participants in STTCs. The STTC programme offers a minimum of two years for those following Foundation and Progression Programmes and up to three years if required for those following extended courses, e.g. the Leaving Certificate applied programme. Training is provided in a culturally supportive network of training centres.

FÁS Programmes

In addition to the inclusion of Travellers on a range of FÁS Programmes, there are a number of special initiatives, which have been developed in response to approaches from Traveller support groups locally. It is important to note that at any given time there are a number of Travellers attending FÁS Programmes who may not have registered as such. **Tables 12 and 13** indicate the Travellers who have registered as such for the years 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Health

A National Strategy for Travellers' Health was launched by the Department in 2000, running until 2005. A number of measures are contained therein aimed at improving the health of Traveller women:

Health education programmes to highlight the relevance of proper ante-natal and post-natal care.

Culturally appropriate ante-natal promotion.

Liaison between maternity units and the Designated Public Health Nurses to ensure early identification of Traveller mothers, prompt birth notification, more timely communication regarding discharges dates for mother and baby and better follow up.

Greater access to and uptake of family planning and sexual health services to be encouraged by Health Service Executive areas through improved primary care services.

Access to women's refuges in each Health Service Executive area to be monitored to ensure that no barriers exist for Travellers and that they are inclusive to Travellers' needs.

Travellers and Traveller organisations to be represented on all national and regional steering groups addressing the issue of violence against women.

Any research projects undertaken on the issue of violence against women will include a Traveller dimension.

Traveller organisations promoting special initiatives addressing the issue of violence against women to be supported.

Refuges to be encouraged to develop and adopt anti-racist codes of practice and to provide in-service training in anti-racism and interculturalism.

Initiatives to work with Traveller men perpetrating violence against women to be supported.

Traveller organisations funded to train and employ Traveller women as refuge workers and counsellors.

Primary Health Care for Travellers Projects to be developed in conjunction with Traveller organisations in all Health Service Executive areas where there is a significant Traveller population by the end of 2005.

The Strategy also provided for the establishment of a Traveller Health Advisory Committee in the Department and for a Traveller Health Unit in each Health Service Executive area. A Travellers' Health Study is also currently being designed by the Department.

Life Expectancy

A Target has been set to reduce the gap in life expectancy between the Travelling Community and the whole population, by at least 10%, by 2007.

A Study Group incorporating the members of the Traveller Ethics, Research and Information Working Group (TERIWG) and representatives from relevant organisations in Northern Ireland and other stakeholders including Traveller women has been established to progress an a All-Ireland Traveller Health Study. This Study will comprise two key elements;

Measurement of the health status of Travellers including mortality and life expectancy, neonatal and infant mortality, morbidity and other status indicators.

Evaluation of the health status of Travellers in Northern Ireland.

The Study will

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groups and organisations including a number of women's groups, for the development of local anti-racism initiatives or projects.

The National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008 (NPAR), which was launched in January, 2005, seeks to be inclusive of multiple forms of diversity and discrimination, with reference to the nine grounds identified in the equality legislation, which are: gender; age; marital status; family status; disability; race; sexual orientation; Traveller and religion. The inequality of women from cultural and ethnic minorities can be compounded by gender as well as ethnic origin, and this is reflected in the NPAR. The National Action Plan Against Racism was used to pilot an integrated proofing template which included gender, poverty, and equality proofing.

The Gender Equality Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government

interculturalism awareness from the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI).

Table 14 shows the number of female applications for Asylum and the number granted refugee status for the period 1 January 2001- 28 February 2005.

Women can claim asylum, on their own behalf or on behalf of their daughters, on grounds of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). According to latest figures, there are currently 3,574 females receiving Direct Provision. There are 170 unaccounted for as gender information was not received. These are mostly new-born babies.

- 27.** The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/Inclusion) contain a range of targets in relation to women. Progress in relation to these targets has been reported on in the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) Annual Report 2003/2004 and will continue to be monitored and evaluated.

The overall objective is to eliminate consistent poverty for older people and to improve their access to appropriate health, care and housing supports, and to support older people to live independent and fulfilling lives.

Key Targets

Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the numbers of older people who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.

By 2003, national guidelines will be put in place for the provision of respite care services to carers of older people;

Access to orthopaedic services will be improved so that no one is waiting longer than 12 months for a hip replacement. This is an initial short-term action to improve quality of life for older people and it will be reviewed in 2003.

By end 2007 adequate heating systems will be available in all local authority rented dwellings provided for older people.

Consistent Poverty and Employment Participation Rate

Data from the Economic and Social Research Institute's (ESRI) Living in Ireland Surveys provide information on consistent poverty levels from 1997 to 2001, the latest and last survey available which facilitates trend analysis. The consistent poverty rate for older women fell from 10.2% to 4.4% during that period. The employment participation rate of 55-64 year-old women increased from 21.6% in 1997 to approximately 39% in 2004.

Pension Rates of Payment

Since 1997 social welfare pensions have been increased by 81%, or about 50% above the rate of inflation over the same period. It is planned to continue this progress in future Budgets and, ultimately, the aim is to achieve the National Pensions Policy Initiative target of 34% of Gross

Improvements in the position of Widows/Widowers

With regard to those widow(er)s who are over 66 years of age the Government had committed to bringing their rate of payment into line with that of the old age contributory pension. This was achieved through a series of special increases in recent budgets and the process was completed in Budget 2004. The maximum rate of both old age contributory and widow(er)s pension is now €167.30 per week.

This group of widows and widowers is also benefiting from the changes in the Household Benefits Package announced over a number of 4. .

following notification from the Board. In other cases natural fathers issued proceedings following a hearing before the Board. In some cases natural fathers were happy for the adoption application to proceed on the basis of their continuing to have a relationship with the child after the adoption order was made and in other cases the natural father decided that he was happy for an adoption order to be made in respect of his child as he considered it was in the best interests and welfare of his child.

2001 saw a dramatic reduction in the number of natural fathers attending the Adoption Board to be heard on adoption applications in respect of their children (from 19 in year 2000 to 5 in 2001). This is most likely attributable to a change in Board's procedures early in that year. Natural fathers, when being notified of an adoption application, were, from then on, offered an additional option of meeting with the Board's Social Workers in relation to their views on the application. They were also issued with the Board's new information booklet on step-parent adoption. Frequently, their enquiries only related to procedural and legal matters and were not indicative of opposition to the making of an adoption order. Prior to this, their only option in such circumstances was to seek a hearing by the Board and the Board itself felt that a full formal hearing was not the most appropriate way of dealing with such enquiries. The option of a full Board hearing is still open to all natural fathers being notified of adoption applications but was taken up by only 5 natural fathers of the 135 notified in 2003.

The Adoption Board has asked the Department of Health & Children to explore the possibility of introducing amending legislation to allow the Board to attach conditions to the making of an adoption order to ensure that a natural father can have continuing access to his child after the making of an adoption order.

30. This reservation is maintained because the rights of fathers of children born outside of marriage are not equal to those of mothers. Specifically, mothers are automatically the guardians of their children while non-marital fathers must acquire the status of guardian. This process has become much less onerous following the enactment of the Children Act, 1997. The Act amended the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964, by, inter alia, providing a mechanism for, and relating to the recognition of natural fathers as guardians of their children born outside of marriage. The Act allows a father, who has not married the mother of his child, to be appointed guardian of the child by agreement with the mother, without the need to go to court, as was previously the situation.

Another consideration is that withdrawing the reservation could be construed as a denial by the State that legislative differences in treatment of women and men in this area still exist.

Note: Annexes to this report are available from the Secretariat in the language in which they were submitted