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Gender Equality Perspective on Ireland's National Employment Action Plan 2004

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Part 1. Economic, employment and policy context

The last eighteen months has seen a resurgence of economic growth in the Irish economy following a slow-down during 2002-03 from the exceptionally high growth rates of the late 1990s. The growth rate during 2003 was 2.8% in GNP terms (3.7% in GDP terms). Economic projections for 2004/05 predict a strong growth rate of around 5-6%. Latest economic data (in advance of November 2004 public estimates) reveal a 7% increase in taxation revenues over the last year confirming a renewed high level of economic activity.

1a. Economic and employment context

Ireland's rate of employment has remained constant just over 65% between 2001 and 2003 – slightly above the EU average of 64%. Women's employment rate increased slightly from 55.0% to 55.8% between 2001 and 2003 while men's employment rate showed a slight decrease over the same period from 76.5% to 75.0%. Ireland's overall employment rate, 65.4% in 2003, was above the EU average of 64.3% (women's employment rate at the EU average, men's rate above the average).

There has been a narrowing of the gender gap in the employment rate between women and men (among those aged 15-64) from 21.5 in 2001 to 19.2 in 2003, still wider than the EU average of 16.5 in 2003. Among the older age group 55-64, the gender gap in employment rate is particularly marked. Measured unemployment shows a marginally lower rate for women (4.3%) than men (4.9%) for 2003 while measured long-term unemployment was 1.4% (similar for women and men) during 2003.

A strong trend evident in the changing pattern of employment in Ireland has been the increased rate of employment among older people (55-64 years) from 46.5% to 49.0 between 2001 and 2003. Most of this increase was accounted for by an increase in the employment rate among women aged 55 to 64 from 28.5% in 2001 to 33.1% in 2003, now above the EU average for older women of 32.2%.

The rate of growth in employment during 2003 was 2.5% with measured unemployment constant at a rate of 4.6%. Gender differences in employment growth are evident mainly in the growth in women's part-time employment.

Employment Growth rate	Part-time	Full-time
Female	3.6%	3%
Male	-1.1%	3%
All	2.7%	3.1%

The largest growth sector during 2003 was health (+12,100), construction (+9,300), other services (+7,500) and financial and other business services (+6,400). A decrease in other manufacturing industries employment (-7,600) occurred over the same period. Women are strongly represented in employment growth in other services (largely personal services and frequently part-time) in health service and also in financial service employment.

1b Key challenges for gender equality

Reaching the Lisbon/Stockholm targets for employment means that the Irish employment rate of 65.5% will need to reach 67% by 2007 and 70% by 2010. Women's employment rate will need to increase from 55.8% to 57% in 2007 and to 60% in 2010. Recent employment trends show that increasing employment rates have been driven by higher levels of employment among women and particularly among those in the 55-64 age group. There is clearly a potential for further employment growth from these sectors allowing Ireland to reach the Lisbon/Stockholm targets. Realising this potential means a targeted employment strategy addressing the barriers to women's employment access, particularly the lack of adequate child and elder care services and the perpetuation of financial disincentives within a household-based welfare and taxation system.

Probably the central issue in relation to women's access to employment is the lack of a proper care infrastructure. A Report from the OECD published in September 2004 strongly criticises Ireland's lack of early childhood education and care provision arguing for increased resources to improve provision. In addition, the Report argues for a system of paid parental leave of one year's duration – to replace the current system of unpaid leave over fourteen weeks. A further key recommendation is for a guaranteed publicly funded pre-primary place for all children and for full school days for all young children from disadvantaged areas. (OECD 2004). Increasing the 'supply and affordability' of childcare facilities has been highlighted in both the Employment Taskforce and the Joint Employment Reports (2004) as a key recommendation to the Irish government. Ireland has a long way to go in the development of a comprehensive childcare system and existing measures, such as the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (mainly targeted at disadvantaged areas), while significant are limited in their effect.

Despite the high levels of growth attained by the Irish economy over recent years, low pay remains a significant problem. The recent review of the National Anti Poverty Strategy showed that the proportion of those in poverty headed by a person in the labour market has increased substantially from 6% in 1998 to 19% in 2001. Women are the majority of those on low pay and account for the majority of those at risk of, and experiencing, poverty. Policies addressing low pay have a positive effect on gender equality. The introduction of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) in 2000, and its increase in 2004 up to a value of EURO 7.00 per hour have been important although the issue of enforcement has yet to be effectively addressed. January 2004 saw the mid-term negotiations under the national agreement 'Sustaining Progress' for a pay agreement to cover the 18 month period through to June 2005. As part of the deal agreed an additional 0.5% increase was set for those earning under EUROS 9.00 per hour above the average increase for the period. Around 10% of those on the NMW continue to pay income tax (although there are commitments to end this situation in the coming budget) and there are serious issues around the retention of secondary benefits for those who move from welfare dependence into low paid jobs. From a gender equality perspective, the predominantly household-based welfare system itself acts as a disincentive to women potential earners due to the household impact of all adult earnings.

Another challenge for gender equality in Ireland is the persistent high gender pay gap and the lack of specific strategies to address it. 'Urgent action' to tackle the causes of the gender pay gap in Ireland is called for in the Joint Employment Report (2004). While the Irish Employment Action Plan details recommendations of the Consultative Group on Male/Female Differentials (covering leave entitlements, taxation reform, childcare etc), there is no indication as to how these recommendations are to be implemented, where the responsibility lies and what kind of targets and timeframe will be applied.

1c. Developments in the employment policy approach

There have been no major changes in Irish employment policy over 2003-04. From a gender equality perspective there have been some important continuing areas of policy implementation. Additional increases to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) as well as the above average increase to those on low wages under the current national wage agreement both reflect some commitment towards a policy on low pay. The over-riding emphasis, however, is on economic competitiveness. Increased maternity leave entitlement has been implemented (in July 2004), and a commitment to review unpaid parental leave has been made, Ireland remains a country with a low level of leave provision. On the negative side cut-backs in active labour market programmes have reduced resources to community employment and other schemes, which have been important to women (including many lone parents) accessing the labour market over recent years. Delays in the roll out of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) have meant that the crisis in access to affordable childcare continues to be a key issue for women in relation to paid employment. Restrictions of the eligibility criteria for certain schemes, such as the Back to Work Allowance (applicants must now be 5 years registered as unemployed compared to previous requirement of 15 months) are likely to have a negative impact on women few of whom are registered as unemployed over five years. Another negative policy change has been the removal of the half rate One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) for those earning above an unchanged earnings disregard level.

Employment policy over the last two years in particular has been made up of contradictory elements. On the one hand there are policy changes (such as taxation changes) aimed at increasing employment rates, while on the other there are restrictions and lack of supports which in effect hinder employment access, particularly quality employment access, for many women and other marginalised groups. However, the reestablishment of strong economic growth has continued to drive up employment levels regardless of policy developments, although low pay has become an increasing issue.

1d. Institutional arrangements for gender mainstreaming

No major new institutional arrangements for gender mainstreaming have been put in place over 2003-04. Ongoing work of the Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform has seen the publication of additional factsheets on gender equality issues in different policy sectors (film and media, transport and housing). These factsheets are intended as an aid to policy makers and others in the gender mainstreaming process and in particular in the implementation of gender impact assessment guidelines under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. They

provide summary outlines of gender equality issues in each sector, profile of women and men's position within the sector, examples of good practice and recommendations for policy development from a gender equality perspective.

The mid-term review of the NDP carried out during 2003 highlighted the weaknesses in the integration of horizontal principles - one of which is gender equality - across the NDP. Following on from this review certain measures under the NDP were selected for monitoring over the 2004-06 period in relation to gender equality. These include all education and training measures and selected regional and housing measures.

A pilot gender budgeting project was funded by the Gender Equality Unit during 2004 which involved the development of a template for gender budgeting in local development organisations. The Report from this project will be published in 2005.

1.e European employment policy context

The four key areas for action specified under the Employment Taskforce (and confirmed by the Joint Employment Report) have important implications for Irish employment policy. In particular, the action area on 'attracting more people to the labour market and making work a real option for all' has the potential to generate important policy developments in relation to gender equality. This action area is linked directly with the identified need for greater investment in childcare and pre-school publicly supported systems as well as the broader system of care provision. Increasing the return from employment by addressing both the gender pay gap and low pay through taxation, leave entitlements, retention of secondary benefits (such as medical cards) for those previously on social welfare and related policies are central to effective action in this area.

Part 2. Assessment of the guidelines

Three overarching objectives

Full employment:

	Y/N	Target
Reference in NAP to specific EU employment target for women	Y	Women's employment rate 57% by 2007 and 60% by 2010.
National employment targets specified	Y	Lisbon/Stockholm targets specified as targets for national policy.
National employment target for women specified	Y	Lisbon/Stockholm targets specified as targets for national policy.
National employment target for older people (is there a gender break-down?)	Yes – no gender breakdown	Employment rate of 50% for age group 55-64.
Specific targets set in NAP with respect to closing gender employment gap?	No	N/a
Specific targets set in NAP with respect to closing gender unemployment gap?	No	Unemployment rates of women and men at similar levels
Any other targets with a gender dimension Specify:	Yes	Reduce rate of 'consistent poverty' to 2% for women (and men) by 2010. Elimination of long-term unemployment by 2007. Reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007

Comment

Irish national employment targets mirror the Lisbon/Stockholm targets of 70% employment rate for working age population, 60% for female working age population and 50% for the age group 55-64. Recent employment trends show that increasing employment rates have been driven by higher levels of employment among women and particularly among those in the 55-64 age group. There is clearly a potential for further employment growth from these sectors allowing Ireland to reach the Lisbon/Stockholm targets. Realising this potential means a targeted employment strategy addressing the barriers to women's employment access, particularly the lack of adequate child and elder care services and the perpetuation of financial disincentives within a household-based welfare and taxation system. Policy over recent years aimed at increasing women's employment rate has focused primarily on moves towards individualisation of taxation together with a significant but limited development of childcare services. 2003 saw a slow down in the government's previous commitment to complete individualisation over a three year period from 2000 as well as evidence of delay in the attainment of expected expenditure levels on childcare.

Stated policies to eliminate long-term unemployment and to reduce the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007 have the potential to benefit certain women. Policies in these areas tend to lack a gender perspective however, evident in the absence of gender-disaggregated data in relation to vulnerable groups and the under-representation of women among the long-term unemployed (linked to eligibility criteria). An important policy proposal from a gender equality perspective has been put forward by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUI).i.e. to change policy towards registration as unemployed in order to provide for registration of those seeking part-time employment. This important policy proposal has not been addressed in the Plan.

Improving quality and productivity at work

Dimension to job quality/productivity	Dimensions discussed Y/N or E (elsewhere in NAP-please give guideline /section)	Adequacy of the gender approach (good, adequate, limited, very limited) or gender dimension omitted	Comments
Intrinsic job quality	Y E – Guideline 1.	No gender dimension.	Important issues from a gender perspective, for example the gender pay gap and occupational segregation are not addressed here.
Skills	Y E- Guidelines 1, 2, 4.	No gender dimension.	Discussion of current and future skills requirement lacks gender disaggregated data and a gender perspective.
Lifelong learning and career development	Y E – Guideline 4	Very limited gender dimension.	Some important initiatives are presented under this theme, for example the Back to Education Initiative. This initiative is one which benefits women, although the gender dimension is rarely recognised in the Plan.
Gender equality	Y E – Guidelines 3, 6, 5, 7, 8.	Limited	Some important gender equality initiatives – but lack of policies to address the gender pay gap, lack of paid parental leave and inadequacy of care infrastructure.

Health and safety at work	Y E - Guideline 3	No gender dimension	Plan does not address the question of gender specific health and safety issues. No gender disaggregated data presented.
Flexibility and security	Y E – Guideline 3	No gender dimension	Plan does not address the question of gender specific flexibility and security issues. No gender disaggregated data presented.
Inclusion and access to the labour market	Y E – Guidelines 1, 5, 7, 8.	Limited	The significance of women’s potential actual and potential labour supply is stated within the plan, but a gender perspective on access and inclusion issues is weak (see below).
Work organisation and work-life balance	Y E - Guideline 3	Limited	Gender issues are specified but policy initiatives are weak. Implementation of new maternity provisions is positive and commitment to improved parental care may be significant in the future.
Social dialogue and worker involvement	Y E - Guideline 6	Limited	The Plan highlights the development of social partnership in Ireland and includes as appendices submissions by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Community and Voluntary Sector on the draft Report. There is little evidence of a gender perspective on the social dialogue process.
Diversity and non-discrimination	Y E – Guidelines 1, 7	Limited	The Plan highlights the strong legislative framework in Ireland in relation to discrimination and the

			development of policies towards diversity. The weakness of a gender perspective in the Plan, However, is reflected in the lack of a gender analysis where the situations of minority and vulnerable groups are addressed.
Overall work performance	Y E – Guidelines 2, 8, 10.	No gender dimension	Plan does not address the question of gender specific job performance issues. No gender disaggregated data presented.
Labour productivity and job quality	Y E – Guideline 2	No gender dimension	Plan does not address the question of gender specific labour productivity and job quality issues. No gender disaggregated data presented.
Job quality targets	y/n	details	Comments/ Policy programme
Specific targets set in NAP with respect to closing gender pay gap?	No	N/a	Recommendations of Consultative Group on male/female wage differentials are referred to in Plan their implementation is not addressed.
Any other job quality targets set : Specify: with gender dimension	No	N/a	Focus of stated policy in this area is on increasing the skill base of the Irish economy and developing further towards a knowledge-based economy. These general objectives are not linked to specific targets.
without gender dimension	No	N/a	

Comment

The focus of policy outlined in the Irish NAPemp in relation to quality of employment is on strategies to enhance the skill base of the Irish economy and to move the economy further towards a knowledge-based economy. The Plan lists the range of factors identified in the European Employment Strategy in relation to quality and productivity of work (skills, lifelong learning, career development, gender equality, health and safety, flexibility and security, inclusion and access to the labour market, work organisation and work-life balance, social dialogue and worker involvement, diversity and non-discrimination and overall work performance. The Plan states a commitment to “fostering a high skilled and adaptable workforce” as well as retraining and upskilling of employees and the unemployed. While these issues are identified in this part of the Plan, they are addressed under individual guidelines and not as an over-arching theme. Where these issues are addressed, the gender equality perspective is limited and restricted to a narrow range of guidelines. For example, gender equality is considered (although to a limited degree) under Guideline 4 (Promote Development of Human Capital and Lifelong Learning), there is no gender perspective applied in Guidelines 2 (Job Creation and Entrepreneurship) and 10 (Addressing Regional Disparities)

Strengthening social cohesion and inclusion

Dimension to social cohesion/inclusion	Dimensions discussed Y/N or E (please give guideline/section)	Gender dimension identified and adequacy of the gender approach (good, adequate, limited, very limited) or gender dimension omitted
Promoting access to quality employment for all women and men who are capable of working	Y E – Guidelines 1, 3, 4, 5 6, 7, 8.	Limited gender dimension.
Combating discrimination on labour market	Y Guideline 1, 5, 6, 7.	Limited gender dimension.
Preventing exclusion from the world of work	Y Guideline 1, 5, 6, 7.	Limited gender dimension.
Reducing regional disparities, positively supporting economic and social restructuring	Y Guideline 10	Gender dimension omitted

Comment

Ireland has a National Anti-Poverty Strategy revised in 2003 incorporating specific targets for the reduction of poverty over the period to 2007. These targets include the reduction of the percentage of women and men living in consistent poverty to 2%. In

addition the Irish NAPemp includes targets to eliminate long-term unemployment by 2007 and to bring unemployment rates of vulnerable groups towards the average rate. However there are tensions and contradictions between different policy areas. Targets specified within the reviewed National Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for the reduction of poverty among specific groups (women, lone parents, elderly) by 2007-10 can be seen to be contradicted by other policies (primarily budgetary policy) which in practice are reducing the level of resources towards key active labour market programmes. Because women account for the majority of lone parents and elderly, positive targets focused on these sectors benefit mainly women. Other policies (such as moves towards tax individualisation) whose stated aim is to increase women's employment rate may in practice be contradicted by policies, such as a low level of public provision of childcare, that have the opposite effect.

Organisations representing disadvantaged groups and women have put forward key priorities to tackle social inclusion. The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed emphasise the need to: address the financial disincentives to take up employment including the low threshold for the loss of secondary benefits in the transition from welfare to paid employment; remove National Minimum Wage earners out of the tax net; to introduce a part-time employment payment. Individualisation of social welfare provisions and entitlements as well as increased child and elder care provision have been the focus of the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) priorities on social inclusion. Child income supports, particularly increased levels of the universal child benefit payments have been strongly emphasised by the Combat Poverty Agency, NWCI, INOU and others. A new recent focus in debate has been on the employment position of immigrants, particularly non EU immigrants who are under a work permit process under which permits are held by employers and not by workers themselves. This has been strongly criticised by many organisations including the Irish Immigrant Council, trade unions and others.

Household-based means testing as well as household-based claimant systems mean that significant numbers of women are dependants within the Irish welfare system. On the one hand, because they are not claimants in their own right, they do not establish individual entitlement to key benefits, e.g. pensions. On the other hand, many women are restricted to low paid, reduced hours and sometimes informal employment due to their concern about the potential negative impact on household income that additional earnings would have.

2.b. The 10 guidelines

<i>1.Active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Limited		Unemployed and inactive women and men are specified as well as named marginalised groups e.g. ethnic minorities, disabled people, Travellers, lesbians and gays, older people.
Gender targets		No	There are no specific targets for unemployment or inactivity. There are gender targets for employment rate based on Lisbon/Stockholm targets (see above).
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	Data on throughput on training and employment support programmes presented with no gender breakdown.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation	Very limited		No gender analysis is presented in relation to key policy changes which are likely to have a negative impact on gender equality : cutbacks in Community Employment Scheme and new restrictions on eligibility for the Back to Work Scheme. One positive new initiative does reflect a gender informed policy analysis. 'Gateway for Women' is aimed at encouraging women to return to work through training programme matched to employer skill needs. However, this is a limited programme involving 571 participants in 2003 and projected 1000 in 2004. Women currently account for 57% of participants. Additional specific schemes such as the Pathways Programme and the High Supports process aim to provide training and other supports to unemployed individuals in order to strengthen their labour market attachment and employment prospects. The numbers are small - less than 1000 over the two schemes - no gender breakdown of their composition is provided.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well	Yes		Childcare policies detailed under the gender guideline are relevant here.
Expected gender	Positive	Negative	Comments

equality effects with respect to:			
Integration into employment (including security of employment)			Policies are contradictory in their effects (see comment below). However, because of continued high growth rates in the economy, it is likely that employment rates will continue to rise, including those of women and older people.
Time and care issues			No effect
Resources/pay			No effect
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)	Limited		
Family/household relations and dependence			No effect

Comment :

Despite the opening statement under this guideline recognising the diversity of those who are unemployed and inactive, including women and marginalised groups, the policies themselves show little recognition of this diversity. Data on training and employment schemes are presented without any gender breakdown. The Plan fails to address the controversial cut-backs in the Community Employment Scheme (CE), a key active labour market programme, with a high participation rate of women (many of whom are lone parents). Numbers on the CE Scheme were reduced from 30,000 to 25,000 in 2003. No further cuts were made in 2004. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions in their response to this Plan state that these cut-backs "have resulted in the loss of a range of valuable community services". In their response to the Plan the Community and Voluntary Sector argue "For women, equality of access and opportunity to the labour market has been hindered by the impact of cut-backs together with inadequate policies to address their needs.....CE cuts are disproportionately affecting women, especially lone parents". Specific new initiatives, such as the 'Gateway for women', the Pathways and High Supports Schemes are positive, these are limited schemes involving small numbers of participants.

<i>2.Job creation and entrepreneurship</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming		No	There is no reference under this guideline to gender.
Gender targets		No	There are a range of targets for business supports, investment and R & D expenditure. None of these targets include any reference to gender.
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	All statistics are presented as aggregates - no gender breakdowns are included for example where targets for increasing the numbers of researchers are specified.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation		No	Policy presented in this area is gender blind. There is little no of gender specific issues or gender differences. Policies which may potentially have a positive impact on gender equality, for example policy towards 'fostering entrepreneurship' which emphasis role models, mentoring, recognition of non-academic achievement etc are framed without any reference to gender.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well		Yes	Childcare policies. Provision for Leave.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)		Potentially negative	Lack of recognition of gender and gender issues in this area of policy is likely to have a negative impact on developing women's entrepreneurship.
Time and care issues			No policy.
Resources/pay			No policy.
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)			No policy.
Family/household relations and dependence			No policy.

Comment

Under this guideline in the Plan there is no recognition of gender, gender issues and the promotion of gender equality. It is effectively gender blind. In their response to this section of the Plan, the community and voluntary sector state " The Plan makes no reference to reviewing the accessibility and relevance of enterprise supports for certain groups in particular women returners, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups. These groups should be involved in the design and delivery of programmes that will encourage and assist them to turn their current skills and knowledge into an entrepreneurial opportunity." The lack of gender analysis in this policy area is likely to result in a failure to develop potential entrepreneurial activity among significant numbers of women.

<i>3. Address change/promote adaptability and mobility in the labour market</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Yes - some evidence.		Under this guideline the establishment of the National Framework for Equal Opportunities and the National Framework Committee for Work/Life Balance are detailed which involve the government, social partners, statutory bodies and the Equality Authority in developing supports for enterprises in their development of policy and practices towards equality, diversity and improving work/life balance.. This guideline also details provision for maternity, parental and adoptive leave are presented as well as the enactment of the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003 and the development of codes of practice in relation to part-time work and teleworking. .
Gender targets		No	There are no targets set under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	Statistics on fixed-term contract workers and workplace injury are presented without a gender breakdown.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation			The importance of provision for, and entitlements to leave are recognised under this guideline although no specific gender analysis is presented. Amendments to maternity leave provide for some positive changes in relation to accessing antenatal classes, provision for breastfeeding, reduced period of pre-confinement leave and more flexible provision for additional leave. There is a stated commitment to strengthening the Parental Leave Scheme which is currently unpaid - no specific improvements are presented.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well			Childcare policy.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment	Yes		Stronger employment protection legislation and improved leave provision are positive

(including security of employment)			from a gender equality perspective.
Time and care issues	Yes - no evaluation.		Stated commitments to work/life balance and equal opportunities under this guideline are positive but are primarily promotional in nature and there is no evaluation of their impact in practice.
Resources/pay			No policy.
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)	Limited - no evaluation.		Positive employment protection legislation has the potential to improve working conditions for part-time, contract and teleworkers the majority of whom are women.
Family/household relations and dependence	Limited - no evaluation.		Work/life balance initiatives have the potential to have a positive impact on family/household relations. However, there is no evaluation of the range or level of initiatives which have taken place at enterprise level.

Comment

There is a recognition of, and emphasis on, equal opportunities and diversity in employment under this guideline. Gender equality is not specifically or directly addressed. Positive changes in maternity protection legislation represent important improvements in working conditions for women around pregnancy and childbirth. New legislation on fixed-term contract workers will benefit both women and men (no gender disaggregated data provided). No specific policy towards encouraging flexibility on the labour market is presented, although part-time employment is increasing. Central Statistics data show an increase of 14,500 part-time workers between 2001 and 2003, of whom 78% were women. Development of guidelines on part-time employment and teleworking are potentially positive but the extent to which they influence or change employment practices will need to be evaluated. Similarly the stated commitment to strengthening parental leave entitlements is welcome but the specifics of any changes will need to be assessed in the future. Pension reform, particularly the introduction of portable pensions in 2002 is referred to here in relation to occupational mobility. No new changes have been introduced.

<i>4. promote development of human capital and lifelong learning</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Limited.		There are some important measures under this guideline which are positive from a gender equality perspective. However, the discussion of policy, frequently the detailing of statistics and the setting of targets are generally presented without reference to gender differences or gender equality issues.
Gender targets	No		There is no strategy outlined for attaining the EU target goal of 12.5% of those aged 25-64 in life long learning and no gender policy perspective. The EU target of 85% of 22 year olds completing upper second level education is specified (Irish level currently at 83.3%) but no gender specific policy is presented to address the different situations of boys and girls in second level education. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) state in their response to the Plan "Congress does not support the contention that progress is being made towards this target. It has been stagnant for many years."
Gender disaggregated statistics	Yes		Statistics on the percentages of those aged 25-64 defined as life long learners are disaggregated by gender (10.9% of women and 8.2% of men). A significant minority 22.7% are defined as 'economically inactive' but no gender breakdown is presented. A gender breakdown is also included in relation to completion of upper second level education (86.5% female and 80.2% male). Gender breakdown of statistics of those on BTEI and VTOS schemes (see below) are not provided.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation	Limited		The focus of policy under this guideline is on education, training and retraining aimed at strengthening Ireland as a 'knowledge-based economy'. The policy is largely 'gender neutral or gender blind' without a gender analysis or gender specific strategies. Certain schemes to encourage educational participation are of significant benefit to particular groups of women. For example, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) includes lone parents (predominantly women) among their target group and the Vocational Training

			<p>Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) includes lone parents and dependant spouses among the eligible groups. Under this latter programme participants receive an allowance in lieu of welfare payments and are entitled to childcare support. Where training and skill needs are addressed, there is also an absence of a gender specific analysis. Recommendations from the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs are detailed including "addressing the variation in participation and levels of attainment of education based on socio-economic background, gender etc". No strategy is outlined for implementing this recommendation. Another aspect of policy specified under this guideline is an emphasis on in-company training and the up-skilling of the existing workforce. Although a gender dimension is not presented here, measures in this area are of benefit to women who are crowded into the lower end of the jobs hierarchy and into low paid employment.</p>
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well	Yes		Childcare policy.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)	Limited		The focus under this guideline is predominantly on education. The establishment of a formal accreditation system in October 2003 should have a positive impact for women (and men) through the recognition of all learning achievements. Training schemes and programmes both in-company and outside are likely to benefit women but there is no gender specific analysis or gender targets.
Time and care issues	Limited		Childcare support in relation to VTOIS and BTEI are important provisions for women, but there is evidence that their availability is very limited (see below)
Resources/pay			No specific policy.
Skills/jobs/careers	Limited		Skills and learning recognition through the

(segregation)			newly established accreditation system has the potential to have a positive impact in relation to gender equality. Policy towards skill needs generally lack a gender perspective.
Family/household relations and dependence			No policy

Comment

The focus under this guideline is on lifelong learning, in-company training, education and skills with the aim of developing a 'leading knowledge based economy'. Policy discussion makes no reference to gender equality. There appears to be an underlying assumption of 'gender neutrality' and a lack of application of the stated aim of gender mainstreaming. The framework for lifelong learning established by the Taskforce Report does not incorporate a gender perspective. Some of the initiatives based on this Report do have potentially important gender equality impacts but these are not identified or addressed. In a similar way, policies presented under this guideline often lack a gender perspective. One example is the focus on in-company training and the up-skilling of the existing workforce. Although a gender dimension is not presented here, measures in this area are of benefit to women who are crowded into the lower end of the jobs hierarchy and into low paid employment. Another example is the establishment of a National Framework of Qualifications and the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning both have the capacity to benefit women with low levels of educational qualifications accessing education in a non-traditional manner. The ICTU have been strongly critical of the slowness in implementing this new qualifications framework. The need for a system of recognition of the qualifications of non-nationals is highlighted by the Community and Voluntary Sector (C & V) in their response to the Plan. Certain training schemes have developed greater flexibility in their eligibility criteria. For example, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) does include lone parents and dependant spouses within its eligibility criteria and also provides child support both of which benefit women. In practice, recent cut-backs in active labour market and training schemes have been seen to result in reduced childcare provision with the likely consequence of reduced access by women (particularly disadvantaged women). In the C & V response to the Plan they state "It is mentioned that childcare services are available to participants but this is not always the case and as a result can affect participation if parents are unable to secure childcare arrangements from their own resources." They also argue the need for specific strategies to address the needs of women and men and specific minority groups, including migrants and ethnic minorities.

<i>5. Increase labour supply and promote active ageing</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Limited		Cross-reference under this guideline is made to policies to increase women's labour force participation detailed under the gender equality guideline 6. However, policy towards active ageing is not gender specific.
Gender targets		No	No specific gender targets are detailed.
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	Data presented under this guideline is not gender disaggregated. There is no reference to the significant gender gap in employment rates of older workers. Data on migrant workers and the issuing of work permits are not gender disaggregated.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation	Limited		Women categorised as 'economically inactive' are defined as a specific target in relation to mobilising additional labour supply under this guideline. Changes to taxation and benefit systems, childcare provision and family-friendly initiatives are specified to address this objective - these policies are outlined under guideline 6 on gender equality. There is no gender perspective in policies towards older workers or migrant workers. Gender issues are not addressed in the new policy initiative to increase the minimum pension age (to 65 years) and abolish the compulsory retirement age (65 years) for new entrants to the public sector
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well	Some cross-referencing.		Cross referencing to gender equality in relation to some policies (see above) does occur under this guideline. Policies on leave provision and on the gender pay gap are not referred to.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)	Mixed	Mixed	New policies towards new entrants to public sector employment in relation to pension and retirement ages (see above) mean a curtailment of pension entitlements as well as an opportunity for extending the period of paid employment. Public sector employment is particularly important to women, who make up the majority of

			employees.
Time and care issues	Yes - limited		Anticipated higher levels of female participation will mean that new systems of social care provision will be needed to replace some of women's traditional informal care provision.
Resources/pay	Mixed	Mixed	Curtailment in pension entitlement for new public sector employees together with possible longer period in paid employment (see above).
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)	Yes - limited		Need for additional labour supply of those with third level qualifications is specified. 'Economically inactive' women and migrant workers are seen as potential supply.
Family/household relations and dependence	Yes - limited		Anticipated higher levels of female participation will create conditions for greater economic independence among women thus changing family relations and dependency.

Comment

There is a recognition under this guideline of the need to "mobilise other sources of labour supply such as economically inactive female population, people with disabilities, older workers, migrants and minority ethnic groups". However, there is a lack of recognition of the care and other supports needed or of the barriers preventing access which need to be addressed in order to attain this objective in practice. In their response to the Plan, the Community and Voluntary Sector point to a range of policy issues which need to be tackled " inadequate childcare facilities, literacy difficulties, buildings being inaccessible, poor public transport infrastructure, inflexible working conditions and inadequate job opportunities ". There is evidence of gender analysis within the policy framework under this guideline but it only sometimes translates into gender specific strategies and rarely into gender disaggregated data or targets. While cross-referencing to the gender equality guideline 6 is included here, this means that there is no explication of policies on childcare etc and how they will be implemented in relation to this particular guideline and its objectives. Cross-referencing is a very limited approach to mainstreaming. In relation to migrant workers, there is a definite recognition of their significance in terms of potential labour supply. However, there is no gender analysis or framework applied to this policy area and no commitment to addressing key policy issues in relation to work permits. Non EU migrant workers in Ireland operate under a work permit process which is attached to employers rather than employees and an entry system which lacks clear entitlements in relation to family reunification. In the absence of much-needed reform in these areas, non EU migrant workers, both men and women, occupy an extremely vulnerable position on the labour market.

<i>6. Gender equality</i>		
A. Development of gender mainstreaming	Reference in NAP	Change since 2003
Institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming	Yes	During 2003 the Gender Equality Unit (GEU) in the Dept of Justice Equality and Law Reform continued its role of monitoring gender mainstreaming in the National Development Plan (NDP). Following the 2003 mid-term review of the NDP certain measures (mainly in relation to human resources) were selected for 'proactive' gender mainstreaming. This decision may lead to a stronger gender mainstreaming approach in certain areas of the Plan, but conversely may lead to a more restricted approach to gender mainstreaming across the Plan.
Statistics/evaluation/ monitoring by gender	Yes - limited.	Gender disaggregated data is required to be presented under all policy measures of the Human Resources Operational Programme of the NDP. New survey of women and men in business and as entrepreneurs.
Gender mainstreaming within policy bodies/services	Yes - limited.	New pilot initiative on developing a gender budgeting template based on selected local development organisations. Training initiative for Community and Enterprise development officers on gender equality issues.
Gender specific policy initiatives/programmes	Yes - limited.	<p>The Plan details the recommendations of the Consultative Group on Male/Female Wage Differentials covering childcare, minimum wage, tax reform and parental leave. However, no commitment is made to implementing any of these significant recommendations.</p> <p>Changes to the Equality for Women Measure (Budget EURO 35 million over 2001-2006) were brought in in August 2004. This measure is a positive action initiative for women which has supported labour market access and training projects, projects</p>

		<p>to increase women in decision-making, to develop family-friendly policies and to gender proof human resources policies. These changes target the bulk of the funding to disadvantaged geographical areas. While targeting of disadvantaged women may be viewed as a positive development, the lack of adequate available funding for broader-based positive action projects without a geographical-specific base is a serious restriction of the impact of this initiative.</p> <p>Continuation of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.</p>
B. Gender mainstreaming of NAP	Any policies that appear only under guideline 6 that could have been introduced in other guidelines (specify which)	Any change in the mainstreaming of the NAP guidelines from last year
	<p>Gender Mainstreaming (only addressed under Guideline 6).</p> <p>Gender Pay Gap (only addressed under Guideline 6).</p>	No. Approach to mainstreaming remains predominantly the same. Policy changes detailed above have limited the scope of mainstreaming in some instances.
C. Policies to reduce gender gaps	Specific targets (y/n and details)	Policies to reduce gender gaps (y/n) and any evidence of change since 2003
Substantial reduction in gender gap in employment	Lisbon/Stockholm employment rate targets are specified and there has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap.	There is evidence of more recognition of women's potential labour supply but policy development, specific initiatives and setting of targets remain weak.
Substantial reduction in gender gap in unemployment	No targets.	Measured unemployment rates of women and men are almost the same.
Substantial reduction in gender gap in pay	No targets.	As detailed above, recommendations from the Consultative GROUP ON Male/Female Wage Differentials are detailed but no strategy for

		implementation is specified.
D. Reconciling work and family life objectives	Targets/plans	Change since 2003-policies/facilities
Childcare* availability, accessibility, quality and affordability	Stated aim is to have created 27,293 new places and support 26,241 places at end of 2003. Data shows that by end of 2003 childcare places under this programme had increased by 18,320 - fewer than projected.	No new policies in this area 2003. Date from OECD Report 2004 shows only 4% of Irish pre-school children are in publicly supported childcare and pre-school facilities. (more detail below)
Care facilities for other dependants	No targets.	Care provision for elderly and disabled dependants is extremely limited in Ireland. No new policies have been introduced in this area in 2003.
Leave/ work-life balance	No targets.	Some improvement in maternity provisions (detailed above). Stated commitment to strengthening parental leave but no initiatives taken.
Sharing of family and professional responsibilities	No targets	Some promotional activities on work/life balance and family-friendly initiatives but no systematic policy approach.

Comment

Ireland has a relatively developed system for gender mainstreaming in terms of the establishment of institutional mechanisms. Under the NDP, gender mainstreaming is specified as a horizontal principle and linked to this gender impact assessment of most policy is required. The GEU has the responsibility for monitoring gender mainstreaming across the NDP. In practice, gender mainstreaming has only become an explicit part of the policy process under one of the six Operational Programmes of the Plan - Human Resources Operation Programme. This situation has been confirmed by the adoption of a new policy position following the 2003 mid-term review of the NDP under which certain measures (mainly those related to human resources) were selected for 'proactive' gender mainstreaming. This decision may lead to a stronger gender mainstreaming approach in certain areas of the Plan, but conversely may lead to a more restricted approach to gender mainstreaming across the Plan.

Probably the central issue in relation to women's access to employment is the lack of a proper care infrastructure. A Report from the OECD published in September 2004 strongly criticises Ireland's lack of early childhood education and care provision arguing for increased resources to improve provision. In addition, the Report argues for a system of paid parental leave of one year's duration – to replace the current system of unpaid leave over fourteen weeks. A further key

recommendation is for a guaranteed publicly funded pre-primary place for all children and for full school days for all young children from disadvantaged areas. (OECD 2004). Increasing the 'supply and affordability' of childcare facilities has been highlighted in both the Employment Taskforce and the Joint Employment Reports (2004) as a key recommendations to the Irish government. Ireland has a long way to go in the development of a comprehensive childcare system and existing measures, such as the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (mainly targeted at disadvantaged areas), while significant are limited in their effect.

The ICTU in its response to the Plan states that "the absence of sufficient childcare still represents a significant infrastructural deficit and a priority to be resolved". The Plan refers to the Barcelona conclusions of the European Council of 2002 that Member States should provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years. However, it adopts no national policy in relation to these targets and makes no commitment to a comprehensive childcare policy and programme. The C & V sector response to the Plan states that "not enough has been done to address this key obstacle preventing women, especially lone parents, returning to the workforce". They argue for a comprehensive system that would be "state subsidised...available in a variety of formats such as community based, public, small scale private and home-based care...costs should be on a sliding scale...system for introducing tax credits for childcare expenses should be explored." They also identify obstacles to women's employment due to the lack of a broader care infrastructure.

Ireland has a significant gender pay gap and the recommendations of the Consultative Group in Male/Female Wage Differentials are strong and clear. This Consultative Group was set up under national agreements involving social partners, government and the community and voluntary sector. However, while the Plan details each of the recommendations, there is no policy or strategy put forward for the implementation of these recommendations. This is a critical area for gender equality policy where the NAPemp should establish policy with a clear strategy for implementation and set targets and timescales for their attainment. Improvements in the level of the National Minimum Wage (currently EUR7.00 per hour) are identified in the Plan and its importance for women workers is highlighted. In addition wage negotiations at the mid point of the national agreement led to a 0.5% increase above the average for workers earning under EUR9.00 per hour. Women make up a clear majority of the low paid in Ireland so both of these developments are important from a gender equality perspective. Other initiatives which have taken place that are positive from the point of view of gender policy analysis and practice include ; new research on the graduate gender pay gap (in progress) and under the Equality for Women measure a toolkit has been developed by the ICTU to support managers, officials and activists to address the gender pay gap.

<i>7. Promote the integration of and combat the discrimination against people at a disadvantage in the labour market</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Limited		Policy under this guideline emphasises specific marginalised groups such as those with disabilities, Travellers, immigrants, prisoners, ex-offenders. Gender issues within disadvantaged groups are generally not considered. One important programme, the EQUAL Community initiative (with a budget of EUR34.5million co-financed by the European Social Fund) funds a range of different projects addressing inequality and discrimination on the labour market. Promoting gender equality is one of the stated objectives addressed under this programme. A Mainstreaming Policy Group has been established to transfer best practice from these projects into mainstream policy.
Gender targets		No	Target to reduce consistent poverty to 2% is applied to both women and men.
Gender disaggregated statistics	Limited		Data on early school leavers provided on male/female basis showing higher rates among young men 14.7% than among young women 9.40% for 2003. Data on specific groups identified as vulnerable to discrimination and social exclusion is not gender disaggregated. Data on local services to the unemployed is not gender disaggregated.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/evaluation	Very limited		There is very little evidence of a gender perspective in policy analysis and evaluation under this guideline. One programme, the Back to Education Initiative, which has been positively evaluated, includes among its target group lone parents, who are predominantly women. Others, for example on access to third level, targets students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and students with disabilities. There is no gender perspective within these targeted groups. Future evaluation of the EQUAL programme should involve a gender equality perspective, given its recognition among the issues identified. A review of the One Parent Family Payment has been initiated.

Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well			Childcare policy.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)	Limited		Targeted programmes addressing those experiencing disadvantage in accessing the labour market should positively benefit women who account for the majority of those living in poverty. However, the lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality.
Time and care issues	Limited		Some projects, for example those under the Back to Education Initiative which identify lone parents as a target group, include childcare supports.
Resources/pay			A gender perspective is not evident in the allocation of resources under this guideline.
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)	Limited		Educational access has a positive impact on women experiencing discrimination and disadvantage on the labour market.
Family/household relations and dependence			No specific effects.

Comment

There is very little evidence of a gender perspective in policy analysis and implementation under this guideline. Although women make up the majority of those living in poverty, policy under this guideline focuses on specific targets groups largely without bringing a gender perspective to bear. Gender disaggregated data on targeted groups is not presented and gender equality is rarely specified as an issue in addressing disadvantage. In their response to the Plan, the C & V sector state " Employment targets need to be specified for each group experiencing risk and exposure to vulnerability. More emphasis is needed on actions to assist those who are experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, for example class, race, disability and that guidance is required to translate national employment targets into local policies and actions. " From a perspective of multiple forms of disadvantage, bringing a gender perspective to bear on addressing disadvantages experienced by those with disabilities, immigrants, Travellers and others is critical.

<i>8. Make work pay through incentives to enhance work attractiveness</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming	Yes		This guideline presents both financial and non-financial incentives to labour market participation. Financial incentives are focused on reforms of the tax-benefit system in order "to make work a more attractive option for all". Women, lone parents, older workers and those with disabilities are identified under this guideline in relation to non-financial incentives.
Gender targets		No	There are no gender specific targets under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated statistics	Limited.		No gender disaggregated data is presented under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation	Yes		There is evidence of gender disaggregated policy analysis, particularly in the recognition of women's potential labour supply and of the existence of barriers to access negatively impacting on women. The Irish income tax code is described as 'gender neutral' under this guideline as a result of a process of individualisation commenced in 2000. In reality, the final stage of individualisation which was to be completed in the last budget was deferred. There are no tax credits for childcare expenses under the Irish tax system.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well			There is a cross-reference under this guideline to the gender equality guideline 6, as well as to guideline 1, 3 and 5.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)	Limited.		Financial supports such as increases to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and child benefit are significant for women who are the majority of those on low pay and those living in poverty.
Time and care issues			Cost and availability of childcare continue to be a huge issue, particularly for low income households. While the Equal

			Opportunities Childcare Programme is significant in some areas of disadvantage, the scale of this problem has only been marginally addressed.
Resources/pay	Mixed	Mixed	Limited improvements in the retention of secondary benefits (e.g. medical cards and rent supplements) in the transition into employment are important both for women welfare claimants and for welfare dependant households. While these improvements operate within certain schemes, for example the Back to Work Scheme, the general threshold for retention of secondary benefits has not been increased since 1994. A new restriction on claimants of the One Parents Family Payment (mostly women) means that they are no longer entitled to a half rate payment where earnings exceed the existing earnings disregard (which has remained unchanged since 2001.)
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)			No specific gender impact.
Family/household relations and dependence	Yes		Certain policies encourage greater economic independence of women.

Comment

There are important policy developments identified under this Guideline, a number of which are positive from a gender equality perspective, particularly because women make up the majority of those on low pay. Policy however, has been contradictory, at times reducing barriers to paid employment and at others reinforcing disincentives. In both instances there are gender effects. Increases to the NMW over the last two years have been significant (since February 2004 at a level of EUR7.00 per hour) benefiting certain low paid workers, the majority of whom are women. Some tax changes, for example moves towards individualisation, have reduced the traditional disincentive to married women to take up paid employment due to high marginal tax rates levied on second earners. Improvements under certain employment schemes (e.g. Back to Work Scheme) in the entitlement to retain secondary benefits and for phased withdrawal of welfare payments have also been important -although eligibility for such schemes is based on long term registration as unemployed where women are under-represented.

On the other hand, there are a number of statements or claims made under this guideline which are contradicted by evidence and which are important from a gender equality perspective. One such statement made under this guideline is that the lower paid have been "removed from the tax net". In reality 10% of those on the minimum wage continue to pay tax. In their response the C & V highlight another claim in the Plan which is contrary to policy practice : " The Plan refers to

the retention of 50% of the One Parent Family Payment as an example of removing disincentives to employment. This half rate of payment was abolished in Budget 2004..." The Plan also claims that Ireland has a 'gender neutral' income tax system despite the fact that the final stages of the individualisation process was deferred in last year's budget. Given the lack of tax credits for childcare in contrast to the availability of tax concessions in relation to different forms of property investment, this claim of gender neutrality must be questioned.

Increased levels of child benefit have been significant, as it is a universal payment (unaffected by employment or income status) and is generally paid to women. However, a critical issue from a gender equality perspective remains largely unresolved, that is the issue of accessible and affordable childcare. The prohibitive cost of private childcare without public supports is a huge barrier to accessing paid employment for many women. In its response to the Plan the ICTU state "...we reiterate our concerns that there is in fact very little progress being made on these issues, especially employment-oriented welfare benefits or childcare. The lack of progress seriously impacts on realistic opportunities for women and people with disabilities in particular."

A further issue which is not addressed under this guideline but which is important from a gender perspective is the eligibility criteria for registering as unemployed. Under the present system those registering as unemployed have to be available for full-time employment. There is no provision for registration for those seeking part-time employment. This policy has a negative impact on women (who currently make up the vast majority of part-time workers) who may be or potentially be seeking part-time employment but are not entitled to payment and are prevented from becoming part of the recorded labour force.

<i>9. Transform undeclared work into regular employment</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming		No	There is no evidence of a gender perspective or gender mainstreaming under this guideline.
Gender targets		No	There are no gender targets under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	There are no gender disaggregated statistics under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/evaluation		No	There is no evidence of a gender perspective in the analysis of the informal sector of the Irish economy.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well	Yes		Childcare policy - particularly in relation to the significance of current childcare provision within the informal sector.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)			Policy under this guideline focuses on tax compliance measures and monitoring of social welfare fraud.
Time and care issues		Possible.	Traditionally an important area of childcare services has operated in the informal economy - policy to restrict this could have a negative impact on care provision and care providers.
Resources/pay			No specific gender impact.
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)			No specific gender impact.
Family/household relations and dependence			No specific gender impact.

Comment

There is no gender perspective or evidence of gender mainstreaming under this guideline and policy generally is underdeveloped. The emphasis is on measures to detect tax evaders and illegal welfare claimants. There is no analysis of the gender breakdown of sectors where informal economic activity is prevalent, for example,

childcare and construction. Both providers and users of childcare services in the informal economy tend to be women and there are important gender issues that may arise if this were to be restricted.

<i>10. Address regional employment disparities</i>			
Gender mainstreaming	Yes .	No	Comments
Reference to/evidence of gender mainstreaming		No	There is no evidence of a gender perspective or gender mainstreaming under this guideline.
Gender targets		No	There are no gender specific targets presented under this guideline.
Gender disaggregated statistics		No	There are no gender specific statistics presented under this guideline. Regional employment data is presented without gender disaggregation. Projected figures for decentralisation are not gender disaggregated.
Gender disaggregated policy analysis/ evaluation		No	There is no evidence of a gender perspective in the analysis of policy under this guideline. For example, there is no gender perspective or analysis presented in relation to policy on decentralisation. Policy on enterprise supports is presented without reference to gender.
Any policies mentioned under the gender equality guideline that should have been mentioned here as well	Yes		Childcare policy. Gender Pay Gap.
Expected gender equality effects with respect to:	Positive	Negative	Comments
Integration into employment (including security of employment)	Limited		Women's increased employment rate has accounted for most of the job growth over recent years. In this context additional regional employment opportunities are likely to benefit women seeking employment.
Time and care issues			No specific gender impact.
Resources/pay			No specific gender impact.
Skills/jobs/careers (segregation)			No specific gender impact.
Family/household relations and			No specific gender impact.

dependence			
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Comment

Policies towards regional development are designed and presented without reference to gender and without using a gender perspective. Despite the fact that gender mainstreaming is a horizontal principle of the National Development Plan, there is no evidence that it has been applied under this guideline of the Irish NAPemp. Regional employment, enterprise and development supports data are presented without gender disaggregation. Specific gender issues in relation to supporting women's entrepreneurship in the regions are not identified or addressed. However, increases in regional employment opportunities are likely to benefit women whose demand for employment and employment rates have risen nationally

Part 3. Response to Recommendations and governance issues

3a. Recommendations

Areas for action identified by the Employment Taskforce .	Recommendation (give number to correspond to order)	Under which guideline is this discussed	Is there an explicit gender dimension to the recommendation y/n	If no, do policies in this area have a strong gender impact y/n	Are gender issues identified in the response y/n	Specify gender dimension and assess the adequacy of gender dimension to the response to the recommendation
increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises;	1 (Promote a better balance of business activity throughout the territory)	Guideline 10	No	Some potential gender impact	No	Given the increase in women's demand for employment and women's employment rate nationally, increases in regional employment opportunities are likely to benefit women in particular. Policies towards regional development are designed and presented without reference to gender and without using a gender perspective. Specific gender issues in relation to supporting women's entrepreneurship in the regions are not identified or addressed.

attracting more people to the labour market and making work a real option for all;	1. increase access to active labour market measures for a larger share of the unemployed and inactive population and ensure their effectiveness	Guideline 1 and 7	No	Yes	Limited	This area has the potential to significantly impact on gender equality. No gender analysis is presented in relation to key policy changes, particularly regarding eligibility to active labour market schemes, which are likely to have a negative impact on gender equality. While specific new initiatives targeting women are set out, their potential is limited by the small numbers of participants involved. Where specific target groups have been identified, gender issues within target groups are generally not considered. This lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality.
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	2. increase the supply and affordability of childcare facilities and take urgent action to tackle the causes of the gender pay gap	Guideline 6, 4 and 7	Yes	N/a	Yes	<p>Cost and availability of childcare continues as probably the central issue in relation to women's access to employment, particularly for low income households. While the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme is significant in some areas of disadvantage, the scale of this problem has only been marginally addressed. Meanwhile recent cut-backs in active labour market and training schemes have resulted in reduced number of community-based childcare projects. Overall, only 4% of pre-school children in Ireland have access to publicly funded childcare or pre-school facilities.</p> <p>The Gender Pay Gap only features in Guideline 6 on Gender Equality and is absent e.g from Guideline 8 Making Work Pay highlighting the shortcomings resulting from the absence of gender mainstreaming in the NAPemp. The Plan details the recommendations of the Consultative Group on Male/Female Wage Differentials covering childcare, minimum wage, tax reform and parental leave. However, no commitment is made to implementing any of these significant recommendations. Some specific research and initiatives are also detailed which while important have limited impact in the absence of</p>
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	(3. increase access to active labour market measures for a larger share of the unemployed and inactive population)	As at 1. above	As at 1. above	As at 1. above	As at 1. above	As at 1. above
	(4. pursue efforts to increase female participation: improve the provision, and affordability, of childcare facilities ; address the other causes of the gender pay gap	Guideline 1, 5, 6 and 7 As at 2. above	As at 2. above	As at 2. above	As at 2. above	Ireland's employment rate for women needs to increase in order to meet the Lisbon/Stockholm targets and will need a targeted employment strategy. As at 2. above

investing more and more effectively in human capital;	1. implement a coherent lifelong learning strategy to reduce early school leaving and increase participation in training especially for low-skilled and for older workers	Guideline 4, 7	No	Potentially	No	There are some important measures under these Guidelines which are positive from a gender equality perspective. Targets set in relation to lifelong learning or completion rates for upper second level education are not specified by gender and no gender specific policy is presented in either area. Certain schemes to encourage educational participation are of significant benefit to particular groups of women particularly lone parents due to attached childcare supports. In-company training has the potential to benefit women addressing their clustering into lower grade and lower paid jobs but there is no gender specific analysis or gender targets. Where training and skill needs are addressed, there is also an absence of a gender specific analysis. The lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality.
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	(2. ensure that the school system effectively tackles numeracy and literacy problems and takes effective action to reduce early school leaving)	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above
	(3. Review incentives to develop lifelong learning, especially in enterprises, and increase access to training especially for low-skilled and older workers)	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above	As 1. above
ensuring effective implementation of	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

reforms through better governance						
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Note : Employment Task Force Report Recommendations appear in brackets.

Comment

Both the Employment Taskforce and the Council recommendations emphasise childcare provision and the urgency of tackling the gender pay gap. The Employment Task Force recommendation relating to making work a real option for all makes an explicit reference to pursuing efforts to increase female participation (4). This was not incorporated into the Council's recommendations. Meanwhile Ireland's employment rate for women needs to increase in order to meet the Lisbon/Stockholm targets and will need a targeted employment strategy in order to do this. The absence of a childcare infrastructure and the persistence of the Gender Pay Gap continue to feature as the two greatest challenges to achieving gender equality in employment. Ireland has a long way to go in the development of a comprehensive childcare system and existing measures, such as the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (mainly targeted at disadvantaged areas), while significant are limited in their effect. No national policy in relation to the Barcelona conclusions of the Europeans Council 2002 targets on childcare is set out and there is no commitment to a comprehensive childcare policy and programme. Meanwhile recent cut-backs in active labour market and training schemes have resulted in reduced childcare provision with the likely consequence of reduced access by women (particularly disadvantaged women).

Ireland has a significant gender pay gap and the recommendations of the Consultative Group in Male/Female Wage Differentials are strong and clear. This Consultative Group was set up under national agreements involving social partners, government and the community and voluntary sector. However, while the Plan details each of the recommendations covering childcare, minimum wage, tax reform and parental leave, there is no policy or strategy put forward for the implementation of these recommendations. This is a critical area for gender equality policy where the NAPemp should establish policy with a clear strategy for implementation and set targets and timescales for their attainment. However, no commitment is made to implementing any of these significant recommendations. The absence of a gender mainstreaming approach across the Plan is evident in the absence of a reference to the Gender Pay Gap in Guideline 8 on Making Work Pay. Improvements in the level of the National Minimum Wage (currently EUR7.00 per hour) are identified in the Plan and its importance for women workers is highlighted. In addition wage negotiations at the mid point of the national agreement led to a 0.5% increase above the average for workers earning under EUR9.00 per hour. Women make up a clear majority of the low paid in Ireland so both of these developments are important from a gender equality perspective. Other initiatives which have taken place that are positive from the point of view of gender policy analysis and practice include ; new research on the graduate gender pay gap (in progress) and under the Equality for Women measure a toolkit has been developed by the ICTU to support managers, officials and activists to address the gender pay gap.

The action area on 'attracting more people to the labour market and making work a real option for all' has the potential to generate important policy developments in relation to gender equality. The Council's recommendation on active labour market measures (1) reflects in full that made by the Employment Task Force (3) and extends it to refer to effectiveness. Guideline 1 addresses this most directly with some reference in 7. Despite the opening statement in Guideline 1 recognising the diversity of those who are unemployed and inactive, including women and marginalised groups, the policies themselves show little recognition of this diversity. No gender analysis is presented in relation to key policy changes, particularly regarding eligibility, which are likely to have a negative impact on gender equality. Restrictions of the eligibility criteria for certain schemes, such as the Back to Work Allowance (applicants must now be 5 years registered as unemployed compared to previous requirement of 15 months) are likely to have a negative impact on women few of whom are registered as unemployed over five years. Another negative policy change has been the removal of the half rate One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) for those earning above an unchanged earnings disregard level. Specific new initiatives, such as the 'Gateway for women', the Pathways and High Supports Schemes are positive, but these are limited schemes involving small numbers of participants.

Policy under Guideline 7 relating specifically to disadvantaged groups emphasises specific marginalised groups such as those with disabilities, Travellers, immigrants, prisoners, ex-offenders. Although women make up the majority of those living in poverty, policy under this guideline focuses on specific targets groups largely without bringing a gender perspective to bear. This lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality.

While the issue of regional imbalance was cited by in the Employment Task-force report and the above recommendation made, this did not feature in the Council's recommendations. In Ireland's NAPemp policies towards regional development are designed and presented without reference to gender and without using a gender perspective, despite the fact that gender mainstreaming is a horizontal principle of the National Development Plan. The announcement of Decentralisation Programme in Budget 2004, represents a key development during this period but there is no gender perspective or analysis presented in relation to this policy.

Under the recommendations relating to Investing more effectively in human capital and lifelong learning the Council's recommendation (1) represents a synthesis of the recommendations made by the Employment Task Force (2. and 3.). The focus of policy under Guideline 4 is on education, training and retraining aimed at strengthening Ireland as a 'knowledge-based economy'. Overall policies in this area are largely 'gender neutral or gender blind' without a gender analysis or gender specific strategies. Recommendations from the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs are detailed including "addressing the variation in participation and levels of attainment of education based on socio-economic background, gender etc". No strategy is outlined for implementing this recommendation.

Policy under Guideline 7 emphasises specific marginalised groups such as those with disabilities, Travellers, immigrants, prisoners, ex-offenders. Gender issues within disadvantaged groups are generally not considered. The lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality. One important

programme, the EQUAL Community initiative (with a budget of EUR34.5million co-financed by the European Social Fund) funds a range of different projects addressing inequality and discrimination on the labour market. Promoting gender equality is one of the stated objectives addressed under this programme. A Mainstreaming Policy Group has been established to transfer best practice from these projects into mainstream policy.

Certain schemes to encourage educational participation under both Guidelines are of significant benefit to particular groups of women particularly lone parents due to attached childcare supports. The establishment of a formal accreditation system in October 2003 has the potential to have a positive impact in relation to gender equality. Policies on in-company training and the up-skilling of the existing workforce do not include a gender dimension. However measures in this area are of benefit to women who are crowded into the lower end of the jobs hierarchy and into low paid employment. Targeted programmes addressing those experiencing disadvantage in accessing the labour market should positively benefit women who account for the majority of those living in poverty. However, the lack of a gender perspective weakens the potential for these policies to enhance gender equality.

3b. Good governance and partnerships in the implementation of the employment guidelines

Summary

Involvement of equality bodies etc in the preparation/ implementation of the NAP	Ireland has a highly developed system of social partnership at central and local levels. This system is evident in the process of consultation in relation to Ireland's NAPemp. Social partners and the community and voluntary sector are provided with a draft plan on the basis of which they make submissions and are included in a consultation process. Their submissions are produced attached to the Plan submitted to the Commission. The National Women's Council (as well as other C & V organisations) made submissions on the 2004 Draft Plan focusing on proposals to strengthen gender equality and gender mainstreaming and particularly policy needs in relation to low pay, labour market access, childcare, leave entitlements and the gender pay gap. The Equality Authority made its own submission and was consulted directly in the preparation of the Plan. The C & V sector, women's organisations and the trade unions have expressed strong concern that despite detailed consultation on areas of social and economic policy and a developed system of social partnership, recent budgets have seen governments unilaterally introduce restrictive welfare and other policies and practices.
Role of social partners in the promotion of gender mainstreaming/specific gender equality policies	Trades Unions have a stated positive policy towards gender mainstreaming. In practice their emphasis is on the issues of low pay, childcare and the gender pay gap as detailed above. Through their involvement in monitoring the NDP both trade union and employer representatives have some involvement with gender mainstreaming in the NDP. Their promotion of mainstreaming as a strategy is weak.
Adequacy of budget allocation to specific gender policies/ gender mainstreaming and/or evidence of use of structural funds to promote gender equality	The budget towards mainstreaming and gender equality is extremely limited. Structural funds are part responsible for funding Ireland's NDP and in this way have contributed to the development of gender mainstreaming policy. A total of EUR5.3 million (3.8 exchequer funds and 1.5 ESF funds) is attributed under the Plan to expenditure on equality, a large majority of which covers the funding and activities of the Gender Equality Unit and Equal Opportunity monitoring and promotion units in the Dept of Education and Science and Justice, Equality and Law Reform. This EUR5.3million represents a small allocation under the Human Resources Operation Programme of the NDP with a total budget of EUR2.2billion. The Plan presents a breakdown of expenditure on the Human Resources Operational Programme of the NDP under the original Four Pillars of the EU Employment Strategy cross related with the current 10 Guidelines. Gender equality (guideline 6) is not identified as being addressed at all under the employability pillar (23

	measures), under one (of 19) measures of the adaptability pillar, under three (of 4) measures under the entrepreneurship pillar and under all four measures under the equal opportunities pillar.
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Comment

Ireland has a strong tradition of social partnership reflected at both national level - through national agreements, consultation processes in relation to the National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme, taskforces in relation to specific sectors (travellers, disabled people, lesbians and gays) - and local level through local area partnerships in disadvantaged areas. In this context public debate around economic and social policies is highly developed and engages a wide range of actors.

Traditional social partner organisations (trade unions and employer organisations) as well as organisations representing the unemployed, women, lone parents, disabled people, immigrant communities, Travellers and others are actively engaged in debates around public policy, particularly in relation to poverty, access to the labour market, provision of care and employment rights. In addition, important statutory agencies such as the Combat Poverty Agency and the Equality Authority as well as national organisations, for example the National Economic and Social Forum, play key roles in facilitating public debate on these issues.

The last two years has seen this social partnership process come under strain, particularly in relation to the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, including women's organisations. The National Women's Council and the Community Pillar (an important umbrella organisation of community and voluntary sector organisations representing disadvantaged groups) withdrew from the negotiations for a new national agreement in January 2003 because of a lack of additional resources towards equality and social inclusion. In addition, the contradictions between budgetary cut-backs in both social welfare provisions and in active labour market programmes during 2003 and 2004, undermine in practice stated objectives of the Plan (see details below). There is an expectation in the build up to Budget 2005 that because of renewed growth and buoyant public finances, of more positive initiatives in relation to social inclusion, active labour market policies and low pay. Critical gender issues in relation to the pay gap, leave entitlements, child and other care provision continue to remain low within the policy priority system despite the social partnership system.

Part 4. Overall Summary

Summary statement
Ireland has a stated policy commitment and a significant policy infrastructure in relation to gender mainstreaming. However, implementation of mainstreaming across the policy system is extremely limited. Despite the fact that gender mainstreaming was adopted as a horizontal principle in the adoption of the NDP in 2000-06, gender equality issues have only been addressed in a narrow range of areas under the Plan. Ireland's current NAPemp does not apply a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of the majority of its policies. The presentation of gender disaggregated data is extremely limited. Central issues from a gender equality perspective have either not been systematically addressed, such as childcare, or policy recommendations have yet to be implemented, such as the gender pay gap.
Priority issues to be addressed
Issue 1. Failure to significantly address childcare provision. A key recommendation from the 2004 OECD Report on Early Childcare Provision in Ireland is for a guaranteed publicly funded pre-primary place for all children and for full school days for all young children from disadvantaged areas. In addition, they argue for a system of paid parental leave of one year's duration – to replace the current system of unpaid leave over fourteen weeks.
Issue 2. Comprehensive policy to address the gender pay gap through the implementation of the recommendations of the Consultative Group on Male/Female Wage Differentials covering childcare, minimum wage, tax reform and parental leave.

Concluding Summary

Recent employment trends show that increasing employment rates in Ireland have been driven by higher levels of employment among women, including those in the 55-64 age group. There is clearly a potential for further employment growth from these sectors allowing Ireland to reach the Lisbon/Stockholm targets. Realising this potential means a targeted employment strategy addressing the barriers to women's employment access, particularly the lack of adequate child and elder care services, inadequate leave entitlements and the perpetuation of financial disincentives within a household-based welfare and taxation system.

There have been no major changes in Irish employment policy over 2003-04. From a gender equality perspective there have been some important continuing areas of policy implementation. Additional increases to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) as well as the above average increase to those on low wages under the current national wage agreement both reflect some commitment towards a policy on low pay. The over-riding emphasis, however, is on economic competitiveness. Despite the high levels of growth attained by the Irish economy over recent years, low pay and poverty remain significant problems. Women are the majority of those on low pay and account for the majority of those at risk of, and experiencing, poverty, consequently positive policies in these areas are critical to gender equality. Another positive policy development has been improvements in maternity provision introduced in July 2004 and the current Plan includes a commitment to review unpaid parental leave. Ireland remains, however, a country with a low level of leave provision.

On the negative side cut-backs in active labour market programmes have reduced resources to community employment and other schemes, which have been important to women (including many lone parents) accessing the labour market over recent years. Delays in the roll out of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) have meant that the crisis in access to affordable childcare continues to be a key issue for women in relation to paid employment. Restrictions of the eligibility criteria for certain schemes, such as the Back to Work Allowance (applicants must now be 5 years registered as unemployed compared to previous requirement of 15 months) are likely to have a negative impact on women few of whom are registered as unemployed over five years. Another negative policy change has been the removal of the half rate One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) for those earning above an unchanged earnings disregard level.

Probably the central issue in relation to women's access to employment is the lack of a proper care infrastructure. A Report from the OECD published in September 2004 strongly criticises Ireland's lack of early childhood education and care provision arguing for increased resources to improve provision. In addition, the Report argues for a system of paid parental leave of one year's duration – to replace the current system of unpaid leave over fourteen weeks. A further key recommendation is for a guaranteed publicly funded pre-primary place for all children and for full school days for all young children from disadvantaged areas. (OECD 2004). Increasing the 'supply and affordability' of childcare facilities has been highlighted in both the Employment Taskforce and the Joint Employment Reports (2004) as a key recommendation to the Irish government. Ireland has a long way to go in the development of a comprehensive childcare system and existing measures, such as the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (mainly targeted at disadvantaged areas), while significant are limited in their effect.

Another challenge for gender equality in Ireland is the persistent high gender pay gap and the lack of specific strategies to address it. 'Urgent action' to tackle the causes of the gender pay gap in Ireland is called for in the Joint Employment Report (2004). While the Irish Employment Action Plan details recommendations of the Consultative Group on Male/Female Differentials (covering leave entitlements, taxation reform, childcare etc), there is no indication as to how these recommendations are to be implemented, where the responsibility lies and what kind of targets and timeframe will be applied. A further issue from a gender equality perspective is the predominantly household-based welfare system and the consequent lack of individual entitlements for many women. On the one hand this means that women continue to be categorised as dependants under much of the social welfare system and lack individual entitlement to key payments, for example pensions. On the other hand the household-based system can also act as a disincentive to women potential earners due to the household means testing of all adult earnings. For example, women's earnings over a specified level can result in the reduction of a spouse's welfare payment.

Employment policy over the last two years in particular has been made up of contradictory elements. On the one hand there are policy changes (such as taxation changes) aimed at increasing employment rates, while on the other there are restrictions and lack of supports which in effect hinder employment access, particularly quality employment access, for many women and other marginalised groups.

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