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National Expert Assessment of the Gender Perspective in the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006 – The Irish National Report

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Key national challenges for social inclusion from a gender equality perspective

1.1 Key national gender inequalities in social exclusion and poverty

The Irish economy has been characterised by two key features over the period 1999-2005: high growth and deepening inequality. The key trends in gender inequalities in social exclusion and poverty for this period include:

- Dramatic rise in the risk and experience of poverty among certain sectors, particularly lone parents and older people, both predominantly female.
- Growing crisis in care provision, linked to both lack of availability and high cost, in the context of low-level public provision, particularly of childcare services.
- Growth in the scale of low-paid employment, particularly in private services including retailing, tourism and personal services, traditionally areas of female employment.
- Continuing evidence of gender based discrimination in employment together with discrimination on the grounds of race and membership of the Traveller community in relation to access to services.

The most recent survey of poverty published in December 2005 based on the 2004 EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) revealed that 6.8% of the Irish population are living in 'consistent' poverty and 19.4% of the population are 'at risk of poverty' i.e. living below 60% of the median average income level. Overall, the at risk of poverty rate for women in 2004 was 21%, three points higher than that for men at 18%. Notably the divergence increased between 2003 and 2004 with the 2003 rates for women being 20% while for men it was 19%.

The EU-SILC 2004 survey shows that lone parents (90% of whom are women) now face the highest poverty risk with 48% falling below the 60% median income level. In addition, lone parent households had the highest consistent poverty rate according to SILC 2004 at 31.1% compared with a national rate of just under 7%. They also reported the highest deprivation levels of all households with children, with almost two-thirds of those at risk of poverty experiencing some level of deprivation including 20% reporting they had debt problems arising from ordinary living expenses and over 14% unable to pay for heating expenses in the twelve months prior to the survey. 'Consistent poverty' is most prevalent among lone parent families affecting 31% of households and over 12% of all children under the age of fifteen. This is despite employment rates among women lone parents having risen over recent years. This highlights the need for the current shift in policy towards increasing employment rates and reducing welfare dependency among lone parents needs to take account of the continued risk of poverty among those at work.

Those living alone, the majority of whom are older women, are the second group most at risk of poverty, with 36% falling below the 60% median income measure. In general older people have the highest risk of income poverty among all age-groups at 27%, with older women's rate at 28% and older men's at 26%. Older women constitute 16% of all women over 15 years of age and their proportion is likely to rise over the next fifteen years as a result of a changing demographic profile in Ireland.

Those living in poverty in Ireland comprise largely persons in lone parent households, those living alone, those living in rented or rent-free accommodation and unemployed or disabled

person/s. Older people and lone parents, two of the groups most at risk of, and experiencing, poverty in Ireland, are predominantly women.

Any assessment of the Irish NAP/inclusion from a gender equality perspective must take into account both the key elements of policy and the economic context of the 2003-05 period. Employment growth has been strong and sustained, and women's employment rate has risen very significantly. Both of these represent key targets set out in the Plan. However neither of these important attainments have addressed the level of poverty in Ireland, and the relatively high poverty rates among women in particular. The rise in relative and consistent poverty over the period of the Plan is clear evidence of the failure of the Plan to address deepening inequality in Irish society. Targets set to reduce poverty have not been achieved.

Anti-poverty and social inclusion policies are constructed on the basis that reducing unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, and increasing employment are the key strategies. This approach lacks an underlying gender analysis and consequently marginalises significant sectors of women, and disadvantaged women in particular, from its concern. Women are under-represented among the long-term unemployed, linked to their traditional interrupted relationship to the labour market and the household nature of the social welfare system. An approach based on targeting those who have experienced a 'period of extended absence from the labour market' rather than an almost exclusive emphasis on periods of registered unemployment would potentially operate on a basis of greater gender equality.

Another challenge for this policy approach is the depth of income inequality in Irish society evident from the EU-SILC 2004 Survey, showing that the top income groups had almost five times more income than the lowest income group. This is noted as among the highest in Europe and as a challenge in the 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006'. Research indicates that women account for the majority of those on minimum wage levels showing the importance of addressing these rates in the interests of social inclusion. It is further noted that the success of a strategy based on employment requires sustained investment in service provision, notably childcare and elder care both of which impact most on women's ability to take up employment.

As a result the application of gender mainstreaming across the Action Plan is extremely limited. 'Social Inclusion in Europe' and the 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006' note that while progress is being made in raising awareness among policy makers of gender issues, continuing efforts are required to ensure that the gender dimension is fully taken into account in the development and implementation of policies. 'Social Inclusion in Europe' goes on to state that the translation of stated commitments to gender equality into effective policy actions, cited as a challenge in the 2004 Joint Inclusion Report is still outstanding and further action is required. Despite a stated commitment to gender mainstreaming, gender issues receive little attention in the Irish NAP/inclusion 2003-05. There is no gender based analysis within the body of the plan and a lack of prioritising of gender in the setting of strategic challenges and targets, in budgeting and in the implementation of measures. Strategic objectives, targets and measures within the Plan are predominantly constructed as gender neutral or gender blind despite the stated commitment to gender mainstreaming.

1.2 Major new developments in national social inclusion policy from a gender equality perspective

There have been some important developments over the past year in national social inclusion policy which are important from a gender perspective. There have been positive changes in policies towards child supports, leave entitlements for parents in employment, minimum wage and low pay - all areas which are important from the standpoint of social inclusion and gender equality. Budget 2006 introduced significant increases in social welfare payments including a 17% increase in the minimum unemployment assistance payment and particularly significant from the standpoint of women a 17% increase in Carer's Benefit. Budget 2006 saw the introduction of new financial supports for parents of young children, increases in child benefit and additional resources towards childcare facilities. A child poverty and childcare package (valued at EURO 154m and EURO 314m in 2006 respectively) was announced in the Budget comprising :

- Annual EURO 1000 payment in respect of each child up to six years of age to all households irrespective of their labour market status commencing in 2006.
- Additional expenditure on childcare is stated to contribute to the development of 50,000 new childcare places and training of 17,000 childcare workers by 2010.
- Increased level of child benefit which took effect from July 2006 to new level of EURO 150 per month (EURO 185 for third and subsequent children).
- Earnings threshold for Family Income Supplement raised by EURO 19 to EURO 282.
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance of EURO 40 per child.

Budget 2006 also saw the introduction of extended maternity leave entitlement (to be phased in over 2006 and 2007), as well as a new tax relief for those earning incomes up to EURO 10,000 available to those minding up to three children in their own homes. No data is yet available on the take up of this relief.

An important commitment, which has been made for 2007 and detailed in the new national agreement *Towards 2016*, has potentially real significance for the economic position of women, who make up the majority of those on social welfare payments in Ireland, is an indexation of the lowest social welfare rate for a single person to a level of 30% of gross average industrial earnings by 2007. The agreement indicates that welfare rates will be benchmarked at that level over a ten year period. The practical implementation of this commitment can only be judged when the details of Budget 2006 are announced next December. For older women on State pensions, women lone parents and women in low income households the realisation of this policy in practice over the coming decade has the potential to bring important economic benefits.

Under the terms of *Toward 2016* two other important commitments, significant to those on low pay in the Irish economy, have been made :

- the National Minimum Wage (NMW) is to be increased (from the rate set in May 2005 of EURO 7.65 per hour) in January 2007. The level of this increase was not specified but it was agreed that ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) and IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation) are to make a joint recommendation in September 2006. Where agreement is not reached either party can refer the matter to the Labour Court following consultation with the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment. This process is still ongoing.

- a new Office of Director of Employment Rights Compliance (ODERC) is being established which will have specific responsibility for ensuring the enforcement of the NMW (together with other employment rights) and with gathering data and commissioning research in relation to compliance with labour law and labour standards. The number of Labour Inspectors is to be trebled from 31 to 90 by the end of 2007 and new harsher penalties for non-compliance are to be set down. Legislation to protect whistleblowers is promised.

While neither of these policies are gender specific, previous research has shown that women account for the majority of those on low pay and would likely benefit from a higher minimum wage rate particularly where enforcement systems are strengthened. More recent research indicates that migrant workers, including significant increased numbers from new EU accession States, are accounting for a growing number of those in low paid unskilled jobs where issues of levels of minimum payment and enforcement of labour standards are critical for both women and men.

What has emerged during 2006 is an indication of a significant change in government thinking towards lone parent and other welfare dependent households which, if implemented in policy, would radically alter the situation of parents in low income households, the large majority of whom are women. Details of this proposed new policy approach is evident in the *Government Discussion Paper : Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents* published in May 2006. Although presented as new policy developments to be directed specifically towards lone parents, these policies are likely in practice to be equally significant for other low income, welfare dependent households, for example those in receipt of unemployment payments. The core element of this change in policy is to ensure that a greater proportion of lone parents, and both parents in welfare dependent households, enter training and employment once their youngest child reaches between 5 and 7 years of age. Recent data indicates that around one-third of all lone parents were in paid employment including 48% of lone parents with school going children in 2005. (Central Statistics Office May 2006).

For the large number of lone parents (over 90% of whom are women) there are clear indications that their right and entitlement to long term welfare payments under the One Parent Family Payment is to undergo significant change in future policy development. This will potentially have a major impact on a large number of women, many of whom may benefit from additional training and employment opportunities but others of whom may find their opportunities for long term supported parenting seriously curtailed. This policy document sets out a proposed new Parental Allowance (PA) to replace the One Parent Family Payment and also to abolish the Qualified Adult Allowance linked to other household payments, for example Unemployment Assistance. Its proposal includes a new development under which '*compulsory engagement*' with job facilitators once the youngest child reaches 5 years for all those on PA and an end to payments once the youngest child reaches 7 years. If the parent is not in employment or training at this stage it is proposed that they are then to be transferred to Unemployment Assistance or a Back to Work/Education Allowance.

Organisations representing Lone Parents have strongly stated that employment participation should be a choice rather than an imperative and that the critical issue of the provision of a comprehensive childcare system should underpin such choices. In this context they have expressed concern at the thinking underlying this new policy statement with its emphasis on making paid employment obligatory for many lone parents and women in low income households in the future. "*Reducing the expectation of long term benefit reciprocity among*

new clients of One Parent Family Payment and a more forceful assistance in employment support policy are needed to help more lone parents into work" (Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, 2006).

If implemented, these proposals represent a radical change in Irish social welfare policy encompassing a welcome emphasis on individual entitlements (rather than the traditional household system) but at the same time a proposed withdrawal of the right to long term welfare support (clearly based on a compulsory system of taking up training and employment) to parents of children over 5-7 years in low income households - the large majority of those likely to be affected by such a change are women.

2. Rapid response

2.1 Preliminary Assessment Of The In/Visibility Of Gender Mainstreaming

The 2006 NSSPI for Ireland reflects the framework adopted in the new social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* organised around a lifecycle approach. This is characterised by a gender blind approach and as a consequence gender mainstreaming is invisible as a cross cutting principle in the Common Overview. Meanwhile within the National Strategy for Social Inclusion element of the Report specific references to the gender perspective is systematically presented in the discussion of measures relating to each priority policy objective. This initiative is very welcome and shows evidence of greater awareness of the particular issues arising for women and men in relation to groups such as early school leavers, those marginalised from the labour market, migrant groups and vulnerable groups such as older people and homeless people. This contrasts with the approach of the 2003 report, which stated a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming but lacked a gender perspective in discussion of objectives and measures. In the 2006 NSSPI this is reversed with no visibility of gender mainstreaming in the framing of the Report but a systematic application of a gender perspective in discussion of objectives and measures.

A consequence of this emphasis on the lifecycle has been a loss of what has traditionally been a weak gender perspective mainstreamed across Irish economic social policy resulting in e.g. no gender breakdown of key trends in the assessment of the social situation other than in relation to labour force data. Despite the welcome consideration of a gender perspective within discussions of each policy objective and measure this does not translate into any gender specific targets. Given that the data is showing the increased risk of poverty among women it is particularly disappointing that gender specific targets have not been carried over from the 2003 report. Overall, the NSSPI does not demonstrate an integrated approach to mainstreaming gender equality such that the impact of the gender perspective applied to each priority policy objective is diminished. While there are references to mainstreaming equality this is related to overall social inclusion but does not articulate a specific perspective on gender equality mainstreaming.

2.2 Policies Where Gender Mainstreaming Has Been Applied

A gender perspective is systematically presented in the discussion of measures relating to each policy objective as follows:

- Policy Objective 1: *Child Poverty* discusses gender differences in early school leaving rates and educational attainment.
- Policy Objective 2: *Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities* discusses marginalisation of sectors of women from the labour market especially lone parents and mothers of larger families, gender differences in employment participation, targeted supports necessary to increase women's access to employment and the gender differentiated impact of low educational attainment on employment opportunities which disproportionately disadvantages women.
- Policy Objective 3: *Integration of Immigrants* discusses the double disadvantage of race and gender faced by migrant women in relation to employment.
- Policy Objective 4: *Access to Services* discusses gender differences in the homeless population (more men) and older population (more women), identifies men living alone in rural areas as a vulnerable group and outlines plans to implement Equality Proofing and Positive Action Programmes to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

2.3 Main Policy Issues Where Gender Mainstreaming Is Missing/ Inadequate

The approach taken to addressing gender in the NSSPI results in partial aspects of the gender dimension of a policy being addressed, usually at the micro level and at the expense of a comprehensive consideration of gender issues. This inadequacy is evident in relation to issues of: Poverty rates and trends, pensions, health status and health inequalities, labour market activation policies particularly those targeted at lone parents and the structuring of social welfare payments to remove employment disincentives.

2.4 Key Gender Issues

Two key gender issues that should be prioritised are quality of work particularly regarding pay in light of women's over representation in low-paid employment and comprehensive childcare provision. While discussed in the NSSPI, there is a limited gender specific analysis applied and developments proposed to childcare infrastructure while very welcome are inadequate to address equality of access to employment among all groups of women.

2.5 Examples of Good Practice

Despite shortcomings referred to, the systematic consideration of a gender perspective in the discussion of measures relating to each policy priority objective in the National Strategy for Social Inclusion is very welcome. Other examples of good practice are:

- Setting equality of opportunity between women and men as a specific aim of public policy to be promoted through the development, implementation and monitoring of appropriate policies including *Programmes to Promote Gender Equality* and *Equality Proofing* and the production of a *National Women's Strategy*. (This is a long-standing commitment and publication is once more delayed until late 2006.)
- Improved income support payments for families including the introduction of an Early Childcare Supplement of €1,000 per annum for every child under 6 years regardless of parents labour force status.
- Development of an infrastructure to provide quality, affordable childcare increasing the supply (valued at EURO 154m and EURO 314m in 2006 and 2007 respectively) including the development of 50,000 new childcare places and training of 17,000 childcare workers by 2010.

1. Gender mainstreaming in the Common Overview

Grid assessment of the visibility and attention to gender equality and gender mainstreaming

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the social situation • Overall Strategic approach • Overarching messages 	Additional comments
References to gender and/or the 'gender equality' aspect of 'objective (a)'	<p><i>Select one:- Frequent/Some/Infrequent/No reference</i></p> <p>Infrequent</p> <p><i>Brief detail</i> (maximum short paragraph)</p> <p>The Plan is organised around a lifecycle approach reflecting the framework adopted in the new social partnership agreement <i>Towards 2016</i>. A consequence of this emphasis on the lifecycle has been a loss of what has traditionally been a weak gender perspective within Irish economic and social policy and this is reflected in the common overview of Ireland's 2006 NSSPI report. It is characterised by a gender blind approach despite the fact that women account for the majority of those among, for example, older people and people with disabilities. This is reflected in the Common Overview where no specific commitments to mainstreaming gender equality are made. Employment and poverty are key trends discussed in the assessment of the social situation. A full gender analysis is provided on employment trends including how this impacts on poverty trends. Only an implicit acknowledgement of the higher risk of poverty for women is evident in relation to poverty through the vulnerable groups listed in the main body. However a statistical table on 'consistent poverty' and 'at risk of poverty' rates broken down by gender is provided in the Annex. Given that the data is showing an increased risk of poverty among women it is particularly disappointing that a gender perspective is not applied or gender based targets carried over from the 2003 report. Measures outlined including labour market activation policies including a specific focus on lone parents, pensions, health status and health inequalities raise important issues from a gender perspective but their gender dimensions are not discussed. While there are references to mainstreaming equality this is related to overall social inclusion and does not articulate a specific perspective on gender equality.</p>	<p>In general Ireland's 2006 NSSPI is framed by the new social partnership agreement <i>Towards 2016</i>. Gender mainstreaming became a stated principle of Irish economic and social policy under the NDP and it is not yet evident whether this will be the case under future plans. However gender mainstreaming is not an overarching principle of the Common Overview of the NSSPI. A gender perspective is systematically presented for each policy priority in Chapter 2, the National Strategy for Social Inclusion giving a very welcome much higher profile for gender than previous NAPs. However it is crucial that a gender perspective is integrated across the plan and particularly into the Common Overview so that there is no pull-back on gender mainstreaming from previous plans.</p>
Use of gender disaggregated statistics in (a) main body (b) annex if provided	<p><i>Select one:- Good/Limited/Very limited/ None</i></p> <p>Limited.</p> <p><i>Brief detail</i> (maximum short paragraph)</p> <p>Statistics disaggregated by gender within the main body of the Common Overview are confined to</p>	<p>There is less extensive gender disaggregation in relation to the key area of poverty in the 2006 NSSPI compared to the previous 2003-2005 NAP inclusion.</p>

	<p>those covering the employment and the unemployment rates. Statistics on the risk of poverty and experience of 'consistent poverty' are not disaggregated by gender within the main body. Most of the data on poverty in Ireland used in the main body is household based and consequently gender blind without gender disaggregation or analysis. The annex contains a statistical table on <i>consistent</i> and <i>at risk of poverty</i> rates broken down by a range of indicators including gender.</p>	
Evidence of gender mainstreaming in overall policy approach	<p><u>Select one</u>:- Good/Limited/Very limited/None</p> <p>Limited</p> <p><u>Brief detail</u> (maximum short paragraph) As stated above the Plan is organised around a lifecycle approach which is characterised by gender blindness. As a consequence gender mainstreaming is invisible as a cross cutting principle in the Common Overview.</p> <p>The Irish NSSPI 2006 reiterates a central feature of Ireland's policy approach to social inclusion that "accessing and retaining employment is [] one of the most important routes out of poverty." This approach has always lacked an underlying gender analysis. Women are under-represented among the unemployed, linked to their traditional interrupted relationship to the labour market and the household nature of the social welfare system. However in its treatment of social protection the NSSPI makes a the commitment "to ensuring that the social protection system adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour market or outside of it and facilitates labour market participation." This indicates a strategy inclusive of significant sectors of women previously marginalised by an approach exclusively targeted at those in the labour market. Commitments to developing child and older people's care services are further evidence of a gender focus in the overall policy approach. However evidence of gender mainstreaming would have been significantly enhanced if there had been an explicit reference to gender in the presentation of these policies. Overall, the NSSPI does not demonstrate an integrated approach to mainstreaming gender equality such that the impact of the gender perspective applied to each priority policy objective later in Chapter 2 is diminished.</p>	<p>The Irish 2003-2005 NAP inclusion contained more explicit commitments to gender mainstreaming in the overall policy approach than appears in the Common Overview of the 2006 Plan. However there was a weak gender analysis within the 2003 plan. A stronger gender perspective is evident within the detail of the 2006 Social Inclusion Plan but is less explicit in the overarching stated commitments.</p>
Evidence of gender impact assessment/ auditing/evaluation of policies	<p><u>Select one</u>:- Good/Limited/Very limited/None</p> <p>Limited</p> <p><u>Brief detail</u> (maximum short paragraph) The Common Overview of Ireland's 2006 NSSPI is very limited in the extent to which gender is explicitly addressed. A full gender analysis is</p>	<p>While overall Ireland's 2006 NSSPI shows more evidence of awareness of the different situations of women and men throughout the report, attention to gender in</p>

	<p>provided on employment trends including how this impacts on poverty trends. However discussions of poverty trends and rates, pensions and health policy is gender blind despite significant gender dimensions to each area. The approach to social protection outlined - “ensuring the social protection system adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour market or outside of it and facilitates labour market participation” – certainly encompasses a gender focus but is not articulated. The plan does go on to systematically provide a gender analysis for each priority policy objective in the following section. However the limited assessment of the gender impact of policies in the Common Overview weakens their impact and undermines the gender focus in the overall policy approach.</p>	<p>the introductory section framing the approach is less pronounced.</p>
<p>Discussion of common objective (a) ‘enhance quality of social protection, gender and equal opportunities for all’: Evidence of understanding and application of gender equality and gender mainstreaming</p>	<p><u>Select one</u>:- Good/Limited/Very limited/None</p> <p>Very Limited</p> <p><u>Brief detail</u> (maximum short paragraph)</p> <p>The four policy domains of social protection, employment, pensions and health covered in the discussion of common objective (a) contain no explicit gender focus. An implicit focus on gender is evident in social protection area. The approach to social protection outlined - “ensuring the social protection system adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour market or outside of it and facilitates labour market participation” – widens out those targeted by this policy to bring in sectors of women previously marginalised by a policy approach exclusively targeted at those in the labour market. The implicit focus on gender is retained in the section on employment particularly when considered in light of the indication in 2006 of a significant change in government thinking towards extending activation policies to lone parents and other welfare dependent households not on the live register. These changes would radically alter the situation of parents in low income households, the large majority of whom are women. Meanwhile no gender focus is evident in the area of pensions. This is despite the generally acknowledged lower pension coverage among women related to their traditional interrupted relationship to the labour market and higher concentration in lower paid, lower quality jobs. Equally no gender focus is evident in the discussion of health under common objective (a) despite references to vulnerable groups with an inherent gender dimension.</p>	
<p>Discussion of common objective (b) ‘mutual reinforcement’:¹ Evidence of understanding and application of gender equality and gender mainstreaming</p>	<p><u>Select one</u>:- Good/Limited/Very limited/None</p> <p>Limited</p> <p><u>Brief detail</u> (maximum short paragraph)</p>	

	<p>Overall there is no explicit reference to gender throughout the discussion of common objective (b) however many of the policy areas covered have direct and significant impacts for women.</p> <p>A new vision for Irish society corresponding to the Integrated Guidelines articulated here includes re-inventing and repositioning Ireland's social policies. Evidence from recent years indicates this involves a shift towards individualisation and away from the traditional household based approach, which would generally benefit women's access to social protection in their own right and to employment. In discussing the interaction between social protection and employment, a commitment is made to implementing policies on improved quality of work. Given women's concentration in low paid work this reference to potentially improved wage levels and enforcement of employment regulation is very welcome. "Supporting employment participation for the parents of children combined with appropriate income supports and access to services including childcare" is part of the approach to tackling child poverty. This has important benefits for women. A new Early Childcare Supplement and commitments on focused provision of childcare go towards addressing one of the key issues for gender equality in employment in Ireland, highlighted consistently in the European Commission's Joint Report on Social Inclusion. The most radical change is the proposal to extend the national employment action plan to focus on lone parents bringing in a sector of women previously marginalised from this core initiative relating to training and employment opportunities. This represents a radical change in Irish social welfare policy encompassing a welcome emphasis on individual entitlements (rather than the traditional household system) but at the same time a proposed withdrawal of the right to long term welfare support (clearly based on a compulsory system of taking up training and employment) to parents of children over 5-7 years in low income households - the large majority of those likely to be affected by such a change are women.</p>	
Setting of national targets:	<p><i>No targets specified/ Yes, targets set</i></p> <p>Yes, targets set</p> <p><i>Specify targets and detail the type of target and whether it addresses gender inequalities²</i></p> <p>The NSSPI reiterates a commitment to the Lisbon employment targets, which include a specific target to increase women's employment to 60%. A target of reducing consistent poverty to 2% or its complete elimination by 2007 set in 2002 is restated. However given that the data is showing an increased risk of poverty among</p>	<p>Policies relating to employment, particularly new emphasis on extending activation measures to lone parents are likely to ensure that targets on women's employment will be achieved. Targets set relation to childcare are not place in the context of the level of demand for childcare in Ireland</p>

	<p>women it is particularly disappointing that gender specific targets have not been carried over from the 2003 report. Commitments on the development of an infrastructure to provide quality, affordable childcare includes a target to increase the supply of childcare places by 100,000 over a ten year period. While the gender dimension of this policy is not explicitly referred to, childcare has long been acknowledged as a central requirement for the achievement of gender equality in access to employment opportunities and such development is very welcome.</p> <p>Commitments on the development of primary care services entailing investment to ensure integrated, accessible services for people within their own community includes specific targets of 300 primary care teams by 2008, 400 by 2009 and 500 by 2011. No consideration is given to the gender dimension of this target. Finally while a commitment is made to developing a range of long term care services for Older People this is only in the form of a general statement to providing additional resources in line with the new emphasis on home and day cares services. Provision of care services for Older People is also acknowledged as central to facilitating women's equality of access to employment but again this is not explicitly acknowledged in making this commitment.</p>	<p>where provision of State supported childcare remains at a very low base. Commitments in the areas of primary care services and services for Older People are not very general and adequacy of resources is difficult to assess.</p>
<p>Discussion of <i>common objective (c) 'Good governance'</i>: Evidence of involvement of equality bodies or NGOs dealing with gender issues in NRS</p>	<p><i>Brief detail</i> (maximum short paragraph) Ireland has a highly developed system of social partnership at central and local levels. The first stage of consultation in relation to NAP/inclusion 2006-08 involved invitations for submissions and holding of consultation meetings with a wide range of social actors - the traditional social partners, the voluntary and community sector, women's organisations and organisations of minority groups. Specific statutory agencies also made submissions, for example the Combat Poverty Agency and the Equality Authority. The National Women's Council, organisations representing Lone Parents as well as other community and voluntary organisations made submissions focusing on proposals to strengthen gender equality and gender mainstreaming and particularly policy needs in relation to low pay, labour market access, childcare, welfare payments, leave entitlements and the gender pay gap.</p> <p>The importance of gender for those consulted in the consultation process is highlighted by the fact that gender constituted the third largest policy area represented by groups making submissions. Groups omitted from consultation were those involved in issues relating to sexual orientation and its gendered impact on social inclusion.</p>	<p>The approach taken in the preparation of Ireland's 2006 NSSPI is a continuation of the approach taken for the 2003-2005 NAP/inclusion though with an added element of a consultative forum providing further opportunity for representation of a gender perspective from NGOs and equality bodies. A potential loss however is the institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming under the last NDP, specifically the Gender Equality Units, Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines and gender equality representation on NDP monitoring committees whose future is uncertain.</p>

1. In the overall strategic approach Member States are encouraged to emphasize the mutual strengthening of economic, employment and social policies using at least one example from the fields of child poverty, social inclusion of migrants and minorities, longer working life (including labour market entry/exit) or flexicurity.
2. Types of targets are defined in the Appendix 2 'Setting Targets' of the guidelines as 'direct outcome', 'intermediate outcome' and 'input'; and attention is drawn to the importance of targets being quantified and measurable (rather than just general statements about magnitude – reduce, increase, etc), time specific and addressing gender issues (targets which are gender disaggregated or focus on reducing gender gaps).

4. Gender mainstreaming in the National Action Plans for Inclusion

4.1 Priority policy objectives presented by the Member States in the NRS

Priority policy objective 1 – Child Poverty

Brief statement of policy objective
<p>Reducing child poverty using a two fold approach, which will take account of the practical implications of the diversity of children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of coordinated, integrated and targeted policies and services designed to lift households with children out of poverty (to be addressed mainly under the other three priorities), and; • A range of services and supports specifically targeted at vulnerable children, to bridge gaps in their development compared to children generally.
Summary of rationale for this priority as presented in the National Report
<p>The most recent figures on child poverty, from the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) for 2004, indicate that the percentage of persons under age 15 experiencing basic deprivation (consistent poverty) was 9.5 per cent, a significant reduction from the 12.2 per cent recorded in the first EU SILC survey in 2003. The survey also reported that the percentage of children in households at risk of poverty in 2004 was 21.2 per cent, up slightly from 21 per cent in 2003.</p>
Brief statement of key existing relevant measures identified in the National Report and any significant reforms or new/additional measures that will be introduced
<p>A multi-dimensional approach to tackling child poverty is being adopted, focusing on supporting employment participation for the parents of children combined with appropriate income supports and access to services including childcare, education, health and housing. Specific targets on income supports and access to services are detailed.</p> <p>Existing measures relevant to tackling child poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government target, set in 2002, of reducing consistent poverty to 2% or its complete elimination by 2007. A review of poverty measures is underway under the auspices of the Office for Social Inclusion with the intention to set real and achievable targets. • Reduce the number of lone parents who are unemployed through special attention to lone parents under the various employment/training schemes, increasing the earnings disregard under the One Parent Family Payment and increasing the upper earnings limit, to encourage them to increase their earnings. • Improved income support payments for families and structural changes to schemes aimed at removing possible disincentives to employment. • Strengthening systems of supports available to families with children including family support initiatives, Teen Parent Support Initiative and Youth Homelessness Strategy. • Accelerated implementation of the Childcare Act 2001. <p>New measures relevant to tackling child poverty in the 2006 NRP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Early Childcare Supplement to assist with the costs of caring for children, amounting to €1,000 per annum for every child under the age of 6 years, regardless of the labour force status of the parent. • Over the period 2006-2008 it is proposed to develop a more integrated programme of measures to support the movement of lone parents into more full-time and quality employment, which would comprise the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reform of income support schemes: - Expanded availability and range of education and training opportunities for lone parents - Extension of the National Employment Action Plan to focus on lone parents : - Focused provision of childcare; and - Improved information services for lone parents.

Summary of the explanation provided in the National Report of (a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account in the policy measures proposed, and (b) the expected impact on gender equality

a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account

Discussion of the measure includes a dedicated section on the gender perspective and wider equal opportunities. The gender perspective referred to in the proposed measures highlights gender differences in early school leaving comprising a much higher proportion of boys (14.9%) leaving school earlier than girls (9.6%). This is reflected later in relation to low educational attainment, where the rates for males are higher across all age groups than for females. This is fully taken into account in the policies for early childhood education and for improving educational outcomes outlined above. The explicit gender perspective is confined here to the impact on the direct target group - children to the omission of the implicit impact on women's employment situation given the particular focus on moving lone parents into employment.

(b) the expected impact on gender equality

Meanwhile the expected impact on gender equality is significant given the particular focus on lone parents of whom 90% are women. Many may benefit from additional training and employment opportunities but others may find their opportunities for long term supported parenting seriously curtailed. These new proposals represent a radical change in Irish social welfare policy encompassing a welcome emphasis on individual entitlements (rather than the traditional household system) but at the same time a proposed withdrawal of the right to long term welfare support (clearly based on a compulsory system of taking up training and employment) to parents of children over 5-7 years in low income households - the large majority of those likely to be affected by such a change are women. Organisations representing Lone Parents have expressed concern at the thinking underlying this new policy statement with its emphasis on making paid employment obligatory for many lone parents and women in low income households in the future and strongly stated that employment participation should be a choice rather than an imperative. Improving childcare infrastructure is critical to women's ability to take up employment by choice on an equal basis.

The strengthening of services under the Teen Parent Support Initiative will positively impact on young mothers.

Summary of indicators and monitoring arrangements proposed

Children up to age 15 are identified as a group in relation to the main poverty indicators. Difficulty has arisen in relation to measuring and setting targets for income poverty incorporating child poverty in the transition to the EU-SILC data source. The 'at risk of poverty' measure has not proved to be a reliable indicator of the experience of poverty. The Office for Social Inclusion will take up the task of developing effective poverty measurements and setting real and achievable targets on poverty as part of their responsibility for data and technical supports necessary for developing, monitoring and evaluating the NAPinclusion and social inclusion measures in other national strategies.

Other indicators used will include those on early school leavers, literacy and educational attainment.

Brief statement of resource allocation – detail of additional resources (including European Structural Funds), agencies (national, regional or local) responsible for implementation and how efforts of agencies will be coordinated

The National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) 2006 – 2010 has been allocated a provisional budget of €575 million. This forms part of the overall National Childcare Strategy which is expected to involve the spending of €2.65 billion between 2006 and 2010. Total income support payable in respect of children will amount to approximately €2.75 billion in 2006. In addition to current funding outlined, future funding decisions in relation to programmes will be decided later in 2006 in the context of the next NDP 2007-2013.

The agencies involved in implementation are:

- Office of the Minister for Children (OMC)
- Irish Youth Justice Service
- Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science
- Integrated Services and Interventions for Children at Local Level

As regards co-ordination, the OMC is the lead agency whose focus is on harmonising policy issues that affect children in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, child welfare and protection, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people and cross-cutting initiatives for children. The Irish Youth Justice Service and Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science are co-located with the OMC, while the Integrated Services and Interventions for Children at Local Level is chaired by the OMC.

National expert's summary assessment of the gender mainstreaming of this policy

The specific consideration of a gender perspective in this measure is very welcome. The gender issues explicitly identified are confined to gender differences in early school leaving rates and related poorer educational outcomes. However this does not translate into gender specific targets in these areas as the targets specified are generic. Meanwhile the significant impact of the measures directed towards lone parents on women's relationship to the labour market is not explicitly considered.

Priority policy objective 2 – Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities

Brief statement of policy objective

Increasing employment participation among marginalised groups and improving access to quality learning opportunities for those in low-skilled employment involving:

- Removal, as far as practicable, of barriers to employment, to education and training, and to key services;
- Implementation of a new active case management service for all social welfare customers. This will include provision of a range of specially tailored, targeted supports to be built up progressively, and designed to enable increasing numbers make the transition from benefit dependency to availing of job opportunities.

Summary of rationale for this priority as presented in the National Report

The increase in employment participation in Ireland over recent years has been accompanied by a rise in the numbers of those outside the labour force. These groups in total now outnumber those classified as unemployed. Moreover, there has also been a rise in the numbers of those people engaged in low-paid and low-skilled employment.

Brief statement of key existing relevant measures identified in the National Report and any significant reforms or new/additional measures that will be introduced

Existing measures relevant to this objective are the main such labour market schemes:

- the National Employment Service and the Local Employment Services
- the National Employment Action Plan (including the Prevention and Activation and Expanding the Workforce Programmes) , High Supports, Bridging/Foundation and Pathways to Employment processes, and
- other training and employment programmes.

To address this specific objective the measures will be reformed so that:

1. priority will increasingly be given in these schemes to the long term unemployed, those unemployed aged 15 - 24, 'non-progression ready' unemployed, and those hitherto marginalised from the labour market.
2. a new active case management service will be implemented for all social welfare customers with targeting the following groups as a priority: lone parents, persons with disabilities and older workers.

Summary of the explanation provided in the National Report of (a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account in the policy measures proposed, and (b) the expected impact on gender equality

a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account

Discussion of the measure includes a dedicated section on the gender perspective and wider equal opportunities. This acknowledges women as the largest group amongst those marginalised from the labour market specifying lone parents and mothers of larger families in particular. Development of care services infrastructure in relation to children, older people and those with a disability as part of the measures acknowledges how care responsibilities have impacted

particularly on women's access to employment. In relation to lifelong learning the gender differences in early school leaving is acknowledged with higher rates among young men. In addition the gender differentiated impact of low educational attainment on employment opportunities which disproportionately disadvantages women.

(b) the expected impact on gender equality

The proposed programme envisages giving all customers similar activation supports, such as training, job search, job placement, whether they are presently unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

The measure states that its general aim in the case of lone parents and other parents excluded from the workforce is to significantly increase participation, training and quality of employment. It is intended to provide lone parents with more options to balance caring and working, including support to move into quality employment on a progressive basis. This is intended to address this group's particular vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion due to a high level of joblessness and, among those in employment, a relatively high incidence of low paid and part-time work among lone parents.

Equality mainstreaming within labour market services will play an important role in ensuring labour market policy and provision take account of diversity and promote equality to achieve effective outcomes for men and women, Travellers, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian people and older people.

By acknowledging women as the largest group amongst those marginalised from the labour market and specifying lone parents and mothers of larger families in particular, explicitly acknowledges that this measure will impact significantly on gender equality.

One gender specific target is attached to the measure. To reach and if possible exceed the EU employment rate targets for 2010 of 60% female employment, from current rate of 58.6%.

Summary of indicators and monitoring arrangements proposed

A range of indicators will be used to monitor progress. These include consistent and at risk of poverty rates broken down by gender, age, and household type, to persistent poverty, to activity status, work intensity, long term unemployment, jobless households, early school leavers, low literacy levels and low educational attainment

The Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social and Family Affairs will have the main responsibility for monitoring, in liaison with the Office for Social Inclusion.

Brief statement of resource allocation – detail of additional resources (including European Structural Funds), agencies (national, regional or local) responsible for implementation and how efforts of agencies will be coordinated

In 2006 approximately €750 million was allocated in total to employment and training supports for the unemployed and inactive. A further €100m was allocated to education programmes aimed at facilitating access to learning opportunities for low skilled disadvantaged workers. This consists of total funds allocated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to 'Labour Force Development' as well as the 'Employment Support Service' of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. No additional dedicated resources are specified in the NSSPI but it points out that future funding decisions in relation to programmes will be decided later in 2006 in the context of the next NDP 2007-2013.

Agencies referred to in the measure are the National Employment Service and the Local Employment Service; Vocational Education Committees; the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Social and Family Affairs and Education and Science. No detail is given on how the efforts of these agencies will be coordinated.

National expert's summary assessment of the gender mainstreaming of this policy

This measure will bring important benefits for women given that the target group for activation measures to people of working age will bring in significant sectors of women marginalised from these measures when the target group was those registered as unemployed. Bringing women in to the target group for these opportunities is an important new direction and very welcome. The core element of this change in policy is to ensure that a greater proportion of lone parents, (over 90% of whom are women) enter training and employment once their youngest child reaches between 5 and 7 years of age. Recent data indicates that around one-third of all lone parents were in paid employment including 48% of lone parents with school going children in 2005. (Central Statistics Office May 2006) However this entails significant changes to lone parents existing right and entitlement to long term welfare payments under the One Parent Family Payment. This will

potentially have a major impact on a large number of women, many of whom may benefit from additional training and employment opportunities but others of whom may find their opportunities for long term supported parenting seriously curtailed. Organisations representing Lone Parents have strongly stated that employment participation should be a choice rather than an imperative and that the critical issue of the provision of a comprehensive childcare system should underpin such choices. In this context they have expressed concern at the thinking underlying this new policy statement with its emphasis on making paid employment obligatory for many lone parents and women in low income households in the future.

Given the importance of this measure to combating poverty among target groups within which women dominate it is disappointing that no gender specific target on poverty is attached to it. This is a gap in the overall plan and particularly disappointing given that the 2003-2005 NAP inclusion for Ireland did specify a gender specific target for reducing poverty.

The commitment to ensuring that some at least of the indicators for this measure will be broken down by gender is welcome.

Priority policy objective 3 – Integration of Immigrants

Brief statement of policy objective
Develop a strategic approach to the integration of immigrants into Irish society focusing on relevant policy areas and services which includes not only channels of entry and access to services but all measures generally required to achieve integration.
Summary of rationale for this priority as presented in the National Report
Immigrants now comprise a significant proportion of Ireland’s workforce and population and their integration into society is one of the main factors determining the overall success or failure of migration policy.
Brief statement of key existing relevant measures identified in the National Report and any significant reforms or new/additional measures that will be introduced
<p>The existing measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS), established in March 2005, which provides a single access point for immigration services for individual immigrants, and also enables State institutions respond in a more efficient and timely manner to demands for labour. The Service incorporates a wide range of pre-existing structures dealing with asylum, visas, immigration and citizenship. • The National Action Plan against Racism (2005) aims to mainstream intercultural issues into formulation of public policy, providing strategic direction to combat racism and develop a inclusive, intercultural society. • A range of educational supports has been made available to schools, based upon the number of pupils from a non Irish background, including a total of more than 800 language support teachers in 2006, at primary and post-primary level. Improvements to these supports will be the removal of the cap on the number of language support teachers to be employed in any one school, currently set at two per school. <p>New measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Immigrant Integration Unit is being established to promote and coordinate social and organisational measures across the whole spectrum of Government for the integration of lawful immigrants into Irish economic and cultural life. • A national integration policy is being developed based on equality principles and social inclusion. This will focus on developing policies and programmes related to the social and cultural needs of immigrants, taking into account the experience of other countries in this regard. It is also recognised that the policy will require a cross cutting approach that involves national development, spatial and social inclusion planning. • A range of services are being provided for minority groups. In the area of health:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An <i>ethnic identifier</i> is planned for 2006 to facilitate more evidence based planning through identification of needs, measurement of uptake of services, and evaluation of outcomes - Development of a National Equality Strategy by the Health Services Executive; - A National Intercultural Strategy designed to provide a framework for addressing the unique health and support needs of, inter alia, asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and Travellers with completion expected end 2006; - Staff training, learning and support needs to provide good standard services for people in minority communities being prioritised for investment, with plans for roll out at an advanced stage; and, - In relation to language, which is a key barrier, a number of initiatives are already in place, including a pilot interpretation project in the eastern region of the country for family doctors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In relation to housing, the development of sustainable communities, which is now a core principle of housing policy, will provide a means for migrants to integrate successfully in Irish society. The Government is supporting a research initiative on issues arising from neighbourhood planning, housing provision and estate management policy arising from increased ethnic and cultural diversity. The results of the research will inform evolving housing policy on the development of sustainable communities.
<p>Summary of the explanation provided in the National Report of (a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account in the policy measures proposed, and (b) the expected impact on gender equality</p>
<p>(a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account</p> <p>Discussion of the measure includes a dedicated section on the gender perspective and wider equal opportunities. In relation to migrants the specific gender perspective is confined to the area of employment participation and states that it is important to acknowledge and respond effectively to the double disadvantage and discrimination faced by minority ethnic women and how their situations can be shaped by both racism and sexism.</p>
<p>(b) the expected impact on gender equality</p> <p>Despite the very welcome acknowledgement of the interaction of gender and race as sites of disadvantage and discrimination, the measure does not include any element that implicitly or explicitly addresses gender or could be expected to impact on gender equality.</p>
<p>Summary of indicators and monitoring arrangements proposed</p>
<p>No specific arrangements are in place to generate indicators or monitor the impact of the measure. Generating indicators and monitoring impacts in the same ways as the other areas is a stated aspiration of the measure but seen as “a major challenge [] to obtain data on immigrants, broken down where possible between ethnic groups”. No strategy to address this challenge is advanced.</p>
<p>Brief statement of resource allocation – detail of additional resources (including European Structural Funds), agencies (national, regional or local) responsible for implementation and how efforts of agencies will be coordinated</p>
<p>The following funds have already been allocated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● €46.5 million to fund language support teaching posts in the school system. ● In the region of €77 million on income support for asylum seekers reflecting a system of direct provision. ● €1 million per annum to further the goals of the National Action Plan against Racism and to make strategic interventions in its implementation. ● €5m for integration-related initiatives in 2006. ● €1m is being expended in 2006/2007 on immigration employment-related initiatives. <p>In addition to current funding outlined, future funding decisions in relation to programmes will be decided later in 2006 in the context of the next NDP 2007-2013.</p>
<p>National expert’s summary assessment of the gender mainstreaming of this policy</p>
<p>It is very welcome to see the important acknowledgement given in the NSSPI to the double disadvantage for migrant women due to the intersection of discrimination based on race and gender and how this affects access to and opportunities for employment for migrant women. However the analysis would have been strengthened if it had demonstrated further awareness of gender</p>

dimensions in the area of health services, housing, educational participation and representation in cultural arena for migrant women.

Priority policy objective 4 - Access to Quality Services

Brief statement of policy objective
Improve access to and the quality of essential services with a particular focus on those in poverty and social exclusion in the interests of achieving adequate standards of living, individual well being and social cohesion.
Summary of rationale for this priority as presented in the National Report
Referring to the framework adopted in the new social partnership agreement <i>Towards 2016</i> organised around a lifecycle approach, the rationale for this measure states that across the full life cycle, vulnerable groups can experience difficulties in accessing services and there remains scope for improvement. The EU Joint Report on Inclusion statement that progress in this area over the period of the last NAP/inclusion was mixed is further rationale for its selection.
Brief statement of key existing relevant measures identified in the National Report and any significant reforms or new/additional measures that will be introduced
<p>Existing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures under objectives 1 regarding childcare and education and objective 2 regarding employment services. • Reducing inequalities in health outcomes through improving access by e.g. increasing medical card coverage; improving evidence base regarding impact of social exclusion on health status and access; making health central to public policy; and acting on social inequalities in health. • Advancing housing policy following core objective <u>to enable every household to to have an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment, and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice</u> through expansion of social housing; supporting those in receipt of rent supplement to access employment; addressing needs of homeless people through a new Strategy on Homelessness and supporting Local Authorities in the implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes. • Ensuring adequate social protection through achieving NAPS target of minimum social welfare rates of €150 in 2002 terms and supporting participation, mobility and transition for all people of working age in the labour market. • Supporting older people through provision of quality health services in the community in accordance with their preferences to be cared for at home and people with a Disability through the National Disability Strategy. • Securing access to transport for vulnerable groups through permanently supporting the Rural Transport Initiative and abolishing restrictions on the Free Travel Scheme. <p>New:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising programmes for disadvantaged urban and rural areas under the next National Development Plan.
Summary of the explanation provided in the National Report of (a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account in the policy measures proposed, and (b) the expected impact on gender equality
<p>(a) how a gender perspective has been taken into account in the policy measures proposed, Discussion of the measure includes a dedicated section on the gender perspective and wider equal opportunities. While this measure is wide ranging spanning the full life-cycle and range of social services discussion addresses three selected areas. It states that as homelessness predominantly affects males and there is normally a gender dimension to prevention and service provision. It acknowledges how the majority of older people living alone or requiring care are women, in part due to their greater longevity, but also due to their lack of pension cover in their own right, as a result of on average lower employment participation and lower paid employment. Finally older men living alone in rural areas are described as a particularly vulnerable group.</p>

The measure goes on to outline institutional initiatives to mainstream a gender perspective across all Government services, policies and programmes following the specific aim of public policy to promote equality of opportunity between women and men. This is to be achieved through the development, implementation and monitoring of appropriate policies including Programmes for *Positive Actions to Promote Gender Equality* (including implementing the National Women's Strategy), and *Equality Proofing*. In addition, the *National Women's Strategy*, a long-standing commitment now expected to be published in late 2006, will be a cross-departmental strategy aimed at enhancing the socio-economic status of women, their well-being and their participation in decision-making and civil society.

In relation to equality more generally the measure outlines how the Equality Authority provides a range of supports to key service providers to assist their capacity to be equality competent and to reflect the principle of equality/diversity established for Quality Customer Service in the public sector.

(b) the expected impact on gender equality

The implementation of initiatives to mainstream a gender perspective across all Government services, policies and programmes will be important in light of the current uncertainty in relation to the future of institutional mechanisms of the previous NDP for gender mainstreaming, specifically the Gender Equality Units, Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines and gender equality representation on NDP monitoring committees. Programmes that ensure continuity of the gains achieved in relation to gender mainstreaming are crucial to advancing gender equality. Otherwise the generality of the measures outlined under this policy objective make it difficult to see how they can have a significant impact on advancing gender equality.

Summary of indicators and monitoring arrangements proposed

In addition to the indicators on poverty for priorities 1 and 2, broken down by age and gender, indicators will be used for measuring progress in tackling homelessness, and in relation to health care, housing and income support. The monitoring arrangements will be co-ordinated by the Office for Social Inclusion in consultation with the relevant Departments.

Brief statement of resource allocation – detail of additional resources (including European Structural Funds), agencies (national, regional or local) responsible for implementation and how efforts of agencies will be coordinated

The following resource allocation is attached to the measure:

- child related payments listed earlier
- €11 billion on income support in 2006.
- Expenditure on social inclusion related Health Care of approximately €7.1 million in 2006.
- Social housing investment between 2006 and 2008 estimated at over €4 billion.
- Approximately €31 million to tackle rural and urban disadvantage in
- €150 million in 2006-2007 for health care in the community for older people.
- Rural Transport Initiative funding will be increased to a cash level of about 4 times the 2005 allocation of €4.5m.
- Budget for the Free Travel Pass is €58m in 2006.

In addition to current funding outlined, future funding decisions in relation to programmes will be decided later in 2006 in the context of the next NDP 2007-2013.

National expert's summary assessment of the gender mainstreaming of this policy

The implementation of initiatives to mainstream a gender perspective across all Government services, policies and programmes will be important in light of the current uncertainty in relation to the future of institutional mechanisms of the previous NDP for gender mainstreaming, specifically the Gender Equality Units, Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines and gender equality representation on NDP monitoring committees. Programmes that ensure continuity of the gains achieved in relation to gender mainstreaming are crucial to advancing gender equality. Otherwise the generality of the measures outlined under this policy objective make it difficult to see how they can have a significant impact on advancing gender equality.

4.2 Targets set

4.2 Targets

Targets prioritized in the National Report for the NAP/inclusion are:

- Continuing progress in relation to increasing the employment rate in line with the Lisbon targets which sets a specific target for female employment of 60%. Target set is to achieve or exceed this target.
- In the case of lone parents and other parents excluded from the workforce is to significantly increase participation, training and quality of employment. These targets contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon targets discussed above.
- Continued reduction of consistent poverty to 2% or its complete elimination by 2007 in line with the targets set out by the Government in 2002. Given that the data is showing an increased risk of poverty among women it is particularly disappointing that a gender perspective is not applied or gender based targets carried over from the 2003 report.
- Continued enhancement of maternity/parental leave entitlements with the extension of maternity leave by four weeks in 2006 and further weeks promised for 2007 bringing paid leave from 18 to 22 weeks in 2006 and to 26 weeks in 2007 as well as an entitlement to a 10 week period of unpaid leave. Parental leave entitlement has also been increased which, while it continues to be unpaid, can potentially be combined with maternity leave to establish a new leave entitlement of 56 weeks in 2007, 26 of which are paid at 80% of pay (for those with a sufficient employment record payment). This is an important development of particular benefit to women and contributing towards greater gender equality.
- Development of an infrastructure to provide quality, affordable childcare increasing the supply (valued at EURO 154m and EURO 314m in 2006 and 2007 respectively) including the development of 50,000 new childcare places and training of 17,000 childcare workers by 2010.
- Ensuring that sufficient data on immigrants is available through the implementation of the OSI Data Strategy and the development of the National Integration Policy.
- Continued monitoring of outcomes through the development of data sources under the auspices of the Office for Social Inclusion with a strong focus on disaggregation by gender.

The NSSPI 2006-08 incorporates a gender perspective in relation to its policy objectives demonstrating a welcome increased awareness of the different experiences of each gender in relation to: early school leaving; migrant workers, over-representation of women in low paid jobs; need for greater sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men; provision of public transport; health policy; homelessness, income support systems; participation and training for lone parents and people with disabilities and affordable childcare provision. The report also makes a commitment to prioritizing equality mainstreaming within labour market services in order to ensure policy provision takes account of diversity and promote equality to achieve effective outcomes for men and women, Travellers, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian people and older people. There is a commitment to develop data for monitoring progress under the 2006 NSSPI disaggregated with reference to gender and age.

However despite these elements, with the exception of increasing the female employment rate in line with Lisbon targets, the measures discussed in the report do not translate into gender specific targets or budgets. Targets of increasing participation in workforce & training for lone parents and people with disabilities and maintaining the existing NAPS target for those relying on social welfare payments imply a gender perspective with women representing the majority of lone parents, disabled persons and those dependent on social welfare. The creation of new childcare places is also significant but the increasingly high cost of childcare (23% increase within 2003-05 period) and limited public funding of childcare places mean targets remain inconsistent with the Barcelona Summit targets of universal provision of publicly-funded pre-school for children aged 3-4 years. As noted above targets set in relation to poverty do not have any specific gender dimension. Given that the data is showing the increased risk of poverty among women and that gender specific targets were given in the previous 2003-2005 report this is particularly disappointing. It can also be argued that the over-reliance on employment growth as a means to address poverty has not been successful and a more integrated strategy to address low income necessary, especially as the majority of those in the low wage bracket are women. Indexation of welfare payments to a percentage of the average industrial wage would be one way of addressing low income

Recognition of a gender perspective on issues affecting specific vulnerable groups is addressed to some degree in the policy objectives, for example in the case of migrant workers and homeless people but there is no follow through with gender-specific targets. Overall, there seems to be an over-emphasis on the importance of equality mainstreaming across the different groups but with limited focus on gender mainstreaming, especially where actionable targets are concerned. Despite strong statements on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the NSSPI is limited in its gender perspective and lacks an actionable strategy towards achieving greater gender equality.

4.3 Governance

4.3 Governance

Ireland has a highly developed system of social partnership at central and local levels. The first stage of consultation in relation to NAP/inclusion 2006-08 involved invitations for submissions and holding of consultation meetings with a wide range of social actors - the traditional social partners, the voluntary and community sector, women's organisations and organisations of minority groups. Specific statutory agencies also made submissions, for example the Combat Poverty Agency and the Equality Authority. The National Women's Council, organisations representing Lone Parents as well as other community and voluntary organisations made submissions focusing on proposals to strengthen gender equality and gender mainstreaming and particularly policy needs in relation to low pay, labour market access, childcare, welfare payments, leave entitlements and the gender pay gap.

The Office for Social Inclusion convenes an annual Social Inclusion Forum, supplemented in a series of regional and national fora on specific topics to provide individual members of the social partner organisations, the community and voluntary and other sectors, and people experiencing poverty, with an opportunity to contribute to the process. The 3rd annual Social Inclusion Forum, held in February 2006, highlighted the importance of gender issues as key for all communities.

The National Report underlines the importance of gender mainstreaming, emphasizing the role of public policy to promote equality of opportunity between women and men through the development, implementation and monitoring of appropriate policies including Programmes for *Positive Actions to Promote Gender Equality* (including implementing the National Women's Strategy), and *Equality Proofing*, all supported and monitored by the Gender Equality Unit and supported by the Equality Authority and other relevant statutory bodies. Putting gender back into view, the report underlines a commitment to publish the *National Women's Strategy* in late 2006 which aims to enhance women's participation in decision-making and civil society. With the NDP coming to a close, a period of uncertainty has opened up in relation to policies towards gender mainstreaming and also the future of institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, specifically the Gender Equality Units, Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines and gender equality representation on NDP monitoring committees.

While the increased visibility of gender in the process of consultation has been a significant and welcome change in the NAP/inclusion decision-making process, with such improvements as the increased representation of gender in group submissions and the expected publication of the *National Women's Strategy* in late 2006, gender mainstreaming still lacks direct implementation in the consultation process.

4.4 Annex – Good practice examples provided by the Member States in the NRS

4.4 Good Practice Examples

Good practice example	Is there any discussion of gender mainstreaming in the discussion of the policy design?	Has the good practice example been evaluated? Is one planned?	Did this evaluation include a gender impact assessment/audit or evaluation	Is the good practice example likely to reduce gender inequality/increase gender

	If yes-please explain		been made? Is one planned?	inequality/have little or no impact on gender equality?
Social Inclusion Units in all local authorities	Not explicitly. However, the evaluation of the pilot study showed the existence of social inclusion units in local authorities increased provision of childcare services for excluded groups which would have direct benefit for disadvantaged groups of women	Yes, in June 2004 the scheme was evaluated by a group of independent consultants and following the evaluation, Government decided to continue with pilot for one more year, pending further evaluation.	No.	Have little impact on gender equality
Disability Sectoral Plans	No discussion.	No, plans were submitted to Oireachtas in July 2006 A progress report on will be prepared after 3 years.	No.	Impact unknown as plans still in their infancy but suggest little impact on gender equality.
Poverty Impact Assessment	Yes. Guidelines published in April 2006 highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming as an area for special attention with a commitment to have all poverty-related data gender disaggregated and also addressing the gender dimensions of poverty	Yes in 2005 by the OSI.	Limited reference to gender impact assessment mechanisms throughout the evaluation but no reference to how gender specifically impacts on poverty. Future poverty-related policies and programmes will be screened for their relevance to gender prior to being assessed for poverty impact.	As poverty proofing previously took place independent of any specific gender analysis, the new guidelines are likely to have some impact on reducing gender inequality to some degree.

4.5 Annex – voluntary attachment of more elaborated NAPs/inclusion or other material

5. Final summary overview of gender mainstreaming in the NRS

The 2006 NSSPI for Ireland reflects the framework adopted in the new social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* organised around a lifecycle approach, one characterised by gender blindness approach with the result that gender mainstreaming is invisible as a cross cutting principle in the Common Overview. Meanwhile within the National Strategy for Social Inclusion a gender perspective is systematically presented in relation to each priority policy objective. This is very welcome showing evidence of greater awareness of the particular

issues arising for women and men in relation to specific groups. This contrasts with the approach of the 2003 report, which stated a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming but lacked a gender perspective in discussion of objectives and measures. In the 2006 NSSPI this is reversed with no visibility of gender mainstreaming in the framing of the Report but a systematic application of a gender perspective in discussion of objectives measures. Overall, the NSSPI does not demonstrate an integrated approach to mainstreaming gender equality such that the impact of the gender perspective applied to each priority policy objective is diminished. While there are references to mainstreaming equality this is related to overall social inclusion but does not articulate a specific perspective on gender equality mainstreaming.

Positive aspects where gender perspective is advanced

1. Regarding social protection policy the NSSPI makes a the commitment “to ensuring that the social protection system adequately supports all people of working age, whether in the labour market or outside of it and facilitates labour market participation.” This indicates a strategy inclusive of significant sectors of women previously marginalised by an approach exclusively targeted at those in the labour market. This represents a radical change in Irish social welfare policy encompassing a welcome emphasis on individual entitlements (rather than the traditional household system) but at the same time a proposed withdrawal of the right to long term welfare support (clearly based on a compulsory system of taking up training and employment) to parents of children over 5-7 years in low income households - the large majority of those likely to be affected by such a change are women.
2. Commitments to developing child and older people’s care services represent a policy direction with very important benefits for women and gender equality.
3. In discussing the interaction between social protection and employment, a commitment is made to implementing policies on improved quality of work. Given women’s concentration in low paid work this reference to potentially improved wage levels and enforcement of employment regulation is very welcome
4. Developing data information systems under the co-ordination of the Office for Social Inclusion with a systematic focus on gender disaggregation will significantly improve analysis on gender issues for future plans.
5. Incorporating the consultation process for the NSSPI into Ireland’s highly developed system of social partnership at central and local levels including invitations for submissions and holding of consultation meetings with a wide range of social actors - the traditional social partners, the voluntary and community sector, women's organisations and organisations of minority groups – has allowed for strong representation of a gender perspective. The importance of gender for those consulted in the consultation process is highlighted by the fact that gender constituted the third largest policy area represented by groups making submissions.

Negative aspects where gender perspective is ignored/inadequate

1. As stated above the Plan is organised around a lifecycle approach which is characterised by gender blindness.

2. As a consequence gender mainstreaming is invisible as a cross cutting principle in the Common Overview and overall, the NSSPI does not demonstrate an integrated approach to mainstreaming gender equality such that the impact of the gender perspective applied to each priority policy objective later in the National Strategy for Social Inclusion is diminished.
3. Only an implicit acknowledgement of the higher risk of poverty for women is evident in relation to poverty through the vulnerable groups listed in the main body. However a statistical table on 'consistent poverty' and 'at risk of poverty' rates broken down by gender is provided in the Annex. Given that the data is showing an increased risk of poverty among women it is particularly disappointing that a gender perspective is not applied or gender based targets carried over from the 2003 report.
4. The Irish NSSPI 2006 reiterates a central feature of Ireland's policy approach to social inclusion that "accessing and retaining employment is [] one of the most important routes out of poverty." This approach has always lacked an underlying gender analysis. Women are under-represented among the unemployed, linked to their traditional interrupted relationship to the labour market and the household nature of the social welfare system.

Priorities to Improve Gender Mainstreaming in Common Overview

1. Commitments to gender mainstreaming evident in general statements of previous plans needs to be incorporated back into this section of the NSSPI to ensure there is no pull-back from an, albeit limited, established position and also to harness the benefits of the systematic inclusion of a gender perspective in relation to each policy measure in the National Strategy on Social Inclusion in the interests of an integrated approach to gender in the NSSPI.
2. Applying a gender analysis to the evaluation of poverty and reverting to providing gender specific targets in relation to poverty as in the 2003-2005 report.
3. Developing further the policy approach of extending labour market activation policies beyond the long-term unemployed to include groups of women previously marginalized. In this NSSPI the focus has been on lone parents, 90% of whom are women. An approach based on targeting those who have experienced a 'period of extended absence from the labour market' rather than an almost exclusive emphasis on periods of registered unemployment would potentially operate on a basis of greater gender equality.
4. Improving quality in employment, specifically low pay and in particular minimum wage levels as well as regulation and enforcement is a priority given women's continued concentration in low-paid employment.
5. Improving on existing commitments in relation to care services for children and older people is crucial to removing barriers to gender equality. In relation to childcare, targets must be measured against current levels of need as well as standards of provision across Europe in light of Ireland's poor performance in measures of cost of childcare to parents and levels of provision, particularly for pre-school children.

Priority Issues to improve gender mainstreaming in National Action Plan on Inclusion

1. Translating the welcome gender perspective applied to each priority policy objective into gender specific targets and budgets.
2. Ensure gender disaggregation in the application of all measures to monitor progress under each objective area.
3. With the NDP coming to a close, a period of uncertainty has opened up in relation to the future of institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, specifically the Gender Equality Units, Gender Impact Assessment Guidelines and gender equality representation on NDP monitoring committees. These mechanisms need to be retained and strengthened.
4. Improving quality in employment, specifically low pay and in particular minimum wage levels as well as regulation and enforcement is a priority given women's continued concentration in low-paid employment.
5. Improving on existing commitments in relation to care services for children and older people is crucial to removing barriers to gender equality. In relation to childcare, targets must be measured against current levels of need as well as standards of provision across Europe in light of Ireland's poor performance in measures of cost of childcare to parents and levels of provision, particularly for pre-school children.