

Gender and Wider Equal Opportunities Horizontal Principle Annual Reporting Template

For the period Jan. to Dec. 2011

1. Name of Activity:

Positive Action to Promote Gender Equality No: ESF 2.8

2. What actions have taken place over the last year to incorporate the principle of gender and wider equal opportunities into the Activity?

The Equality for Women Measure (EWM) is a positive action programme for women which aims to foster gender equality in accordance with the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 and the goals of the European Union in relation to both gender equality and economic growth and labour market activation.. To-date the EWM has addressed areas of gender inequality to improve women's access to employment and to increase their engagement as entrepreneurs. The focus has included:

- Strand 1 Projects - Activities to support women who are returning to or preparing for work;
- Strand 2 Projects - Training to develop women entrepreneurs; and
- Strand 3 Projects - Training for the advancement of women in the workplace.

Following an open call for applications, a total of 41 projects were awarded funding of up to €50,000 in October 2010. Funding was initially committed to projects up until 30th June 2011. In May 2011 all EWM funded groups were invited to apply for additional funding under Year 2 of the Measure, for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 April 2012.

The breakdown by Strand is as follows:

Strand	No. Of Projects 2010/2011	No. Of Projects 2011/2012
Access to Employment	31	29
Entrepreneurship	9	10
Career Development	1	1

The EWM again made funding of €50,000 available to National Women's Enterprise Day (NWED), a developmental event for women entrepreneurs organised in 2011 by Limerick City Enterprise Board. NWED aims to inspire, activate and assist women across Ireland in running their own business. This annual event includes a conference, networking, exhibitions and mentoring clinics. Over 250 women in business participated in NWED 2011, supporting the recognition for the role of female entrepreneurship in Ireland.

3. Progress against Indicators (where established):

EWM projects continue to attract women eager to undertake personal development and to move forward into employment or into further education and training. As a result of rising unemployment, many EWM training/education courses will continue to be oversubscribed, with some projects maintaining waiting lists. Accordingly, it is evident that the cumulative 2013 targets set in the AIP for ESF 2.8 will be exceeded.

Positive actions, undertaken under the individual strands of the Equality for Women Measure, are targeted at a broad range of women in Irish society. In 2011, the total number of women who have benefitted under the Measure included (Note - these data are not mutually exclusive):

- 1,341 unemployed women
- 851 inactive women

- 776 early school leavers
- 780 who have completed secondary education and have no further qualifications

- 274 young people
- 395 older people

- 101 Travellers
- 500 Migrants
- 81 Women with disabilities
- 923 Others¹

4. Taking account of the material presented under 2 and 3 above, what contribution is the measure making to the promotion of gender and wider equal opportunities?

The level of participation of women in the Measure has far exceeded the expectations, with 2011 participants alone totalling 3,229. The EWM has facilitated a large number of women to engage in development opportunities, some for the first time, some as returners to education, some as a way of progressing to further education or meaningful work. As can be seen from 3 above the projects across each of the strands have benefitted a diverse target group of women across all ages and include women who have experienced domestic abuse, migrants, lone parents, Travellers, women who are long-term unemployed, offenders, ex-prisoners, women experiencing addiction issues, women in business, aspiring entrepreneurs and women in employment.

As stated previously, economic circumstances will see the demand for participation on EWM projects remaining constant. However, the success of this level of

¹ Disadvantaged women including lone parents, women with substance misuse, domestic violence, mental health difficulties, LGBT community, offenders and ex-offenders

participation is also due to the innovative approaches which projects have developed (as highlighted in 2 above) which have been informed by the needs of the women involved.

In 2011, a total of 663 Strand 1 participants moved to employment or advanced to another educational/training programme at the end of EWM projects. The further improvement of the socio-economic status of this group of heretofore marginalised and disadvantaged women, enhances the quality of their lives and moreover the well-being of their families.

5. Identify any issues arising that need to be drawn to the attention of the Managing Authority, the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Representatives or other Departments.²

The European Union places considerable emphasis on the need to foster women's engagement in the labour market to boost economic growth. Its five year Gender Equality Strategy has the economic independence of all women as a key goal. The Strategy aims to make better use of women's potential, thereby contributing to the EU's overall economic and social goals.

A series of actions earmarked in the Strategy includes getting more women into the labour market and helping to reach the Europe 2020 target employment rate of 75% overall for women and men.

In an Irish context it is estimated that there are currently about 350,000 women of working age entirely detached from the labour market (neither in employment nor unemployed). The labour market activation of this group is also recommended by the OECD.

It is therefore recommended that any successor programme to the HCIOP should continue to target female labour market activation, particularly for this group and for those whose engagement is now required through changes to the social protection scheme for lone parents.

There are plans to roll out a new Strand on women and decision-making later this year to complete the Measure.

6. Please feel free to attach any relevant additional material to this reporting template.

None

² The issues could relate to specific implementation concerns e.g. collection of data, or could relate to more general findings concerning the principle in question e.g. a particular policy in another department is obstructing your Activity from promoting the principle.