Gender Proofing

HANDBOOK

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Gender equality will only be achieved through an active and not re-active approach. In this context I congratulate the 6 County Development Boards: Roscommon, Sligo, Offaly, Westmeath, Galway and Donegal and the authors Marie Crawley and Louise O'Meara on this excellent Gender Proofing Handbook. It not only raises awareness of the gender equality issue but also simplifies the task of gender proofing. I am pleased that this commendable initiative is part funded by the European Union.

Democracy is a fundamental principle of the E.U. The full realisation of this core value requires the involvement of all citizens, women and men, in the economy: in decision-making and in social, cultural and civil life.

The Treaty of Amsterdam formalised the EU's commitment to gender mainstreaming. Despite this it is apparent that structural gender discrimination exists. This Handbook makes that clear. The cold statistics are difficult to reconcile with aspirations of equality - 97% of County / City Managers in local authorities are men, 86% of TDs are men while 14% are women. In my opinion, the paucity of women in decision-making positions is reflected to some extent in the lack of adequate policies to promote gender awareness and action.

In this respect I am glad to say that in my own office as President of the European Parliament, six out of the ten senior advisors are women. I am also proud of the fact that Ireland has the only female Ambassador (Permanent Representative) to the European Union not just now, but ever. In addition Ireland has appointed women to two other key posts in the European Union, namely in the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Auditors.

Gender proofing is not only about women. It also highlights issues relevant to men in today`s workplace and in society in general.

While much has been achieved in recent years, much remains to be done and this Handbook is both a useful and practical tool for bringing about real change at local and regional levels. It is a welcome Irish addition to the tools that are being developed throughout Europe for gender proofing and mainstreaming and I urge people to use it.

Pat Cox
President European Parliament

*Gender Proofing is the means
by which it is ensured that
all policies and practices within
organisations have equally beneficial
effects on men and women*

Gender Proofing Handbook

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Introduction

Between May and December 2001, a gender proofing training initiative was carried out with six County Development Boards[1] in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region - Donegal, Galway, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath. It was funded by the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform NDP Gender Equality Unit and was led by Roscommon County Development Board. The initiative arose in response to the Government's commitment to gender proofing the National Development Plan. The purpose of the training initiative was to design and deliver Gender Proofing Training to Board members of the participating CDB's to enable them to gender proof their ten year strategies.

This Gender Proofing Handbook has been developed as an outcome of the initiative. The Handbook is intended to provide information and practical assistance to those planning to gender proof strategies or development plans. Although the contents were developed in the first instance to be used with the County Development Boards, they have been adapted for use in the development and implementation of a wide range of policies and programmes.

The Handbook is divided into two sections. Section One comprises a number of information sheets outlining why gender proofing is needed and provides general background information on the issue. Section Two focuses on how to apply the process of gender proofing to objectives and actions.

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1. The County/City Development Boards were established in 1999 to prepare and oversee Strategies for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of their respective Counties/Cities.

Section One

Information Sheet 1 has been developed in recognition of the fact that there is a body of language concerning gender proofing which must be understood at the outset. The distinctions between the different terms provided here are important as they set the context for any discussion on gender proofing.

There is a prevalent view in Irish society that many of the inequalities between men and women have been eroded and that equality has been achieved for the most part. Closer examination of available data highlights the extent to which there is still a sizeable gap in this area. The statistics on Information Sheet 2 illustrate this point.

Information Sheet 3 is designed to provide a broad overview of some of the issues around gender proofing; its premise, what it will achieve and what is needed within organisations to make it happen.

While a primary incentive for gender proofing local development initiatives is the creation of a more equitable society, it is imperative to locate this agenda within a legislative and policy context. Information Sheet 4 provides an overview of both EU and domestic legislation and policy which relates to gender proofing.

Gender proofing is essentially a process and therefore requires considerably more than working through a checklist and ticking boxes. Nonetheless there is merit in using checklists within the context of a process centred approach. Information Sheet 5 provides checklists on four areas of work.

The concept of 'proofing' in the context of planning is a relatively new one in Ireland. Consideration of gender issues at all stages of project planning and implementation will be an innovative step for many people. Raising awareness of the need for, and the benefits of, gender proofing among all those involved in the design and delivery of policies and programmes within organisations is key to the implementation of an effective gender proofing strategy. Training is central to such awareness raising. In order to help organise a training programme and recruit participants, Information Sheet 6 outlines some possible responses to 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

"Gender proofing requires... that the knowledge, experiences and values of both women and men be given equal weight and used to inform all areas of local development activities."
Siobhan O'Donoghue,
Dublin Castle Conference Report

Section Two

Section Two focuses on the practice of gender proofing. For this purpose, a template has been developed, rigorously tested and revised accordingly. It progresses through the stages of gender proofing from information gathering to monitoring and evaluation. The template is designed to be used at the outset of a strategic planning process. It can also be applied by organisations which are in the middle of a strategic planning cycle to gender proof specific objectives.

Completed templates are provided to offer some insight into the types of issues policy and programme makers have identified in the gender proofing process. The sample templates were completed during training sessions run by the authors when developing these materials.

Finally, some of the key learning points from the CDB training initiative are outlined as points to be considered as you embark on the process of gender proofing.