

Driving Women's Equality



NWCI
STRATEGIC PLAN
2016 – 2020





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Introduction

The National Women's Council of Ireland's / Comhairle Náisiúnta na mBan (NWCi) mission is to lead and to be a catalyst in the achievement of equality for women.

We are the national representative organisation for women and women's groups in Ireland.

A non-governmental, not for profit organisation, founded in 1973, we seek to achieve **EQUALITY FOR WOMEN.**

We represent and take our mandate from our 190 member groups from across a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and geographical locations. We also have a growing number of individual members who support the campaign for women's equality in Ireland.

Our mandate is to take action to ensure that the voices of women in all their diversity are heard.

Our vision is of an Ireland and of a world where women can achieve their full potential in a just and equal society.



Founded in
1973

NWCI Values & Beliefs

NWCI's values and beliefs shape and inform all the work we do. They include:

FEMINISM

NWCI is a feminist organisation. We work to change society so that women and men have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives.

SOLIDARITY

between women in all their diversity, through empowerment, collaboration and participation of all women in Ireland and globally.

COLLECTIVE ACTION, COLLABORATION AND PARTICIPATION

NWCI is committed to work, where possible, based on collective action, collaboration and through participation, as preferential ways to achieve an equal and inclusive society where there is equality for all women.

THE RECOGNITION OF CARE IN OUR SOCIETY AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF CARE WORK BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

The recognition and valuing of affective care is fundamental to the achievement of equality for women.

IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE, JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

NWCI believes in the dignity and human rights of all human beings. These rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible.

INTERSECTIONALITY

NWCI acknowledges the intersectionality of women's lived experiences and in particular seeks to end discrimination on the grounds of gender, family status, religion, race, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, ethnicity or membership of the Travelling community.

PROTECTION AND RESPECT FOR THE BODILY INTEGRITY AND SECURITY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

NWCI believes that bodily integrity is a human right and the right to make one's own choices about one's body for oneself is a basic personal freedom.

PROMOTE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LEADERSHIP TO ACHIEVE AN EQUAL SOCIETY

NWCI believes we must examine the role of women in leadership and promote women into decision making spaces at every level, in order to promote solidarity amongst women and the generation of sustainable gender equal societies.

RIGHT OF WOMEN TO ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

NWCI believes that every woman has a right to economic independence and that such a right pertains to women in employment or on welfare.

COMMITTED TO BUILD A SOCIETY BASED ON EQUALITY, RESPECT, DIGNITY AND INCLUSIVITY

NWCI believes that women have the right to live in a society where equality principles rest on an understanding of respect, dignity and inclusivity for all women.



Context

The planning process for NWCi's new Strategic Plan took place in spring 2016, when Ireland was commemorating the 1916 Rising from which the Irish Republic emerged.

'Driving Women's Equality 2016–2020' builds on the progress made by NWCi to ensure we operate as a sustainable organisation, adding value to the work of our 190 diverse member organisations, being a voice for women's equality and acting as a catalyst for change for women in Ireland and beyond.

The world around us

In order to formulate NWCi's strategic view for the coming four years, it is necessary to take stock of the rapidly changing external context in which we operate, both at home in Ireland and more broadly in the international context.

A prolonged period of austerity, married with a new political reality in Ireland and a number of emergencies both at home (housing, healthcare) and internationally (the migrant crisis) all combine to shape the approach that NWCi will take in working to achieve full equality for women in Ireland in the coming years.

The majority of Irish people can see that gender inequalities are widespread and their impacts cut across all aspects of social, political and cultural life.

'Inequality continues to be a persistent feature of women's position in Irish society' the most recent Gender Equality in Ireland report tells us. This report shows that women are disadvantaged in the labour market; women are still primarily responsible for unpaid care work; while women also continue to be hugely under-represented in the political, economic and administrative systems in Ireland.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains 17 development goals, seeking to build on the Millennium Development Goals. Goal 5, in particular to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' will be a focus for NWCi.

Government has agreed to the development of a new **National Women's Strategy** and NWCi is ready to play a central role in ensuring that our members have their say in what the new women's strategy should strive to achieve for women. We will also work to ensure that it is underpinned by clear goals and timeframes with budget lines and a strengthened monitoring mechanism over the lifetime of the new plan.

General Election 2016 heralded a new era in Irish politics due to the implementation of gender quotas. GE2016 saw an increase in the numbers of women elected to Dáil Éireann (a rise to 22% from 16.3%) High profile appointments of women to positions such as Attorney General, Chief Justice, Head of An Garda Síochána and Minister for Justice, added to the fact that the previous two Presidents of Ireland were women, does not adequately reflect the dearth of women throughout the ranks of Gardaí, legal professions and senior Cabinet positions.

Violence against women in all its forms goes to the heart of addressing women's unequal position in Irish society. Statistics from Women's Aid show that 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence. The Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence was published (2016-2021) by the Department of Justice and Equality. The Istanbul Convention presents the central framework for progressing policy, legislation and investment on violence against women. The Irish Observatory on Violence against Women, chaired by NWCi called on Ireland to sign and ratify the convention on violence against women and this has now been achieved.

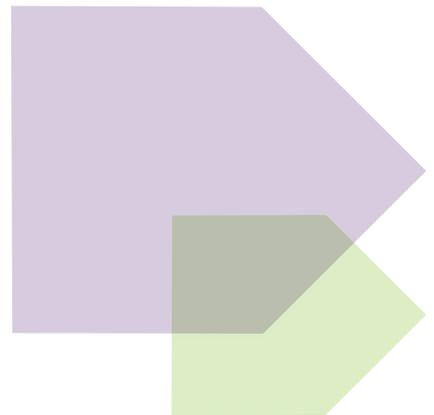




Ireland's abortion legislation is the most restrictive across the EU. The growing consensus that repealing the eighth amendment to the Irish Constitution which gives an equal right to life to the foetus and the mother is necessary and is a subject which is swiftly moving to the mainstream political agenda.

NWCI with a clear policy position and mandate from our members established over many years, will continue to play an appropriate role in raising awareness and calling for full reproductive choice for Irish women in the coming debate and possible referendum.

NWCI is heartened by the inclusion in the Programme for Partnership Government of many of our key areas as outlined in our 'Manifesto for the General Election' including, the National Women's Strategy, gender proofing, economic independence for women, investment in early years, violence against women. Over the course of this Strategic Plan, we looking forward to working with Government to further women's equality in Ireland.



10 Strengths of NWCI

1 Umbrella organisation for women



2 Mandate from a growing membership



3 Driving Social Change for Women



4 Unified voice for members

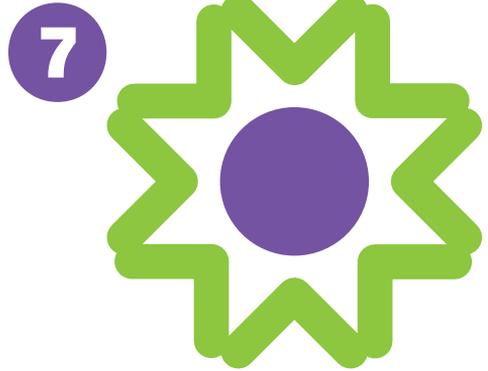


5 Staff, board and members





Trusted members
of Community and
Voluntary sector



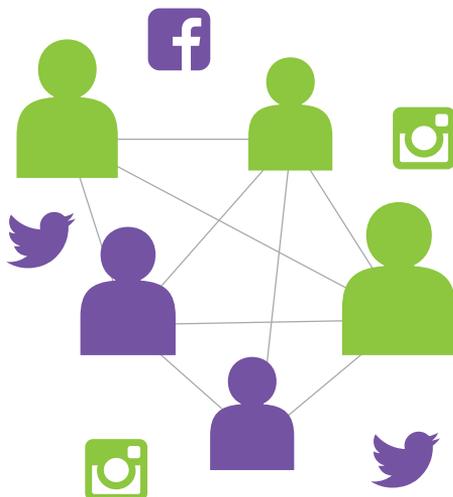
Being the go-to
organisation for
women's equality



Having a
permanent
home



Membership Diversity

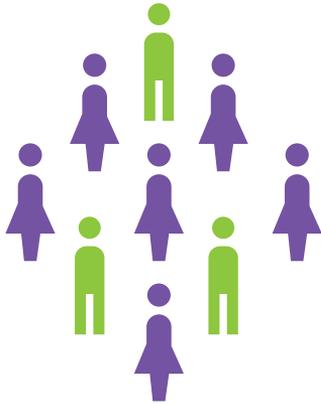


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Wide engagement
with women through
social media

10 Opportunities for NWCi

1



Women's increased political representation

2



CEDAW 2017

3



New National Women's Strategy

4



World Congress on Women's Mental Health 2017

5

Engagement with Women Leaders in Corporate Sector



6



International popularisation of feminism

7



8



Using new facilities of NWCi to engage more with members

NWCi campaigns more accessible to women in all their diversity

9



Harnessing the potential of social media for enhanced engagement with women and men

10



Support for Women Leaders across diverse sectors

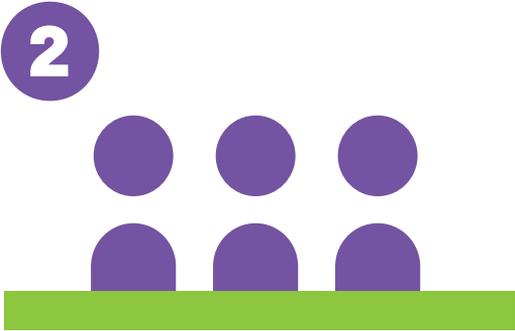
10 Achievements (2013 – 2016) for our Members:

1



Achieved first general election using gender quotas

2



Increased representation /articulation of issues at decision-making tables

3



VOTE NO.1

Highlighted the priority issues for members with 150 GE candidates

4



Increased membership of NWCi

5

More public positive discussion on feminism

6

Greater visibility of NWCI members across media

7



Ireland became a signatory to the CoE Convention Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence

8



Highlighted women's priorities to all GE2016 candidates

9



A strong position on abortion

10



Recognition and wider understanding of impact of austerity on women

10 Achievements Gained Through Working with Others



1 Growing network of complimentary organisations strengthened, giving a more vocal and visual presence for women in Ireland

2



Helped achieve increased access to childcare and parental leave

3



Made Repeal 8th a visible issue for GE2016 candidates & public

4



Contribute to awareness of human rights standards/ processes



Reached out to young women to create an ongoing engagement programme and a feminist space in Y Factor



Achieved the Magdalene apology



Achieved increase in minimum wage



Partnering with corporate sector on events



Marriage Equality



With HSE devised Gender Mainstreaming Framework

Methodology and timeline of NWCI strategic planning process

The Board of NWCI appointed Dr Grainne Healy to develop with the board, staff and stakeholders a strategic plan for NWCI (2016-2020).

In December 2015 Dr Healy met with the Chairwoman and Director of NWCI to plan the process and seek the necessary organisational support for its completion. Dr Healy conducted extensive desk research, met with board and staff members in a facilitated joint session to gather views. From March-May 2016, Dr Healy conducted a series of over 30 one to one interviews with multiple stakeholders including additional sessions with individual board and staff members, external stakeholders, funders and other informants. In April 2016, the members were brought together for a facilitated member's meeting in which their views were gathered using the same process as that used with the board and staff. Following this session, for those who were unable to attend but wished to have their views heard, Dr Healy sent a set of instructions along the same lines as the facilitated group work, to facilitate the greatest level of membership consultation and input possible. An executive summary of the report was published and presented to the members at the AGM in September 2016.



Driving Women's Equality 2016-2020

NWCI's work is informed by its understanding of how social change takes place.

We understand it to have four key elements and these inform and determine how NWCI does its work for social change leading to women's equality:

1. **NWCI BUILDS** and makes the case for change, working with research partners, members and allied organisations so as to reflect the lived experience of women and the work of our members.
2. **NWCI COMMUNICATES** to internal and external audiences, highlighting the nature, extent and impact of inequalities and human rights violations for women and effective ways to work towards the achievement of women's equality.
3. **NWCI WORKS TOGETHER** with members and strategic partners to drive campaigns to amplify the reach and impact of our work and increase political pressure to affect structural, effective change.
4. **NWCI SEEKS** to work collaboratively with our members and other strategic partners to build common engagement and ensure that as an organisation our staff and board are resourced to deliver on their work plans and enjoy a secure a respectful workplace experience.

NWCI is adopting two overarching strategic goals to support its drive for women's equality 2016–2020.

Goal 1:

NWCI will work strategically as the national representative organisation for women in Ireland by adding value to our members' work and progressing key equality and human rights issues for women so that:

1. **WOMEN REALISE** their right to health and bodily integrity including reproductive rights.
2. **WOMEN HAVE** economic independence.
3. **WOMEN'S CARE ROLES** are recognised and valued.
4. **WOMEN LEAD** and are represented on and can meaningfully participate in all decision-making spaces that affect their lives.

Goal 2:

NWCI seeks to further develop NWCI as a stable, more diverse, sustainable, highly visible organisation, growing in our ability to achieve women's equality, so that:

1. **NWCI MEMBERS** have their voices heard and can meaningfully engage in our work to achieve women's equality.
2. **NWCI'S WORK** and reach are amplified and supported by strong partnerships, collaborations and engagements with a wider audience.
3. **NWCI MEMBERS** are represented by a financially sustainable, effective organisation.
4. **NWCI MEMBERS** are represented by a trustworthy and professional organisation.

Key Goals and Key Headline Headline Indicators

GOAL	HEADLINE INDICATORS (showing we are achieving our goals)
<p>GOAL 1: NWCi will work strategically as the national representative organisation for women in Ireland by adding value to members' work and progressing key equality and human rights issues for women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have increased our understanding of the lived experiences of women • We have effectively highlighted the nature, extent and impact of inequalities and human rights violations for women and effective ways to address these • We have effectively campaigned for political change and achieved greater political leadership on women's equality • We have strengthened our analysis and sharpened our policy recommendations for women's equality
<p>GOAL 2: NWCi seeks to further develop NWCi as a stable, sustainable, highly visible organisation, growing in our ability to achieve women's equality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have diversified and increased our membership • We have provided greater opportunities for members to have their voices heard and engage in our work • We have reached a wider audience and achieved greater impact • We have increased our capacity to plan long term and affect structural changes • 30% of NWCi funds will come from non state grants • Regular monitoring and reports will show that NWCi maintains the highest standards of corporate governance by implementing the Governance Code • Continue best practice in preparation of Annual Audit using Statements of Recommended Practice (SORP): Accounting and Reporting for charities, 2014 FRS 102

OVERARCHING POLICY OBJECTIVES

- Inform NWCi policies through the lived experiences of women in their diversity
- Engage in dialogue, collaboration and consultation with key decision makers and policy influencers
- Drive national campaigns actively involving our members to increase public support and activism
- Use international human rights instruments and frameworks to highlight human rights violations and advocate for change
- Promote gendered analysis and gender mainstreaming in policy-making at all levels
- Support women candidates and feminist politicians in local, national and European elections
- Raise public and political awareness through proactive media and communications

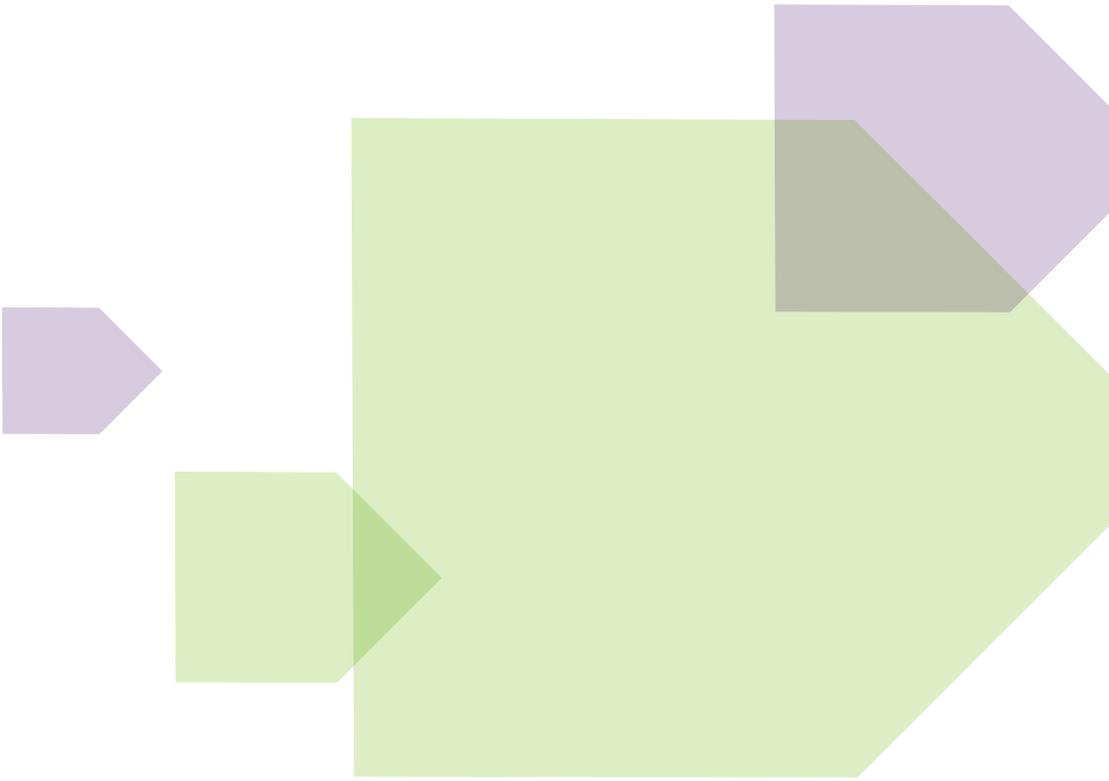
EXPECTED OVERARCHING POLICY OUTCOMES

- Better understanding of women's lived experiences in their diversity
- Greater political and public awareness of the nature, extent and impact of inequalities for women and effective ways to address these.
- Strengthened analysis and policy recommendations on women's equality
- Greater political leadership on NWCi policy priorities and improved policy making
- Greater engagement of women and men in advancing women's equality

Implementation and Monitoring

An implementation plan with clear measurable objectives and indicators based on the above strategic plan will be developed with staff of NWCI and approved by the Board.

A full internal review will take place at the end of 2017, to be drawn up based on a real time context. The Board will monitor overall progress of the implementation of the plan twice yearly at board meetings (February and October) with the Director bringing quarterly updates reflecting staff reports based on the agreed implementation plan.





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