

Questionnaire
Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas
Ireland's response
May 2019

Rural and women's organisations were encouraged to engage in the consultation that informed the priorities set out in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020,¹ adopted by Government in May 2017, through public meetings with stakeholders and the wider public in regional centres in Cork, Athlone and Sligo as well as in the capital city, Dublin, and by written submissions. Rural women are represented in the membership of the Strategy Committee appointed to advise on the preparation of the Strategy and which monitors its implementation, and include representatives of the Irish Farmers Association and the National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (NCCWN).

Among the outcomes pursued under the Strategy are actions to recognise women's contribution to agriculture and promote their leadership opportunities in the sector. The Strategy also aims to support and resource women's community development as a means to provide services and support for socially-excluded women. In this regard, the Department of Justice and Equality is supporting the Women's Equality & Development Programme, a support scheme undertaken by the NCCWN to enhance the inclusion of women in communities, with funding of €1.485m provided in 2019. The NCCWN's mission is to empower and support community-based women who experience disadvantage and marginalisation as a result of barriers to participation and lack of opportunities, through women's projects bringing about positive and sustainable changes to their lives and society using collective action and feminist approaches, with an emphasis on policy and on challenging structures, attitudes and behaviours that marginalise women.

In addition to the above, the Action Plan for Rural Development,² launched in January 2017, was developed to be inclusive of all people in Irish society but contains a number of gender-linked actions. The following actions have been completed:

93. "As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out the women's entrepreneurship initiative to promote female entrepreneurship and develop their entrepreneurial capabilities."

Two rural projects are funded under the ESF funded PEIL 2.9 Gender Equality, Women's Entrepreneurship strand and contracts agreed in 2017 are in place until 2019. These projects are GMIT in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon and SECAD CLG in rural catchment areas in Cork and Limerick. The two projects will receive a total allocation of €611,515 over three years. Each year participants in these projects will also receive a qualification upon completion.

¹ The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 can be accessed here: [justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf/Files/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf](https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf/Files/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf)

² The Action Plan for Rural Development can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/091dba-realising-our-rural-potential-action-plan-for-rural-development/>

94. “Continue the implementation of supports for the Rural Female Entrepreneurs Initiative (Acorns programme).”

In 2018, Fitzsimons Consulting was awarded, as part of a competitive tender process, a contract to further develop and implement the ACORNS programme. ACORNS is a six month part time development programme for aspiring rural female entrepreneurs aimed to equip early stage entrepreneurs with the appropriate knowledge, confidence and networks to successfully start and develop sustainable businesses in rural areas. Over the past four years Acorns has provided peer support and learning for 50 plus women with start-up businesses in rural areas each year. A one year extension is allowable on this contract.

143. “As part of the EU Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, roll out training under the “women returning to the workforce” strand, targeting women who are currently detached from the labour market and who are interested in entering/re-entering employment.”

Ten rural projects are receiving funding under the ESF PEIL 2.9 Gender Equality Women Returning to the Workforce Strand. Contracts awarded in 2017 will run until Q2 2020. The projects are located throughout rural areas of Ireland. The ten projects will receive a total allocation of approximately €3 million over three years. The participants in these projects attend group training and one-to-one coaching to improve job readiness skills and are supported both into and in employment.

Finally, Ireland was proud to chair the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) in March 2018, which saw the adoption of agreed conclusions on the priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”.