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PARTICIPATION OF IRELAND IN THE GENDER FLAGSHIP PROJECT

2022-2025



**GENDER
FLAGSHIP**

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES

The Gender Flagship Project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by Expertise France in cooperation with the European Commission.

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About the project

This case study was prepared as part of the project “**Gender mainstreaming in public policy and budget processes**” (hereafter referred to as the “**Gender Flagship Project**”, funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). The project is implemented by Expertise France (EF) with the support of the European Commission, SG REFORM, in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).



Implementation period: 49 months (June 2022 to July 2026)

Beneficiary Member States: Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain

Key activities: Technical methodological support, capacity building through trainings, workshops and study visits, dissemination and capitalisation

Implementation:

Funder: EU (SG REFORM) through TSI

Implementer: Expertise France, in collaboration with European University Institute (EUI) and European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The Gender Flagship Project aims to support public authorities from EU Member States at national and local level, in understanding how to advance gender equality by better mainstreaming gender into their policies and budgeting, as well as address any related gaps. It offers technical support for analysing policies and budgets with a focus on gender mainstreaming, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to fully participate in and contribute to a fair society.

The project works with twelve Beneficiary Authorities (BAs) across nine Member States over a 49-month period (2022-2026). Each BA receives:

- In-depth analysis of current practices and development of tailored Gender Action Plans (GAP);

- Technical support from dedicated Local Experts and core Gender Flagship Project team experts to build capacity and implement tools, such as developing and improving their equality-related programmes and indicators, enforcing gender mainstreaming through developing specific processes (e.g. circulars), developing gender-responsive budgeting methodologies.

In addition, the Gender Flagship Project provides capacity development through general online training and specific in-person training on the latest trends, methodologies and tools for effective gender mainstreaming. The project also facilitates peer learning and exchanges between countries through study visits and workshops, helping Member States to enhance their targeted approaches in specific sectors, policy areas and/or regions.



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

- BA** Beneficiary Authority
- CSO** Central Statistics Office
- DCDE** Department of Children, Disability and Equality
- DCEDIY** Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- DPENDR** Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
- DPER** Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
- EF** Expertise France
- EIGE** European Institute for Gender Equality
- EUI** European University Institute
- GIA** Gender Impact Assessment
- GM** Gender Mainstreaming
- GRB** Gender-Responsive Budgeting
- MyGED** My Gender Equality Dashboard
- OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- SDG** Sustainable Development Goals
- SG REFORM** Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission
- TSI** Technical Support Instrument

Executive summary

Ireland joined the Gender Flagship Project to close the gap between its strong political commitments to gender equality and day-to-day government practice. While a solid legal and strategic framework was in place, most civil servants lacked the practical tools, structured training and data needed to assess how policies and budgets affect women, men and gender-diverse people differently. Gender impact analysis was not systematically applied, practice in equality proofing varied between departments and data gaps reduced the visibility of unequal outcomes.

Through the project, Ireland received tailored support that unfolded in three closely linked steps. First, **targeted capacity-building** was delivered for three pilot departments, based on an initial gender analysis and training needs assessment. Online sessions and in-person workshops were used to test draft training materials, with officials working on live policy examples and providing feedback on content and format. Second, this feedback was used to consolidate a Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, designed as a practical “working book” built around GM case studies, a standardised Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) template and Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) examples, checklists and reflection exercises to guide officials step-by-step in assessing gender and wider equality impacts. Third, a Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module was finalised as a self-study resource explaining how to apply a gender lens to public expenditure, describing Ireland’s equality budgeting model – including equality tagging – and showing how gender analysis can inform budget decisions.

Looking ahead, Ireland plans to roll out mandatory online training across the civil service, building on the **Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit** and the Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module, and to pilot the Toolkit more widely across public sectors under the new National Strategy for Women and Girls (2025–2030), and its associated first Action Plan currently being developed. A monitoring framework is expected to track uptake of training, use of the GIA tool and progress in integrating gender equality into policy and budget processes. If these measures are implemented as envisaged, they will provide a clear pathway for the project’s outputs to become embedded in routine administrative practice, demonstrating the concrete impact of the technical support and supporting the long-term sustainability of its results. At the same time, continued efforts will be needed to address data gaps, ensure coordination across key institutions and maintain high-level political commitment.

Section 1

CONTEXT AND
RATIONALE FOR
SUPPORT

This section is mostly informed by the in-depth gender analysis undertaken in the beginning of the project, led by the EF project's experts Sara Cantillon and Rezart Xhelo. 2023.

1.1. Beneficiary Authority (BA)

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)¹, through its Equality and Gender Equality Unit, is the principal beneficiary of the Gender Flagship Project. The Unit holds the central governmental mandate to promote gender equality, coordinate gender mainstreaming, advise on gender-responsive budgeting, and develop relevant national strategies. It also monitors progress and disseminates information on gender equality issues. The Senior Minister heading DCDE carries the highest level of responsibility for gender equality within the Irish Government, placing the Department at the core of Ireland's equality architecture.

1.2. Context when joining the project

Ireland joined the project at a time when its longstanding commitments to gender equality required renewed operational focus. While gender mainstreaming has been part of Ireland's policy landscape since the early 2000s², implementation had become uneven. Key actions under the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2017–2020) - particularly those concerning gender impact assessment, data collection, and departmental capacity - remained incomplete or delayed. Progress reports highlighted limited awareness of the Strategy outside equality-focused bodies and persistent lack of gender-disaggregated data, structured training, and systematic gender analysis across the policy cycle.

This period also coincided with strong political and societal momentum for reform, driven by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality³ and subsequent parliamentary engagement, both of which called for stronger gender impact assessment, improved data systems, and enhanced mainstreaming capacity.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Ireland's governance architecture for gender equality comprises several interconnected institutions, but the Equality and Gender Equality Unit within DCDE stands at its core. The Unit exercises coordination functions, provides policy leadership, and engages directly with the equality and mainstreaming agenda. It works alongside, though distinct from, complementary structures such as the Performance Budgeting Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER)⁴, which leads the development of the equality budgeting initiative, and independent bodies such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The Central Statistics Office, meanwhile, provides the data infrastructure essential for gender and equality proofing, including the development of the Equality Data Audit and the forthcoming National Equality Data Strategy. Collectively, these bodies shape the environment in which DCDE operates, although their autonomy and different mandates have made consistent coordination an ongoing challenge.

¹ Former Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

² Ireland adopted a formal commitment to gender mainstreaming in the late 1990s and early 2000s in its National Development Plan (a multi-annual investment strategy, partly funded by the European Structural funds). Ireland has also received support from the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) over the years to develop our capacity to meet these commitments.

³ The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was a significant initiative in Ireland that arose from an Oireachtas resolution in July 2019 to consider gender equality and make recommendations to the Oireachtas to advance gender equality.

⁴ Previously called Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDR)

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Ireland's gender equality commitments rest on a substantial legal and policy foundation. The Employment Equality Acts (1998–2015) and the Equal Status Acts (2000–2018) form the statutory backbone of anti-discrimination protections. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 introduced the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which places a mandatory obligation on all public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect human rights in the performance of their functions. The National Strategy for Women and Girls (2025 – 2030)⁵, building on the previous strategy for 2017-2020, constituted the most recent national gender equality strategy relevant to gender mainstreaming and reaffirms the Government's commitment to the advancement of gender equality and the creation of a more equal society, with the vision of "An Ireland where women and girls can thrive in a gender equal society". Ireland's overall strategy is underpinned by a dual approach to gender equality, combining targeted actions to address persistent inequalities (like the Women's Health Action Plan⁶) with gender mainstreaming (applying and integrating a gender perspective to all policies). This framework intersects with Ireland's Equality Budgeting Initiative and with EU and the international commitments (EU treaties and equality provisions, SDGs, CEDAW).

Although the legislative and policy framework is strong, its implementation has been inconsistent. Gender impact analysis is still not legally required for all policies, data gaps persist, and gender mainstreaming is not yet standard practice in departmental processes. These gaps directly informed Ireland's engagement with the technical support offered through the Gender Flagship Project.



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⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/campaigns/national-strategy-for-women-and-girls-2025-2030/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/publications/womens-health-action-plan-2024-2025-phase-2-an-evolution-in-womens-health/>

1.3. Reasons for the beneficiary's participation in the project

Ireland's participation in the Gender Flagship Project is rooted in the need to move from policy aspiration to operational reality. The national objective articulated for the project - *to develop and deploy capacity within government departments so that gender equality is systematically embedded in decision-making* - reflects an awareness that existing tools, training, and practices were insufficiently developed to achieve this aim. There was recognition that the Equality and Gender Equality Unit required stronger structures, clearer mandates, and enhanced resources to support whole-of-government implementation.

The baseline gender analysis conducted for the project underscored substantial variation across departments in the practice of gender and equality proofing. Some had made notable progress within the framework of equality mainstreaming and budgeting, while others had not yet developed the required skills, protocols, or data infrastructure to mainstream gender effectively. The absence of a formalised approach to GIA, combined with the sporadic nature of training and limited availability of disaggregated data, created a pressing need for external technical support. The project thus offered Ireland an opportunity not to rebuild its system from scratch but to strengthen, professionalise, and harmonise the instruments already in place.

1.4. Project objectives and aims

Within the Gender Flagship Project, Ireland aimed to consolidate its gender equality framework by establishing durable capacity within government departments. The project's objectives focused on equipping pilot departments⁷ with the expertise, protocols, and tools required to carry out effective equality proofing as part of their routine policy work. The project ultimately aimed to ensure that gender impact assessment is systematically monitored throughout the policy cycle, enabling more transparent, accountable and evidence-based decision-making. In doing so, Ireland aimed to translate political commitments into lived administrative practice and to ensure that gender equality becomes a sustained and normalised aspect of governance.



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⁷ Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery, and Reform (DPENR) and Department of Transport as pilot sites for applying GIA and GRB tools.

Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED



The study visits and workshops provided a practical, evidence-informed basis to explore how gender considerations could be more systematically integrated into government decision-making processes. Working alongside the experts was a collaborative environment where we could exchange real-world challenges in the Irish context, test concrete methodologies through workshops, and co-design the tools that are both ambitious and operationally realistic.



Representative from Beneficiary Authority

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

The Gender Flagship Project provided Ireland with comprehensive technical assistance focused on capacity building to strengthen gender mainstreaming throughout the entire policy cycle, addressing a recognised gap between high-level political commitments and consistent implementation. This support was structured around three key components: identifying priorities through an in-depth gender analysis and action plan; operationalising capacity through targeted training and workshops; and capitalising the effort by developing a full suite of standardised methodological tools. The tailored methodological support centred on two key deliverables: the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, offering practical guidance and templates for conducting GIA; and the Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module, introducing officials to Ireland’s equality budgeting system and the principles of gender-responsive public finance. Together with tailored training, these outputs provide a coherent foundation for embedding gender considerations more systematically into policymaking and budget processes.

2.1.1. THE GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLKIT

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit was developed as a central deliverable to strengthen the Irish civil service’s capacity to integrate gender considerations systematically throughout the policy cycle. Designed as a practical, accessible resource, it introduces key gender concepts, outlines the national and international equality framework, and provides clear methodological guidance for applying gender mainstreaming in day-to-day policy work.

At its core, the Toolkit includes a number of GM cases studies and examples, guidance on gender indicators, and a comprehensive GIA template, accompanying step-by-step instructions, and illustrative examples to support users in assessing gender relevance, gathering evidence, identifying impacts, and formulating actions. To support continuous reflection, it also incorporates a series of interactive exercises integrated throughout the toolkit built into “My Gender Equality Dashboard (MyGED)” - a personal set of resources or a “learning log” for the user, which helps the readers to challenge gender blindness by prompting them to reflect on their understanding of sex and gender and identify gendered language and stereotypes a structured worksheet.

The Toolkit draws on the findings of the in-depth Gender Analysis, inputs from the Action Plan, and the experience of training sessions and pilot GIAs undertaken in participating departments. Its development involved close collaboration with DCEDIY⁸, DPENDR⁹, and short-term experts, ensuring relevance to the Irish administrative context.

⁸ Currently called Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

⁹ Currently called Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER)

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The Toolkit is a core outcome of the Gender Flagship Project, providing the Irish civil service with a standardised, nationally agreed framework for integrating gender and equality analysis across the policy cycle. Through its GM case studies, gender indicator guidance, GIA template and guidance, it offers a clear, step-by-step method for identifying gender-diverse beneficiaries, assessing positive and negative impacts, proposing evidence-based mitigation and enhancement measures (including indicative costings and monitoring arrangements), and aligning policies with national, EU and departmental objectives, as well as existing obligations such as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty e-learning module and equality budgeting.

The Toolkit also serves as the foundation for new gender mainstreaming and budgeting training, including a Training Handbook and module suitable for future e-learning. Its “My Gender Equality Dashboard (MyGED)” exercises help officials challenge gender blindness by interrogating assumptions, identifying gendered language and stereotypes, and using gender-disaggregated data to “build a gendered picture”. An explicit intersectional lens is embedded throughout. The tools and methodologies were tested and refined through pilot GIA and GRB exercises in selected departments, and are intended to be rolled out across the civil service as part of mandatory training under the recently announced National Strategy for Women and Girls, supporting sustainable, whole-of-government institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The development of the Toolkit highlighted several important lessons. First, gender mainstreaming tools must be both clear and practical to be effectively adopted across government; straightforward templates and concrete examples proved essential in building user confidence.

Second, the pilot GIAs underscored the centrality of robust gender-disaggregated data, while also revealing ongoing data gaps that need to be addressed to support thorough impact assessment.

Third, the process confirmed that structured guidance - such as the GIA template and the reflective MyGED worksheet - helps civil servants move from general awareness to applied practice, reducing reliance on individual interpretation and improving consistency across departments.

Finally, framing gender mainstreaming as integral to effective policymaking, rather than as an administrative add-on, significantly improved engagement. When officials see how gender analysis strengthens policy outcomes, the motivation to use the tools rises markedly.

For further details, see Annex. Spotlight Practice: The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit.



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2.1.2. THE GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING TRAINING MODULE: UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTING GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING PRINCIPLES

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Alongside the Toolkit, the Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module: Understanding and Implementing Gender-Responsive Budgeting Principles, was developed as a self-directed learning tool to introduce civil servants to the fundamentals of gender-responsive budgeting. The module explains, in plain terms, what gender-responsive budgeting is, why it is necessary, and how it is implemented within the Irish administrative and budgetary context. It outlines Ireland’s equality budgeting process, including the equality-tagging system, and describes how gender analysis connects to budget decisions. The module is divided into five parts, each presenting specific learning objectives and guiding the user through definitions, examples, and core concepts.

To support learning, the module includes quizzes, case studies, exercises, and a learning log where participants can record their reflections. The content emphasises the importance of data, the role of indicators, and the visibility required to understand gendered impacts in budgets. The document also cites OECD guidance, noting that gender-responsive budgeting tools should be simple and straightforward, and the module is structured to reflect that approach.

The module is organised over five main sections:

- Section 1: The key concepts underpinning gender-responsive budgeting principles.
- Section 2: The Importance of gender analysis and impact assessment for gender-responsive budgeting.
- Section 3: The importance of gender metrics and visibility for gender-responsive budgeting.
- Section 4: Building an understanding of gender-responsive budgeting.
- Section 5: Equality perspective in the Irish budgetary process.



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RESULTS ACHIEVED

The module provides a complete written introduction to gender-responsive budgeting, including explanations of central concepts, the importance of gender analysis, and the role of gender-disaggregated data. By presenting Ireland’s equality budgeting model and equality-tagging system, the module supplies civil servants with a clear account of how gender-responsive budgeting functions in practice. Case studies included in the document illustrate how gender impacts appear in different policy areas, while exercises and quizzes allow users to check their understanding and apply what they learn.

The module is also intended to be adapted for e-learning and accessed online for wider use across the civil service.



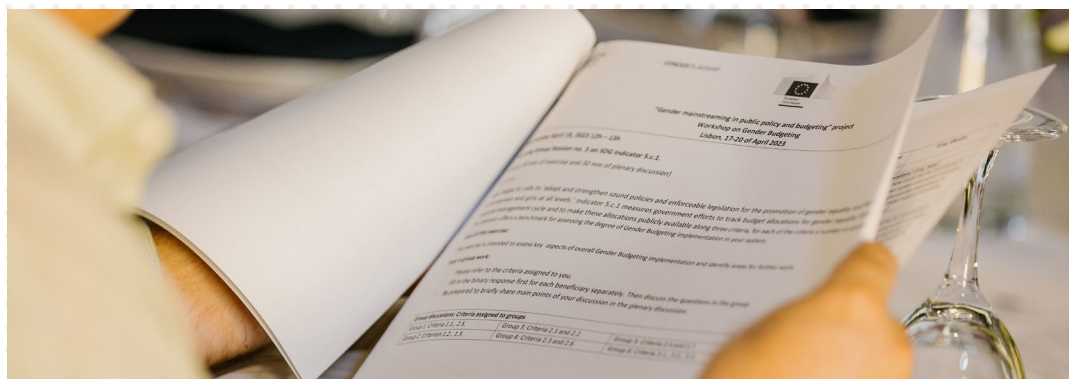
Gender mainstreaming is a central pillar of the new National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030, and leading in the development and rollout of this toolkit represents a major step forward in turning that commitment into everyday practice. By equipping departments with clear methodologies, practical templates, and evidence-based processes, the toolkit brings consistency and clarity to how we will assess the gendered impacts of our policies and budgets.



Representative from Beneficiary Authority

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module highlights several challenges encountered in the practice of gender-responsive budgeting in Ireland. The module notes that effective gender-responsive budgeting depends heavily on the availability of gender-disaggregated data, and it shows that in many policy areas such data are limited or incomplete. This lack of visibility restricts the ability of departments to fully assess gender impacts. The material also points to challenges in developing and applying appropriate indicators and metrics, which are necessary to understand how budget decisions affect different groups. Furthermore, the examples provided demonstrate that gender impacts often remain hidden unless deliberately examined, revealing that existing budgeting processes do not always make gender considerations explicit.



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2.2. Capacity-building activities

As part of the capacity-building component of the Gender Flagship Project, Ireland participated in a structured programme aimed at strengthening institutional knowledge and practical skills in gender mainstreaming, GIA and GRB. Irish officials took part in two complementary strands of activity: project-wide group capacity-building open to all beneficiary administrations and Ireland-specific training targeted at the three key departments. At project level, representatives from Ireland joined online training sessions organised by EUI and cross-country workshops and study visits. These activities promoted peer learning and exposed Irish officials to diverse methodologies and good practices from other administrative systems, which were then complemented by more tailored national sessions responding to Ireland's specific needs and context.

In addition to these shared activities, Ireland benefited from a focused programme of national capacity-building tailored to civil servants from the DCDE, DPENDR, and Department of Transport. This work began with a detailed training needs and capacity assessment, which identified existing levels of gender expertise and clarified the support required. The assessment found that most participants held a basic understanding of gender considerations and wished to strengthen their capacity to apply gender analysis more systematically. All participants completed the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty e-learning module before progressing to project activities, ensuring a common baseline of knowledge.

Between May and September 2024, the project delivered several rounds of targeted training through both online and in-person formats to a core group of around 16 participants. Two online sessions introduced the fundamentals of gender mainstreaming and EIGE's GIA Framework, providing participants with core concepts and preparatory exercises. These were followed by an intensive two-day GM and GIA workshop in Dublin, where departmental teams worked through the full set of GIA steps using live policy examples drawn from their own portfolios. The workshop enabled officials to practise applying GM and GIA tools, identify data needs, and outline follow-up actions required for further internal work. A dedicated GRB workshop held in June 2024 complemented this training by guiding participants through Ireland's equality budgeting system, equality tagging, and the use of the Public Service Performance Report for gender analysis. Lastly, a half-day workshop in September helped participants to receive and exchange direct feedback on the application of GIA and GRB in their respective department programs, outlining success, addressing challenges and gaps in data availability. The session also drew on comparative international experience to contextualise the Irish approach.



The rollout of this toolkit is more than a technical exercise; it is an important milestone in embedding gender equality into the culture of government. It will support staff in all sectors, regardless of their prior knowledge, role or seniority to make informed, inclusive decisions and will help ensure that our strategic commitments translate into real, measurable improvements in people's lives.



Representative from Beneficiary Authority

Section 3

FUTURE
DIRECTIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



Section 3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ireland's next steps in advancing gender mainstreaming are closely tied to the recently announced National Strategy for Women and Girls (2025-2030). The Strategy places a strong focus on ensuring that women and gender-diverse groups are systematically considered in both policy formulation and budgeting processes.

A major priority moving forward is the wider piloting and dissemination of the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, developed through the Gender Flagship Project, across government departments. This, as revealed by a representative from the DCDE (BA) during the project's capitalisation conference in Brussels, will be supported by the development of mandatory e-learning modules, which will provide self-guided online training for the civil service. Pilots for this digital training are planned for specific sectors, including environment and economic policy advisors, with broader rollout to follow. These modules build directly on the materials and lessons developed under the Gender Flagship Project and are intended to support sustained capacity-building and consistent application of gender mainstreaming tools.

Ireland also intends to strengthen its approach to GRB through the implementation of equality tagging for budget allocations, reinforcing the link between policy design and resource decisions. Alongside this, the publication of the Toolkit and Dashboard later in the year will mark a further step toward embedding gender and equality proofing within government processes.

A monitoring and evaluation framework will accompany the new Strategy, tracking uptake of the training and use of the GIA tool across departments. This will provide a clearer picture of how gender mainstreaming practices are being applied in practice and support ongoing refinement. At the same time, several challenges identified during the project - such as changes in key officials, lack of political understanding at senior levels, and delays linked to coordination issues - highlight the importance of stable engagement and continued support as Ireland moves into the implementation phase.



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Annex

ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT
PRACTICE:
THE GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
TOOLKIT

Purpose and added value

The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit was designed as a practical “working book” for Irish civil servants who need to turn high-level gender and equality commitments into concrete policy and budget results. It targets staff with differing levels of prior knowledge and walks them from basic concepts through to the use of the Toolkit’s core instrument – a comprehensive national GIA template – and on to monitoring, evaluation and equality budgeting in a structured way.

The added value of the Toolkit lies in the way it combines three dimensions in a single resource:

- Conceptual grounding – clear explanations of basic gender concepts, terminology, gender stereotyping, gender blindness, intersectionality and gender relations, illustrated with short examples and case snippets.
- Procedural guidance – a stepwise description of how to identify equality goals, analyse the gender situation, choose meaningful indicators, and conduct GIAs using the standardised GIA template, as well as guidance on integrating these analyses into evaluations and budget processes.
- User-oriented tools – fillable templates (including the GIA template), checklists and “My Gender Equality Dashboard (MyGED)” exercises, which invite officials to apply ideas directly to their own portfolio and to build a personal learning log over time.

The Toolkit is organised around questions expressed from the perspective of the civil servant (e.g. “I want to know our gender equality goals”, “I want to make gender equality results visible using GIAs”, “I want to know more about gender budgeting in Ireland”). This framing reinforces the message that gender and equality analysis – and the routine use of GIAs – are core to everyday policy and budget work, not an add-on reserved for specialists.



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Novelty

In the Irish administrative context, the Toolkit brings together elements that had previously existed only in separate documents, guidance notes or training materials. Its main innovations include:

- A single, end-to-end pathway: The Toolkit tracks the full policy and budget cycle – from clarifying gender equality goals, through diagnosis and design, to monitoring, evaluation and equality budgeting. Officials can see how each step connects to the next rather than encountering isolated tools.
- Integrated reflection tool (MyGED): Throughout the text, MyGED exercises invite users to capture their own examples (e.g. of gender stereotypes in their policy area, statistics from the CSO “Women and Men in Ireland” online hub, or indicators used in a current programme). Over time this becomes a personalised reference, rather than a one-off training worksheet.
- Concrete GM case studies across sectors and countries: Short case examples show gender mainstreaming applied in different domains – from police uniforms and infrastructure design to automatic enrolment in pensions, social welfare measures and transport projects. For instance, one case summarises how gender analysis of family leave benefits reveals risks of reinforcing traditional care roles despite nominal gains for women, while another shows how heatwave guidance must account for different vulnerabilities of older women and men living alone.
- A comprehensive GIA template linked to consultation, costings and monitoring: The GIA template goes beyond minimal screening. It prompts officials to document goals, objectives, outputs and outcomes; identify affected groups and differential impacts; summarise consultations with gender-diverse people; propose mitigation and enhancement actions; outline indicative costings; and specify monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Together, these elements make the Toolkit more than a checklist: it is effectively a structured learning and practice manual that embeds reflection, evidence use and accountability throughout.

Figure 1. Example of MyGED exercise included in the Toolkit

MyGED - Challenging Gender Blindness

Write down examples of gendered language and gender stereotypes that still prevail

Identify gendered language and gender stereotypes	▶	What are some of the assumptions behind these
Example : Women are better carers than men.	▶	More women work as paid and unpaid carers so it can be assumed that women are better carers than men
1.	▶	
2.	▶	
3.	▶	

Implementation in practice

The Toolkit is designed for use at both ex-ante and ex-post stages of the policy cycle. A typical application for an Irish civil servant might unfold as follows:

- Clarifying equality goals (“I want to know our gender equality goals”). An official working on, for example, a childcare support scheme is guided to map relevant commitments at EU, national and departmental levels and to record how their measure contributes to these priorities. A MyGED exercise then prompts them to list specific EU, national and departmental gender equality goals and to note whether – and how – each is relevant to their area of work.
- Understanding the gender equality situation (“I want to understand the gender equality situation”). The next step is to build a picture of the current situation for different groups of women, men and gender-diverse people affected by the measure. The Toolkit explains concepts such as gender analysis, gender relations and intersectionality, and asks users to combine quantitative data with qualitative insight. Officials are encouraged to draw on sources such as the CSO online hub and research by civil society organisations (e.g. the National Women’s Council) to identify horizontal and vertical inequalities, and to record key statistics and observations in MyGED worksheets (“Building a Gendered Picture”). In practice, this might involve documenting differences in labour market participation between women and men in particular age groups, or identifying how caring responsibilities shape access to childcare subsidies or transport services. Where data are limited, the Toolkit stresses the importance of consultation with gender-diverse people and representative organisations to capture lived experience.
- Using meaningful metrics (“I want to use meaningful metrics”). Once the situation is understood, the Toolkit helps officials select and define output, outcome and gender equality indicators. It distinguishes outputs (e.g. number of beneficiaries or services delivered) from outcomes (changes in behaviour, status or well-being) and shows how both can be framed in gender-sensitive ways. MyGED exercises invite users to sketch indicators for their own programmes or policies and to consider how these might be disaggregated by gender and other characteristics.
- Making gender equality results visible using GIAs (“I want to make gender equality results visible using GIAs”). The Toolkit then moves to the core operational tool: the Gender Impact Assessment. GIAs are presented as the central instrument of gender mainstreaming, with the Toolkit providing both narrative guidance and a detailed template. Case studies embedded in the Toolkit – for instance, on heat protection measures or transport infrastructure – illustrate how GIAs can be used both ex-ante (to shape the design of new policies) and ex-post (to review existing measures), and highlight the importance of ensuring that GIA findings are actually taken into account at decision and implementation stages.
- Doing impactful evaluations (“I want to do impactful evaluations”). The Toolkit then explains how GIAs can inform monitoring and evaluation, encouraging officials to use the indicators and impact hypotheses developed earlier to test whether gender equality goals are being met in practice. A dedicated section and case study on evaluation demonstrate how to incorporate gender questions into terms of reference, data collection and analysis, and how to interpret findings through an intersectional lens.
- Understanding gender-responsive budgeting in Ireland (“I want to know more about gender budgeting in Ireland”). Finally, the Toolkit introduces gender-responsive budgeting concepts and their application in the Irish budgetary process. It explains the rationale for integrating an equality perspective into budget preparation, decision, implementation and review, and summarises existing mechanisms such as distributional impact assessments and well-being analysis.

Figure 2. Excerpt from the GIA template provided in the Toolkit

GIA TEMPLATE

What is the policy, programme, or service you are addressing?

List the GOALS of the policy, programme, or service you are addressing.

1.

2.

3.

List the corresponding goals in national, EU, Departmental or your annual/business Workplan.

Has there been consultations with gender diverse people to assess the impact of this policy, programme or service on their lives.

Yes, please describe the results.

If not do you plan to conduct consultations?

Yes, please provide details late in the GIA.

No, please outline why not?

The Toolkit’s design also allows for use by individual officials or teams and can be applied to both new policy proposals and reviews of existing programmes. Its structured format assists departments in producing clearer documentation of their GIA process, which can support internal decision-making and alignment with equality-related obligations.

During the project, officials in the participating departments used the Toolkit to inform their pilot GIA exercises. These pilots were carried out on a range of policy areas, such as transport strategy, public expenditure and performance frameworks, childcare and early learning schemes, and social inclusion initiatives¹. In practice, the Toolkit helped structure their assessments and provided a common reference during training and coaching sessions. The “MyGED” worksheet supported users in documenting their reflections, data sources and emerging insights as they progressed through the GIA steps.

Guidance for adaptation

The Toolkit is designed to be flexible for use within Ireland and adaptable to different policy areas and administrative contexts.

- **Modular use:** Departments can deploy selected components depending on the scale and nature of the measure. A short screening form may be sufficient for routine technical changes, while large-scale reforms, strategies or budget decisions would normally trigger a full GIA using the complete template and associated worksheets.
- **Sector-specific tailoring:** While the overall GIA process and analytical framework set out in the Toolkit are standard, departments can adapt examples, prompts and reference tables to reflect sector-specific issues (for example, safety and accessibility in transport, care responsibilities in social protection, or workforce composition in employment measures). Data requirements can be aligned with existing departmental datasets and information systems, provided the core principle of seeking gender-disaggregated and, where possible, intersectional data is maintained.
- **Integration into internal guidance:** The material can be incorporated into departmental policy manuals, templates for submissions to ministers, or internal checklists used in programme design and review. For instance, departments may decide that no major policy proposal proceeds to approval without an attached GIA summary sheet generated from the Toolkit.
- **Digital and training formats:** Because the Toolkit is structured around clear steps, questions and fillable tables, it can be converted into online forms or e-learning modules. Officials could complete a short introductory module on key concepts, followed by a practical exercise in which they carry out a simulated or real GIA using the digital template. This supports consistent uptake across geographically dispersed teams and among new entrants to the civil service.

Expertise France is the French interministerial agency in international cooperation and development, part of the French Development Agency (AFD) Group.



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