



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality

Report of the Inter-Departmental Group on Gender Balance on State Boards

Options and Recommendations for
Government

March 2019

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2011 the Government introduced new arrangements to increase openness and transparency in the selection of appointees to State Boards. Under these arrangements expressions of interest were to be sought where a vacancy arose on the Board of a State body, with vacancies advertised on the relevant Department's website or by the independent Public Appointments Service (PAS). In order to support the new approach, the website portal www.stateboards.ie was created by PAS to offer a single dedicated point of contact for Government Departments to assist in the selection procedures for members of State Boards.

Building on this initiative, the Government in 2014 decided that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform should prepare guidelines for appointments to State Boards setting out requirements which would apply to all State Board appointments. These guidelines incorporate the long standing target to achieve 40% representation of women and of men on State Boards.

This target was also reflected in the Programme for a Partnership Government, which commits to every State Board reaching the 40% target. It is also included in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020, launched in May 2017, where advancing women's leadership in a wide range of areas, including on the Boards of State bodies, is one of the priorities to be pursued.

The Strategy includes two actions which aim to achieve gender balance on State Boards, as follows:

- Action 4.7 requires all Government Departments and State Agencies, together with the Department of Justice and Equality and PAS, to implement measures aimed at accelerating progress towards the target of 40% representation of each gender on all State Boards. Such measures may include engagement with external nominating bodies and awareness raising among eligible groups of women. The actions taken should be reported to DJE on an annual basis, highlighting the proportion of boards under the Department's aegis for which the target has been met.
- Action 4.8 requires the Public Appointments Service and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to consider the gender impact of the new arrangements for appointments to State Boards and report annually on the stateboards.ie website on the effectiveness of the process in ensuring an increase in participation by women on State Boards.

Significant progress has been made as a result of the Government's decision in 2014. By July 2018, the average gender balance across all State Boards stood at 40.7% female and 59.3% male members. However the target was met in respect of only 48.9% of individual boards.

With a view to accelerating progress in achieving this target, the Government agreed at its meeting of 11 December 2018 to the convening of an inter-departmental group to identify and report on best practices which could be adopted across Government. The Group would be chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality and include Departments which are on the National Strategy for Women and Girls Committee and have boards under their aegis, and the Public Appointments Service (PAS). It was intended that the group would report by the end of March 2019. The Ministers would then bring the report to Government with recommendations on actions to be taken by Government departments and agencies and an accompanying implementation plan.

“Gender balance will not be achieved on State Boards unless a climate is created in each sector where both women and men feel encouraged to apply. Minister Flanagan and I believe there is merit in examining what constitutes best practice in this area and spreading it throughout Government. This interdepartmental group will consider measures including those highlighted in the National Strategy for Women and Girls, identify best practice and consider how to mainstream such practice.” Minister Stanton, 17/12/2018

1.2 Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Inter-Departmental Group and the timeframe for conclusion of its work were set out in its terms of reference, as follows:

The Inter-Departmental Group will

- identify best practices (whether already in use in Departments or not) aimed at accelerating progress towards the target of 40% representation of each gender on all State boards, considering measures mentioned in Action 4.7 of the National Strategy for Women and Girls such as engagement with external nominating bodies and awareness raising among eligible groups of women;
- consider how such practices could be mainstreamed across Government Departments and public bodies;
- recommend actions in respect of those practices that could be taken by Government Departments and public bodies; and
- propose an implementation plan to give effect to its recommendations.

The Inter-Departmental Group will conclude its work and report with its conclusions to Minister Flanagan and Minister of State Stanton by end March 2019.

1.3 Membership of the Inter-Departmental Group

The following Departments are represented on the Group at senior official level:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
- Department of Finance
- Department of Health
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Department of Justice and Equality
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
- The Public Appointments Service.

1.4 Approach

The Inter-Departmental Group was convened and held its inaugural meeting on 13 February 2019 in the Department of Justice and Equality. The workplan agreed and pursued by the Group over the course of two meetings followed by written procedures, is set out at Appendix I below.

At its first meeting, the Inter-Departmental Group reviewed provisional statistics, as of 31 December 2018, on the gender balance on State Boards. A summary is provided at Annex A. It was evident that concerted efforts were being made to establish gender balance representation on Boards. The increase in the average female representation to 41.5% was welcomed. However it was noted that the proportion of individual boards meeting the target had fallen to 47.6% of boards from 48.9% when the previous survey was conducted in July 2018. It was noted also that the representation of women among board chairs lagged behind the percentage of female board members, with 29.8% of serving chairs being women.

The Inter-Departmental Group concluded that, in general, the PAS process appeared to be functioning well. To date in excess of 6,000 people had registered with PAS to receive alerts when board member vacancies were advertised and 51% of 203 appointments made through this process in 2018 went to female candidates and 49% to male candidates. Men and women were not equally represented among applicants, with only 32% of applications received from women¹. The Inter-Departmental Group identified this gap as a matter to be addressed.

Overall, women were appointed to 38.3% of 269 appointments made in the period July to December 2018. In addition to appointments made through the PAS process, board members are reappointed, appointed ex-officio and appointed on the nomination of external bodies. As the representation of women among such appointments is, on average, lower than appointments made through the PAS process, these were also flagged for attention.

Four key themes emerged from discussion, and these provided a focus for the Inter-Departmental Group's subsequent work:

- Measures were needed to encourage women to apply for Board positions in greater numbers.
- The Inter-Departmental Group would consider ways to encourage consideration of gender representation in appointing board members and chairpersons.
- Low representation of women among candidates put forward by nominating bodies and among ex-officio appointments needed to be addressed.
- The Inter-Departmental Group would also consider ways to encourage further engagement by Departments with nominating bodies with a view to increase the diversity and skills mix more broadly on State Boards, which indirectly could contribute to greater gender balance.

The Inter-Departmental Group identified a broad range of possible interventions to address one or more of these themes. These suggestions were discussed at its second meeting, held on 28 of February. An overview of these possible measures is set out at Appendix II.

The Inter-Departmental Group's recommendations are set out at Section 2.

1.5 Work already being undertaken by PAS

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) which operates under the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards has played a positive role, with the PAS process achieving

¹ State Board Activity 2018, PAS, accessed at https://www.publicjobs.ie/restapi/documents/State_Boards_Activity_2018.pdf

51% of appointments to female candidates in 2018 and 53% since the establishment of the process in 2014. The PAS focuses on meeting the Government request for greater openness in the appointment process and increased transparency in the selection of eminently qualified appointees for State Board positions, to support the relevant Minister in making appointments to State Boards under their remit.

This has been achieved through close collaboration among the State Board Liaison Officers (SBLOs), the line managers, and Assistant Secretaries within the Government Departments with the PAS State Boards team. An important component in the assessment of candidates for State Agencies has been the development of Assessment Panels to include diverse, highly qualified representatives of all industry sectors across, public, private and civil society.

The PAS State Boards process is constantly evolving, developing stronger recognition of the State Boards brand in key sectors with a focus on gender and regional representation across candidate pools. As a direct result of this engagement process, we have seen an increase in the number of women applying for vacancies on State Boards. In fact, the current applicant pool of 32% of female applications in 2018, demonstrates the success of actively engaging with female candidates and is a good representation of attracting women at all levels across public and private industry. In Ireland, women currently make up 18.1% of Directors of Irish registered ISEQ20 companies. Although higher, the EU average of 26.2% for large publicly-listed companies is still low.

Building on the success of the PAS State Boards process, consideration should be given to the following:

- Targeting specific groups, e.g. Career Returners, Women in Technology, Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM).
- Time commitments (including monthly meetings and sub-committee involvement) can be quite onerous especially those with family commitments. Allowing for video conferencing or time flexibility is attractive and should be highlighted at application stage.
- When applying, knowing that once appointed, coaching/mentoring is available can provide enormous support to female applicants.

Section 2. Conclusions and Recommendations

2.1 Introduction

The terms of reference set for the Inter-Departmental Group focused on identifying practical steps to improve gender balance on State Boards. The Group were conscious of the structural issues that may influence decisions to apply for or to appoint a candidate to a State Board. Women continue to be under-represented in the leadership cadres of public and private sector organisations which continues to be the primary pool of candidates for State Boards. They are similarly under-represented in the STEM, transport and agriculture sectors from which candidates for some State Boards are drawn. More generally, they are competing against those with incumbency advantage - the person with existing State Board or equivalent experience will find it easier to demonstrate that he or she has the necessary experience to warrant being appointed to a State Board. The Inter-Departmental Group were also conscious of wider issues such as the barriers constituted by women's caring responsibilities or by stereotypical assumptions which influence decisions regarding suitability for leadership roles.

The Inter-Departmental Group agreed that a focus on practical measures and targeted action directed at the composition of State Board membership will achieve more widespread gender balance in the shorter term. Some State Boards are currently governed by legislative provisions which include safeguards for balanced gender representation, and it was agreed that this approach represents an effective practice to be taken into account in the future. In the shorter term, the Inter-Departmental Group considered that a combination of governance changes and policies aimed at increasing awareness of diversity issues at Board level and among nominating bodies would yield results.

2.2 Conclusions

The Inter-Departmental Group on Gender Balance on State Boards concludes that targeted actions by Government Departments, external nominating bodies, the Public Appointments Service and by chairs and members of State Boards should enable all State boards to achieve the 40% target for gender balanced Board membership.

The Inter-Departmental Group considers that the appointments system currently being operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) has been effective in promoting better gender balance in appointments to State Boards. PAS's focus on developing awareness of Board opportunities among potential female candidates and on engaging in proactive outreach to broader networks of eligible women is considered key to the process of increasing the number of applications for Board positions from qualified female candidates. Equally, the support provided by PAS to Departments on candidate

specifications is also helping to increase the number of applications from female candidates.

However, barriers remain which are resulting in continuing gender imbalances on some State Boards. The factors which lead to gender imbalances in the membership of State Boards include the following:

- Lower numbers of applications from women for Board opportunities;
- No term limits on some Boards / tendencies to appoint members to some State Boards for long periods resulting in lower numbers of possible Board vacancies;
- The tendency for some external nominating bodies to nominate male candidates, particularly in sectors where women have historically been under-represented (this tendency occurs in reverse in sectors where women have historically been over-represented such as on certain health-related Boards);
- Overly narrow specifications regarding the skills needed, resulting in the exclusion of potentially qualified female candidates.

The Inter-Departmental Group considers that the achievement of better gender balance on State Boards will require Government Departments and Public Agencies to give greater visibility to this requirement both so that external nominating bodies are aware of it when nominating potential candidates and so that eligible women have greater awareness of potential vacancies.

Following consideration by Government of its recommendations, the Department of Justice will prepare an implementation plan, in consultation with the State Board Liaison Officers of each Department, of actions to be implemented by all relevant public bodies. It is proposed that a further review of progress be made by end 2019 and submitted to Government in early 2020.

2.3 Recommendations

It is the view of the Inter-Departmental Group that implementation of the following recommendations would address the factors which are leading to gender imbalances in the membership of certain State Boards.

2.3.1 Reporting

In view of the importance of maintaining visibility on the importance of promoting better gender balance on State Boards and of reaching the 40% target, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **All Government Departments should be required to report in their annual reports on the gender balance of appointments made to State Boards under their responsibility in the previous year.**
- **All Government Departments should be required to report in their annual reports in particular on any State Boards which continue to have either an all-male or all-female membership. They should set out the measures planned to introduce better gender balance onto such Boards.**
- **Where the membership of the State Board has not reached the 40% target, all Government Departments should be required to set out the measures that they are taking to promote better gender balance.**
- **All State Boards should be required to report annually on the gender composition of their membership. Where the Board has all-male or all-female membership or where it has not met the 40% target, the chair of the State Board should be required to report on any measures being taken to promote better gender balance in Board membership.**

2.3.2 Outreach

Reiterating the importance of promoting awareness of potential vacancies to women, as well as to women's and professional networks, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **Government Departments and State Agencies should proactively promote awareness of potential Board vacancies including by:**
 - **Consistently using the Public Appointments Service (PAS) website to advertise publicly for expressions of interest when vacancies arise and highlighting the requirement for gender balance;**
 - **Encouraging professional bodies, third-level institutions and women's networks to put forward female nominees for Board places;**
 - **Encouraging women retiring from the Civil and Public Service to register their interest in State Board vacancies with PAS, with similar initiatives for those retiring from the private sector, where possible.**

2.3.3 Terms and Conditions

In view of the need to increase turnover so to improve the gender balance on State Boards and as term limits constitute better governance overall, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **Government Departments should vary the terms of board members from 5 years to 3-5 years;**
- **In situations where the Board composition remains seriously gender imbalanced, they should ordinarily limit the terms of Board members being appointed to 2 years until gender balance has been achieved.**

2.3.4 Highlight gender balance when making appointments

In view of the strong signal that political support can give to the objective of promoting better gender balance on State Boards, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **The current gender composition of a Board should be highlighted when making submissions to a Minister on appointments/re-appointments.**

2.3.5 Governance and culture

Promoting better gender balance contributes to better governance overall. In this context, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies should be updated on a regular basis to keep pace with evolving good practice on skills mix, inclusiveness, diversity and gender.**
- **Each State Board should be required to adopt a Diversity and Inclusion Policy by 2020, including with regard to gender, setting out organisation-specific objectives in relation to Board composition on which the Board should report annually. Boards should be required to explain how they are using the Policy to comply with the requirement for gender balance.**
- **The current Board evaluation process should be strengthened to incorporate a detailed look at the gender, diversity and skills mix within a Board, including where relevant a critical assessment of the reasons why gender balance in Board membership has not yet been achieved.**

2.3.6 Nominations by external nominating bodies

The decisions of external nominating bodies have a strong influence on the gender composition of many Boards and may hamper the Board in achieving better gender balance. For this reason, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **External nominating bodies should be asked to submit both a male and a female candidate for a potential vacancy, unless precluded from nominating more than one person at a time.**
- **Departments and Public Agencies should place a focus in their engagement with external nominating bodies on the objective of promoting better gender balance in nominations to State Boards.**

2.3.7 Emphasise diversity and skills mix on Boards

Government Departments can play a vital role in promoting better gender balance on State Boards through their engagement with Boards and other stakeholders. In this context, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **Government Departments should undertake a package of measures to promote better gender balance on State Boards under their auspices, including discussing gender balance and skills mix with Chairs, encouraging Chairs to undertake inclusive leadership training, including on gender, and examining how to broaden the criteria for Board membership to attract non-traditional applicants.**

2.3.8 Training interventions

In view of the incumbency advantage enjoyed by those with existing Board experience and the importance of supporting new candidates to apply for Board positions, the Inter-Departmental Group recommends that:

- **Mentoring and shadowing programmes should be developed, with the support of the PAS, to support women interested in applying for Board positions to gain experience with regard to serving on a State Board.**

Annex A

Table: Gender Balance on State Boards 1995-2018

Year		Feb 1995	December 2011	December 2018
Number of Boards		*	272	232
Boards Meeting 40% target	Non-vacant Boards	*	268	225
	Boards meeting target	*	84	107
	% of boards meeting targets		31.7%	47.6%
Board Membership	All Serving Members	3,367	3,162	2,610
	Females	740	1,073	1,082
	Males	2,627	2,089	1,528
	% Female	22.0%	33.9%	41.5%
	% Male	78.0%	64.1%	58.5%

Appendix I: Outline Workplan

AGREED 13.02.2019

December 2018

Secretariat

- Draft ToR, workplan and letters seeking nominations from PAS and relevant Departments, and submit for approval.

January 2019

Secretariat

- Agree date of first meeting.
- Subject to approval, issue letters to PAS and relevant Departments seeking nominations to IDG.
- Confirm nominations from PAS and all relevant Departments.
- Compile State Board gender balance statistics as of 31 December 2018. Analyse State board membership and appointments trends since 2013. Identify the boards and sectors that have made greatest progress. Consult Departments to identify what measures were taken at Department or Agency level to support these changes.

February 2019

IDG Meeting 1:

- Agree ToR and workplan.
- Presentation from Secretariat on trends in gender balance on State boards, and measures taken by Departments.
- Discussion of effective measures and possibilities for mainstreaming.
- Arrange date for 2nd meeting.

IDG

- Provide material on measures and mainstreaming approaches to Secretariat.
- Submit draft recommendations.

Secretariat

- Write up measures and mainstreaming approaches (part I of draft report) and draft recommendations and priorities (part II of report).

March 2019

IDG Meeting 2:

- Review measures and mainstreaming approaches (part I of draft report).
- Discuss & agree recommendations and priorities (part II of report).
- Arrangements to finalise report & implementation plan, and approve by written agreement.

Secretariat

- Finalise report (IDG to agree by written procedure).
- Prepare draft implementation plan based on report (IDG to agree by written procedure).

IDG

- Agree report by written procedure.
- Agree draft implementation plan by written procedure.

Secretariat

- IDG chair to submit report to Ministers.
- Submit proposal to Govt.

Appendix II: Review of measures and mainstreaming approaches

The Inter-Departmental Group completed questionnaires aimed at identifying measures to promote better gender balance on State Boards. In some instances, these questionnaires reflect views solicited from Public Agencies. Ideas identified in questionnaires as well as ideas discussed during the Inter-Departmental Group's meetings are set out below.

1. Aim to increase applications from women

1.1 Outreach

- a) Mainstream good practice already used by Departments: Permanent link to PAS State Boards website on the Department's website; Prominent State Board vacancies link on the Department's website.
- b) Consistently use the Public Appointments Service (PAS) website www.stateboards.ie to advertise publicly for expressions of interest in appointments to boards when vacancies arise, highlighting the requirement for gender balance in the advertisements. This improves transparency and ensures gender balance is emphasised from the start of the PAS process.
- c) When advertising State Board positions on Public Jobs, an email should also issue to all the stakeholders from the relevant Department, highlighting the vacancies, enumerating the relevant skill sets and also including a reference to the fact that there is a move towards ensuring 40% gender balance. This would ensure stakeholders are aware of the vacancy, and notwithstanding the need for 'best person for the job', the inclusion of gender balance would signal a more open approach, thus encouraging qualified women to apply.
- d) Encourage professional bodies and third-level institutions in occupations and sectors where females are strongly represented, such as the legal profession, teaching, accountancy, quality, HR, nursing, some areas of science, etc., to put forward nominees for Board places.
- e) Serving board members could be invited to encourage women in their professional and personal networks to consider applying for State Board membership.
- f) Consider raising awareness of State Boards on media and through partnership with representative groups (PAS), or at participation in trade shows.

- g) Commission an executive search firm to identify a pool of 250-500 female potential board members, who would be invited to serve on boards. Similarly approach accountancy firms, investment banks and advisory firms for potential board members.
- h) Highlight the gender balance requirement in the public advertisement process seeking applications.
- i) Review the essential and desirable skills and experience for Board positions. Guard against describing requirements too narrowly when advertising positions through PAS, possibly discouraging applicants with adequate experience.
- j) The www.stateboards.ie website should provide public access to a list of all State Boards and include an indication of trends in gender balance and links to the relevant Board websites with more detailed information on board membership.
- k) Encourage women retiring from the Civil and Public Service who have a wealth of relevant experience to register their interest in State Board vacancies with PAS. This information could be included, for example, in retirement preparation courses.

1.2 Training interventions

- l) Consider an apprenticeship or sponsorship programme for State Boards to address pipeline issues, e.g. as in Scotland.
- m) Consider developing a 'board ready' programme for aspiring board members, to encourage women candidates. PAS also provides roadshows and talks on board membership.

1.3 Terms and conditions

- n) Vary the terms of board members from 5 years to 3-5 years. A reduced time commitment may be an incentive to encourage greater numbers of women and men to apply.
- o) Increase board remuneration and permit board members to hold 3-4 directorships, currently limited to 2 under PAS guidelines, to create a greater financial incentive and attract more female candidates.
- p) Where a State Body is falling short of public policy requirements in relation to board-level gender balance, or failing to meet the targets set out in its

Diversity and Inclusion Policy, all Board Directorships should be considered for appointment/re-appointment/rotation on an annual or biennial basis.

- q) Surveying women currently serving on State boards on their experiences could identify their career pathways to board membership.

2 Highlight gender balance when making appointments

2.1 Non-Legislative measures

- r) Through political leadership, create a climate where women feel encouraged to apply for Board vacancies. This involves the Government and Ministers in leading on the issue of gender balance and in appointing members of the under-represented gender to boards in greater numbers. Chairs and board members need to show leadership in encouraging women to put themselves forward for appointment to the boards on which they serve.
- s) Highlight the current gender balance of the board when making submissions to Ministers on appointments/reappointments.
- t) A representative of the Department and the Chair of the board should sit on an assessment panel convened by PAS to shortlist a panel of suitably qualified candidates, and care is taken to provide a gender-balance shortlist to the Minister. A clear policy and set of procedures is put in place and consistently followed across all relevant line divisions of the Department.
- u) Appoint women Chairs, to foster a climate where women feel encouraged to apply for Board vacancies.

2.2 Legislative measures

- v) Specifying in legislation the minimum number of board members who should be of each gender. For example, for a 13 member board to meet the 40% target, it must have not less than 6 men and not less than 6 women. The Arts Council and the Heritage Council also have the requirement for gender balance written into their legislation.
- w) More generally, examine the enabling instruments for State Boards and identify those which are silent on gender. Examine statistics to see if boards whose legislation is silent on gender are more, or less, likely to meet the gender balance target. Develop a composite piece of legislation to address gender balance on these boards.

- x) Examine legislation setting out nominating rights for external bodies, to see if guidance can be incorporated to underpin the skills profile of the candidate sought and encourage a more gender-balanced slate of nominees.
- y) Consider worker participation legislation to see if gender balance in such appointments can be improved.

2.3 Governance and Culture

- z) Update the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies² (CPGSB) on a more regular basis, to keep pace with evolving good practice in the area of inclusiveness and diversity, and gender.
- aa) Under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (CPGSB), board members are typically appointed for a term of 5 years (renewable). In comparison, directors are subject to annual re-election under the UK's Corporate Governance Code issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) Code, which is the reference for Irish listed companies. A 5-year rule may retard progress towards meeting gender balance objectives and its removal could clear the way for faster progress and incentivise changed behaviour in board appointments.
- bb) Hold regular workshops for Boards on governance in general, with a particular focus on the role of the Board, its relationship with the Executive and their respective legal responsibilities, and equality issues. These workshops should also have an emphasis on issues relating to bullying, abuse of power and sexual harassment in the workplace. This would aim to improve awareness and compliance.
- cc) Ask Boards to develop gender policies.
- dd) Introduce an explicit requirement for State Boards to adopt a Diversity and Inclusion Policy, including in regard to gender. These policies should include linkages to the National Strategy for Women and Girls, and a series of organisation-specific objectives, including in relation to Board composition and senior executive leadership. The annual reports should outline how the policy is being implemented, and the progress made against the objectives.
- ee) Strengthen the current Board Evaluation Process to incorporate a detailed look at gender and skill mix, and use this as an opportunity to seek strategies, actions and targets to address gaps.

² Revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, accessed at <https://www.per.gov.ie/en/revised-code-of-practice-for-the-governance-of-state-bodies/>

- ff) Mainstream good practice already used by Departments: Quarterly working groups on Corporate Governance; and Annual agencies' workshop.

3 Improve gender balance in nominating bodies' and ex-officio appointments

3.1 Nominations by external bodies

- gg) Ask external nominating bodies to submit both a male and a female candidate.
- hh) Mainstream good practice already used by Departments: Engage Chair to seek cooperation of external nominating bodies.
- ii) In approaching external nominating bodies, highlight Central Bank Commission's message that more diverse boards are more likely to make better decisions.

3.2 Worker-directors

- jj) Ask trades unions to consider gender balance when nominating members for worker-director positions.

3.3 Semi-State companies

- kk) Departments and NewEra should remind semi-state companies of the need to promote gender balance in appointments to their boards.

3.4 Ex-officio appointments

- ll) Encourage Departments and Agencies to submit both a male and a female candidate for ex-officio appointments.
- mm) All Government Departments and State Bodies should have diversity/Gender Balance groups, allied to a visible Management Board commitment to Gender Balance, to ensure that Gender Balance does not get lost among other issues. Management Boards and Management Teams in State Bodies need to demonstrate visible commitment and promote a whole of organisation approach to change the culture around Gender Balance, in order to bring more women forward to apply for positions.
- nn) Examine the legislative basis for ex-officio appointments and externally nominated candidates could indicate scope to extend the pool of potential nominees, such as women in various roles across the nominating organisation.

4 Emphasise diversity and skills mix on Boards

- oo) Encourage Department staff to discuss current/upcoming vacancies with Chairs and consider gender balance, skills mix and diversity.
- pp) Consider developing inclusive leadership training and guidance on governance, specific to State boards, or incorporating a focus on gender balance on State Boards in general inclusive leadership training modules, e.g. by the Institute of Directors in Ireland (IoD) and Institute of Public Administration (IPA).
- qq) Continue to encourage SBLO network to engage with PAS to drive best practice in determining skills mix and role descriptions.
- rr) Departments should systematically emphasise competencies and skills for board membership, and consider how to broaden the criteria to attract non-traditional applicants.