Introduction

The 30% Club is a group of Chairs and CEOs committed to better gender balance at all levels of their organisations through voluntary actions. Business leadership is key: this takes the issue beyond a specialist diversity effort and into mainstream talent management.

Details of our Chair/CEO Supporters, Advisory Board and Steering Committee are outlined in the 30% Club Ireland booklet included at Appendix A.

Please note that the views outlined within this proposal document do not necessarily reflect those of all 30% Club Ireland supporters.

Executive Summary

The focus of our submission is on women in business as that is the principal focus of the 30% Club in Ireland.

It is well established that better gender balance leads to better business practices, outcomes and results and that a combination of the following factors create a replicable formula for success:

- Supportive public policy that acknowledges that advancement of women in leadership is required
- Measurable goals with defined timetables
- Transparency in gender reporting
- Change driven by those in positions of influence and leadership
- Engaging men in championing gender balance
- Openness to collaborate
- A concerted and consistent series of actions and programmes, from schoolrooms to boardrooms

The 30% Club advocates a voluntary approach, underpinned by targets, accountability and transparency in order to realise meaningful, sustainable change. One challenge with the gender debate is that it is often seen as a women’s issue as opposed to a society and business issue. We believe that leadership from government and employers is key to achieving meaningful and sustainable change.

The 30% Club welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the development of the National Women’s Strategy 2017-2020 and we would be delighted to meet with you to provide further input and to collaborate in whatever way may be helpful.

Marie O’Connor
Chair – 30% Club Ireland Steering Committee
31 January 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the 30% Club</td>
<td>3 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations on key issues to be addressed</td>
<td>5 – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on proposed high level objectives</td>
<td>8 – 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations on outcomes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations on actions</td>
<td>11 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index to appendices</td>
<td>13 - 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction to the 30% Club

The 30% Club first launched in the UK in 2010 with a goal of achieving a minimum of 30% of women on FTSE-100 boards by the end of 2015 and since then the 30% Club has become an international, business-led approach focussed on developing a pipeline of senior female talent.

Officially launched as a campaign in Ireland in January 2015, the 30% Club has a goal to achieve better gender balance at all levels in leading Irish businesses. The 30% Club believes that gender balance on boards and executive leadership not only encourages better leadership and governance, but further contributes to better all-round board performance, and ultimately increased corporate performance for both companies and their shareholders. The initiative is complementary to individual company efforts and existing networking groups, adding to these through collaboration and the visible commitment of senior business leaders.

In Ireland, the 30% Club is supported by Chairs/CEOs of 160 leading Irish businesses: public, private, state and multinational companies. These leaders are committed to accelerating gender balance in their organisations through voluntary actions. Our mission is to develop a diverse pool of talent for all businesses. The 30% Club is a collaborative business-led effort to make real change in Ireland, aiming towards 30% female representation in senior management by 2020.

The 30% Club Ireland is led by a Steering Committee, comprising of 16 senior men and women from a wide range of businesses in Ireland including professional services, investment management, multinational and public companies. We are guided by a group of eight Chairs/CEOs of our supporters who form our Advisory Board. All of these people volunteer their time and skills in an effort to improve gender balance at all levels of Irish business.

The 30% Club Ireland does not believe mandatory quotas are the right approach in the private sector at this time. We support a voluntary approach, underpinned by targets, accountability and transparency in order to realise meaningful, sustainable change. While some progress has been achieved there is clearly more to be done.

The 30% Club Ireland is working to bring about real transformation by:

1. Encouraging and supporting Chairs and CEOs to appoint more women to their boards and executive positions.
2. Providing a platform for business leaders to share information on building a stronger and sustainable pipeline of female talent - looking at what works well and devising new collaborative actions.
3. Engaging men as champions of better gender balance.
4. Developing and initiating a number of interventions aimed at supporting businesses in developing female talent e.g. cross-company mentoring programme and executive education scholarships.
5. Collaborating with existing and future initiatives which support improved gender balance. We believe that collective, concerted effort can achieve much more than individual initiatives and are ‘open source’ in our approach. We are driven by our objective, rather than by any ‘ownership’ of the issue.
6. Intensifying pipeline efforts and extending our focus to earlier stages of careers and education.
7. Developing effective workstreams to support particular sectors, currently professional services firms and financial services.

8. Keeping the spotlight on the issue through our ongoing engagement with individual businesses, business organisations and our role in the public debate and through social media.

9. Organising events (free-of-charge to attendees) to provide insights on issues which have been suggested by supporters: mentoring, networking, unconscious bias and much more.

10. Learning from the experience of 30% Club programmes operating internationally and applying this learning in Ireland where appropriate.
Recommendations on key issues to be addressed

The 30% Club in Ireland is focused on women in business and we believe the following key issues should be addressed in the National Women’s Strategy 2017-2020:

1. Advancement of women in leadership, both at Board and executive levels
2. Access to and encouragement of girls and women in STEM-related subject choices, careers and industries
3. Harnessing the potential of women returning from maternity leave or from a career break

Advancement of women in leadership

The government has acknowledged that the advancement of women in leadership is a key issue to be addressed. There is a strong business case that better gender balance leads to better decisions and therefore to better business performance.

The “Women in Work Index”\(^1\) ranks Ireland 25th amongst the 33 OECD Countries, nine places behind the UK. In Ireland, the proportion of women aged 30-34 who have third-level qualifications\(^2\) has increased from 48.9% in 2007 to 58.6% in 2015. However, according to the 30% Club Ireland/DCU research “Women in Management Survey2016”\(^3\) findings, it is evident that women’s participation in management is inversely related to the leadership hierarchy, reflecting the ‘sticky floor’, rather than the glass ceiling, that women encounter as they get stuck in the bottleneck of middle management. Women hold 40% of positions at the lowest level of management (three steps down from CEO). This percentage decreases in line with each more senior step in the management hierarchy, falling to 17% of CEO positions. Where women have found seniority, they are more likely to be found in traditionally female dominated functions such as HR and marketing and less likely to occupy leadership positions in Finance, Sales, Operations and IT. The full report can be found in Appendix B.

At board level, the picture is even bleaker. On the boards of companies listed on the Irish Stock Exchange, only 13% of directors are female, and 41% of boards have no female directors.

We believe that government could support better gender balance and the advancement of women in leadership in Irish business by actively promoting and encouraging the following:

- Improved gender balance on the boards of companies, with a particular focus on companies listed on the Irish Stock Exchange
- Business leadership to consider adopting internal targets for gender diversity at various levels in their organisation against which they can measure progress
- Gender pay gap calculation and appropriate narrative disclosure for organisations over certain size criteria - transparency and granularity of data is important
- Gender lens to be applied to policies around recruitment, promotion and retention, in order to remove inherent biases
- Continuous unconscious bias training to be promoted at all levels in business and education

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\(^1\) Source: PwC Women in Work Index (March 2016). An assessment of female economic empowerment across 33 OECD countries. The index is a weighted average of 5 indicators that reflect female participation in the labour market and equality in the workplace.

\(^2\) Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)/Central Statistics Office

\(^3\) Source: “Women in Management Survey 2016”
• Business support for and take up of parental leave, particularly by men
• Development of agile and smart working environments,
• Active career sponsorship and mentoring of females
• Promotion of more scholarships to encourage female continued education
• Recruitment/search firms to further support women seeking employment opportunities.
• Male champions to promote gender balance

Access to and encouragement of girls and women in STEM-related subject choices, careers and industries

STEM-related industries are key to the Irish economy and its future development. We need to support and energise young girls to get involved in these subjects at school in order to allow them to be able to participate in the broadest range of careers. This will also help address the continuously growing demand for resources in these areas.

There is a belief that in girls’ schools there is sometimes more limited ability to do subjects like physics or applied maths, which decrease the chances of girls following up with an interest and a chance to go to third level in these disciplines. In some girls’ schools, science is not mandatory for the Junior Cert cycle. The recent Stem education review group4 chaired by the president of Dublin City University, Prof Brian MacCraith highlighted major gender differences in the selection of science subjects at Leaving Cert, with the ratio of male students to female students greater than 3:1 for physics and approximately 2:3 for biology. We need to give more girls the opportunity and the desire to follow subjects like physics and ensure for Junior Cert, science is mandatory in all schools. Computer science is the single most powerful force for upcoming generations, we need to make it accessible for all and need to teach it in a fashion that generates as much passion and understanding as possible.

Government working in tandem with both industry and schools could increase focus on encouraging more girls into science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is imperative that a career in STEM is seen as a viable option from the early stages of education. Trends in these areas in recent years are troubling and action is needed to address these and the underlying drivers. With the continued advancement of digital technologies, the reality is that we no longer have certainty about the jobs and roles of the future. We do however know the core skills that need to be developed. This creates a challenge when young women are choosing Leaving Cert subjects as they and their parents cannot identify a clear career path. This is a new reality which students, teachers and parents alike need to become comfortable with. There is a great opportunity for industry to collaborate with Government to help increase the understanding of the wide range of STEM career opportunities and skills required. One such initiative is the STEM Teacher Internship Programme, which Accenture, the 30% Club and DCU successfully piloted last year. This gave STEM Secondary School Trainee teachers the opportunity to work in STEM industry for 3 months to increase their awareness, skills and experience in this area and be able to bring it back to the classroom. Government and industry also need to work closely to educate parents who are still the biggest influencers on young women’s academic and career choices (Accenture’s Continuing to Power Economic Growth – Attracting more

4 Source: STEM: Education in the Irish School system – a report on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Analysis and recommendations by the STEM education review group (November 2016)
women into Science and Technology 2.0 Report) (Appendix G). The recently published report on STEM education and its recommendations should be effectively implemented (Appendix H).

**Harnessing the potential of women returning from maternity leave**

Women returning from maternity leave or from career breaks represent real added potential for the Irish economy and for society. From the perspective of the government, resources and funds have been invested in women through the Irish education system. By supporting these women as they re-enter the workforce following a career break, the government can realise the value of that investment which could create significant value and improved services and performance.

Research conducted on the UK labour market indicates that addressing the career break penalty could deliver gains of £1.7bn to the UK economy\(^5\). In the UK market, three in five professional women returning to the workforce are likely to move into lower-skilled or lower-paid roles, experiencing an immediate earnings reduction of up to a third. Two thirds could be working below their potential when they return to the workforce. Full details of the research and findings are included at Appendix F. We would suggest that fully harnessing the power of more women returners would have significant economic benefit in Ireland. In this respect, the impact of childcare costs as well as the pressures of combining work and caring responsibilities represent significant barriers to women’s full participation in the workforce and their career development.

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\(^5\) Women returners: The £1 billion career break penalty for women (November 2016)(Appendix F)
Feedback on proposed high level objectives

Our response is focussed on the advancement of women in business leadership. However, in broad terms, we agree with all of the high level objectives proposed viz:

- Advance socio-economic equality for women and girls
- Improve women’s and girl’s physical and mental health
- Promote women’s and girls’ equal and active citizenship
- Advance women in leadership
- Embed gender equality in decision making

The 30% Club is focussed primarily on the greater effectiveness of organisational diversity. Gender balance is not only a social equity issue but an urgent business and talent management imperative for successful enterprise and to meet society’s needs.

Strong evidence exists that organisations with more diverse leadership perform better. A number of studies have been completed in this regard and these are listed in Appendix C to this submission.

The 2016 KPMG “Think Future Study”, whose research population included Generation Z students from UCD, DCU and UCC, as set out in Appendix D, had a number of valuable findings. However, two findings are particularly striking:

1. 53% of women were confident that their gender will have no bearing on their career progression compared to 76% of men; and
2. 53% of women express the view that gender will have no future bearing on their pay and reward compared to 78% of men.

Despite young women’s strong self-confidence, their doubts about the ‘female friendliness’ of traditional career structures may lead them to self-select out of certain industries or career moves, including waiting to apply for promotions until they meet ‘all’ of the criteria. Talent management processes are not typically gender-intelligent. “Cracking the Code”, research led by behavioural psychologists YSC and KPMG for the 30% Club in the UK, found that women express confidence and claim ownership of performance outcomes in a way that talent management and appraisal processes may not be alive to. Talented women may go ‘unseen’ or be described as ‘not ready’ much earlier in the career path than is traditionally assumed. This pattern is amplified through the career, contributing to the sharp pyramid effect of under-representation of women at leadership levels.

One of the challenges for women in their career can be that in dual working parent families, the mother still takes on a lot more of the home responsibilities. The ability to work flexibly and from home, especially with the advancement in technology tools to help us work from anywhere, should be promoted.

The objectives of the National Women’s Strategy will need to implement programmes which can address these issues. In addition to the matters referred to in the previous section, a focus on the following areas would be appropriate:

1. Creating a learning environment free from gender stereotyping and with real focus on full development of potential and employability;

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6 Source: Cracking the Code (2014)(Appendix C)
2. Focus on shaping the aspirations of students of both genders and from all socio-economic backgrounds;

3. Continue to bridge the gap between education (at secondary and higher levels) and employment through collaboration;

4. A concentrated encouragement of women into STEM areas through improved information for teachers and parents in understanding the opportunities in this sector and to address gender stereotyping and unconscious bias; and

5. Promoting agile working models e.g. could the government look at the public sector areas to pilot more flexible and homeworking schemes?
Recommendations on outcomes

**Gender balance in business**

An important outcome will be better gender balance at all levels in business – this should be driven by business leaders through voluntary action. Businesses should be encouraged to set internal targets for diversity at all levels in the organisation, including Board and executive management, so that progress can be measured over time.

**Workforce participation**

Women should be encouraged and facilitated to participate in the workforce. Business in Ireland is experiencing talent shortages and fuller employment of women can help to address this issue.

Promotion of agile working models, which are enabled by technology, support working parents/caregivers, especially women. Fathers should also be encouraged and facilitated to avail of parental leave so it is seen as a social norm. We are pleased that from September 2016, paid parental leave of 2 weeks has been introduced in Ireland. While some businesses are offering longer leave to fathers, businesses should also encourage equal take up of parental leave.

**STEM**

Given the importance of STEM related industries both to Ireland and globally, the government should aim to increase the percentage of women working in these industries. Teachers and parents have a key role to play in influencing children.

**Gender pay gap**

Closing the gender pay gap is an objective for business which the government should aim to achieve. We believe that businesses and senior business leaders should drive this change and that meaningful and consistent transparency in the matter of gender pay information would be a significant step toward focussing the minds of employers on addressing the pay gap issue thus ensuring that female employees are fairly represented in all grades across businesses. The publication of gender pay information will encourage employers to take actions that will help close the pay gap. The UK has recently introduced legislation in this regard and the first transparency reporting is expected in 2017. We firmly believe in the adage that “what gets measured gets managed” and that measuring the extent of the gap will provide companies with the information they need in order to tackle the issue most effectively. Furthermore, making the information publicly available will introduce competitive pressure amongst companies that will serve to drive further action and progress towards solving the imbalance.

**Public policy**

In all of these matters, it is important that there is a supportive and well-articulated public policy – so that business and government are working together to achieve the same aims.
Recommendations on actions

The 30% Club recognises that these objectives cannot be achieved overnight which is why we believe that action should be taken through targeted initiatives intended to strengthen the pipeline of women at all levels from the “schoolroom to the boardroom”. Actions and initiatives are needed at the schoolroom and higher education levels to ensure a sustainable pipeline and to further the objectives set out.

Voluntary targets - The 30% Club does not believe mandatory quotas for gender balance on boards are the right approach at this time. Instead, we believe that concerted voluntary action can realise meaningful, sustainable change. In the UK, the introduction of a voluntary initiative at board level\(^7\) has worked well because it introduced targets and encouragement in the furtherance of gender balance. The implementation of a voluntary initiative or code would encourage businesses to look at the barriers to gender balance which may exist. By setting out targets rather than strict quotas, it could allow businesses to take actions suited to their particular challenges, recognising that creating better gender balance makes good business sense.

Accountability - Accountability and transparency are key to achieving real and measured advancements in this area. To support this voluntary drive, government should consider setting a framework and timelines for the expected progress and change and examine options to link business incentives to actions to improve gender balance. We recommend that entities focus on implementing diversity policies and setting quantitative targets that can be measured and achieved. Metrics and voluntary targets are critical tools for creating a disciplined approach to gender balance in organisations. We also support the proposals to implement gender audits for policies/public expenditure. These steps, combined with visible leadership and genuine accountability at the most senior levels aimed at improving the representation of women in leadership and management, can help businesses to take the next step to gender balance in their organisations.

Education – Women are greatly under-represented in the STEM workforce in Ireland and it is imperative that a career in STEM is seen as a viable option for women from the early stages of education. The recently published report on STEM education\(^8\) highlights the selection of subjects on third level programmes by young women at post primary level as a key contributory factor to this under-representation. The report advocates setting ambitious targets and a sustained, multi-faceted action plan for addressing the gender imbalance in specific STEM disciplines. We believe its recommendations should be effectively implemented.

Maternity leave - More needs to be done to generally level the playing field, particularly in respect of maternity leave. Initiatives such as shared parental leave work well to improve balance between the genders. We recognise the changes which the government introduced in respect of two weeks’ paternity leave. However, we suggest that the government can encourage business to support fathers can do more to encourage taking paternity leave or corporate career breaks or availing of other forms of agile working.

Childcare - The high cost of childcare currently presents a significant barrier to women returning to work and to remaining committed to their career development. For parents who decide to return to

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\(^7\) Source: Women on Boards February 2011

\(^8\) Source: The STEM Education: Analysis and Recommendations (November 2016) Group Report
work after having a child, we propose that the cost of returning to work be mitigated by the introduction of tax relief or other measures to mitigate the impact of childcare costs.

**Leadership** - One challenge with the gender debate is that it is often seen as women’s issue as opposed to a society and business issue. As men have been the beneficiaries in business they often do not notice the privilege that they have and therefore often struggle to understand the debate or feel the need to be actively participating. If a women cannot see a woman at the Board level of her organisation it is harder for her to see herself striving for that position. A positive step would be to continue to have a male Minister championing the gender issue. This will promote an understanding that gender balance is good for education, business and society. It will also highlight that this is something that affects both men and women.

**Returnships** - Programmes that act as a bridge back to work for women who have taken an extended voluntary career break, may provide a path for women to return to the workforce and the government could put in place tax provisions to incentivise both the woman and the employer in this regard. As mentioned previously, harnessing the power of more women returners would have significant economic benefit in Ireland and this could be particularly valuable in respect of highly trained and experienced women taking up senior roles in business and in other service sectors.

**Honouring women** - Many countries are looking to redress gender imbalances in street names⁹, naming of bridges, buildings, relooking at the people recognized in public monuments¹⁰, art, portraits¹¹, currency¹² etc. There are many opportunities for this in Ireland and documenting the objective in a national strategy would be a great place to start.

A number of countries are also explicitly adding *gender studies* (or women’s history studies) to the syllabus both at primary and secondary level. This would be a great benefit in Ireland and last year’s 1916 centenary was a great example of the effectiveness of increasing visibility on groups under-represented in the past, as a way to shape the future. Boys and girls would benefit enormously from this and it would help develop critical thinking and citizenship too.

**Other** - Programmes such as other agile working, optimising technology and corporate sponsored career breaks for both women and men contribute to success in this area. Furthermore, having a focus on such options for both men and women removes the bias towards women who choose to take time for maternity or family leave as the case may be. Currently men may be effectively discriminated against in this regard and this is undoubtedly going to become more and more of an issue for the millennial generation for whom dual career couples are the norm and who have very different motivations and priorities. Within a short period of years, the majority of workforce in Ireland will be millennials. The PwC Diversity Journey report, as set out in Appendix E, addresses the ever-increasing importance of factors such as diversity and equality to both male and female millennials.

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⁹ Source: World Economic Forum: Spain is renaming its streets
¹⁰ Source: www.monumentalwomen.org
¹¹ Source: www.accenture.com/ie-en/women-on-walls
¹² Source: http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/Pages/characters/austen.aspx
## Index to Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Hyperlink</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>30% Club Ireland booklet:</td>
<td>Please refer to separate attachment</td>
<td>30% Club Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Women in Management – the Leadership Pipeline 2016</td>
<td>Please refer to separate attachment</td>
<td>30% Club Ireland &amp; DCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cracking the Code (2014)</td>
<td><a href="https://home.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2015/04/Cracking-the-code.pdf">https://home.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2015/04/Cracking-the-code.pdf</a></td>
<td>30% Club UK/KPMG/YSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>Hyperlink</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The PwC Diversity Journey 2016</td>
<td>The PwC Diversity Journey</td>
<td>PwC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>PwC Women Returners 2016</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pwc.co.uk/womenreturners">http://www.pwc.co.uk/womenreturners</a></td>
<td>PwC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>