



Press Release – June 2010

The continuing under-representation of women in decision-making structures is the primary goal of a new 'Women into Public Life' (WIPL) project funded by the European Union's INTERREG IVA Programme.

The project is an innovative regional partnership between three key women's organisations in Derry/Londonderry (Foyle Women's Information Network), Donegal (Second Chance Education Project for Women) and Scotland (Engender) with Donegal County Council providing support as the lead partner.

The Project has been awarded €898,945 under the EU's INTERREG IVA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) (www.seupb.eu) for a programme of activities. These will include training, advocacy, research and providing a range of supports for women to take up leadership roles and engage with political processes at local, national and European levels.

The project has four staff members: Noirin Clancy (Project Coordinator), Maureen Fox (Outreach Worker) and Terry Conway (Financial Administrator) with Eilish Boyle employed by Donegal County Council as a Clerical Officer. The main office is located in Lifford and an outreach office is at the Foyle Women's Information Network in Derry/Londonderry.

The Project is managed by a Steering Committee comprising of representatives from the four partners. A key ingredient to a successful partnership is relationship building. Earlier this month, project staff and committee members from Derry/Londonderry and Donegal travelled to Edinburgh to visit their Scottish partners Engender, and to participate in a teambuilding session. An exciting aspect of this project is learning from the work of Engender, a women's organisation, based in Edinburgh, which has been active for many years in addressing the under-representation and participation of women in politics and public life. Campaigning tirelessly on this issue has yielded results with 34% of women represented in the Scottish Parliament. In the recent Westminster elections, 13 women will take up their Scottish seats compared with just 9 in 2005. Ireland, north and south, lags

behind greatly. Of the 108 MLAs in Stormont, 18 (i.e. 16%) are women and in the Dail only 13% of women are represented.

Over the three year lifespan of this project, a range of programmes and activities will be implemented to increase the number of women in public life, ensuring their right to meaningful participation at decision-making tables at all levels of society. The project will build on initiatives already undertaken in Donegal over the last number of years by organisations such as the Donegal Women's Network and the County Development Board.

The official launch of the WIPL project is due to take place at the end of June. Also, plans are currently underway to organise women's leadership courses in September. These will be aimed at grassroots women and will take place in the three partner regions.

For further information on the Women into Public Life project, contact the office in Lifford on 074 91 72901.



Project partners and steering committee members that attended the teambuilding session in Edinburgh on May 10th.