

# equalitynews

autumn  
2001



Launch of Anti-Racist Workplace Week

World Conference on Racism



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*The Equality Authority,  
2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2, Ireland  
Business - Tel: 353 1 4173336  
Information - Lo Call: 1890 245545  
Tel: +353-1-417 3333  
Fax: +353-1-417 3366  
Text Phone: +353-1-417 3385  
Email: [info@equality.ie](mailto:info@equality.ie) Web: [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)*

*The Equality Authority would like to advise all callers that they can contact our Public Information Centre directly at 01 4173333 or Lo Call number 1890 245545, for advice on the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. Information is also available on the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 and the Parental Leave Act, 1998. For business and other services, please contact 01 4173336*

# UPDATE...

## By Niall Crowley

The Equality Authority is two years old on October 18th. It has been a busy two years - satisfying for the agendas that have been opened up, for the relationships and partnerships that have been developed and for the wide ranging commitment that exists to the new equality agenda. The level of demand does however pose challenges for the Equality Authority and the resources we have available.

Our current case-load stands at over 700 cases. The Equal Status Act accounts for two thirds of this and the Employment Equality Act for one third. This is the exact inverse of the proportions predicted. It is a measure of how slowly service providers are gearing up to the new legislative context and the absence of the equality infrastructure in this area that is already in place in relation to employment - infrastructure such as equality officers, equal status policies and positive action measures.

**We are challenged to evolve new strategic approaches to enforcement that build on the current approach which has been so important in opening up the legislation across the nine grounds. We are looking to stimulate the emergence of new sources of support for claimants under the Equal Status Act through developing community advocacy approaches. This involves important partnerships with community based groups. It is an approach that still requires further definition to be established as a viable strategy.**



The Equal Status emphasis is beginning to be further reflected in our developmental role. In particular we are opening up our mandate in relation to the provision of education. A valuable joint seminar on equality and education was hosted with ASTI. Presentations at this conference looked at the interaction of the Education Act with equality legislation. The role of school planning, school anti-harassment policies, and the contribution made by teachers were emphasised. It is hoped to publish the proceedings of the conference and to link this with research being carried out for the Equality Authority. This research sets out to map the education sector from the perspective of the nine grounds and to establish an agenda for further development that could be supported by the Equality Authority. We hope to shortly commission a similar initiative in relation to health provision.

Our development work contributes to managing the demand on our services with its focus on prevention. A key preventative tool is equality proofing. Equality proofing is about:

- **establishing clear equality objectives;**
- **assessing the impact of decisions on the nine grounds;**
- **working with equality groups to assess this impact;**
- **monitoring outcomes across the nine grounds.**

The development of equality proofing is currently in the hands of a working group established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

The working group is convened by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. FÁS and the Department of Education and Science have made valuable commitment to piloting an equality proofing exercise. A template for this has been drafted by the Equality Authority. The Equality Authority, in a related exercise, has also been working with the County Development Boards and PLANET to devise a template to equality proof the County/City Strategy Plans being prepared. As the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness draws into its third and final year it is important to focus attention on this working group and the learning it will establish - this is the learning that will give practical expression to a single integrated proofing system embracing poverty, gender and the wider equality agenda.

*Niall Crowley*



# E.U. UPDATE

By Brian Harvey

## Draft directive on equality in the workplace and sexual harassment

The European Parliament approved this summer the first reading of a new proposed Commission directive on equality in the workplace, which:

- Updates the old directive 76/207 on equal treatment
- Deals with equal treatment in employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions
- Takes account of the case law of the European Court of Justice since 1976 (no less than 40 cases) and of changes in the treaties (articles 13 and 141)
- Notes the passing of the directives against discrimination in 2000
- Defines and prohibits sexual harassment
- Reinforces maternity legislation specifying that women must, on returning to work, be offered their previous job or an equivalent post on terms that are no less favourable.

In its first reading, the Parliament put forward some amendments and the Social Affairs Commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, was happy to accept the bulk of the amendments. However, the subsequent Council of Social Affairs Ministers meeting disagreed with most of those amendments. The Ministers' position now goes for a second time around the decision-making circuit, with the possibility of using the conciliation procedure between the institutions.

This directive has a long history. Parts of directive 76/207 were effectively amended by the Kalanke judgement of 1996, which restricted the use of affirmative action. The Commission introduced

amending legislation to update 76/207 but legal questions were raised about the Commission's competence to do so, a matter not resolved until the Amsterdam Treaty. Even then, the new proposal was defeated by the Parliament in March 1999.

In June 2000, the Commission reintroduced its proposal in order to find a new consensus and the issue of sexual harassment was added as it evolved. The Commission took the view that "a sensitive issue like sexual harassment cannot be ignored any more and must be addressed at Community level".

The current text proposes ten amendments to the 1976 directive. These are:

1. A commitment to mainstreaming
2. Defining and criminalizing sexual harassment
3. Definition of indirect discrimination
4. Exceptions to discrimination in occupational qualifications
5. Right of women to return to their job or an equivalent post with the same or no less favourable working conditions
6. Obligation on member states to report on positive action measures
7. Prohibition of discrimination in workers' organisations
8. Protection of victim after job has ended - right to compensation
9. Framework for national bodies to promote equal treatment
10. Encouragement of collective agreements promoting equality

Amendment 4 brings European law into line with Court of Justice decisions in regard to women bearing arms in the army and police and the exclusion of men from midwifery. Any exclusions must now be specific, limited, transparent and narrow.

In the area of positive action, member states may take measures to make it easier for the under-represented sex to pursue careers, but may not grant women automatic preference over men and must operate systems with objective criteria.

**The definition of sexual harassment is:** Sexual harassment shall be deemed to be discrimination on grounds of sex at the workplace

when an unwanted conduct related to sex takes place with the purposes or effect of affecting the dignity of the person and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive or disturbing environment, in particular if a person's rejection of, or submission to, such conduct is used as a basis for a decision which affects that person.

### Indirect discrimination is defined as:

Where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice disadvantages a substantially higher proportion of the members of one sex unless that criterion, provision or practice is appropriate and necessary and can be justified by objective factors unrelated to sex.

### Exceptions are now defined as:

Member states may provide, as regards to employment, that a difference of treatment which is based on a characteristic related to sex shall not constitute discrimination where, by reason of the nature of the particular occupational activities concerned or of the context in which they are carried out, constitutes a genuine occupational requirement. Derogations to the principle of equal treatment shall remain within the limits of what is appropriate and necessary in order to achieve the aim in view.

### The right to return to work is now expressed as follows:

A woman who has given birth shall be entitled, after the end of her period of maternity leave, to return to her job or to an equivalent post with no change in her working conditions.

The new article 8a requires member states to set up independent bodies to promote equal treatment between men and women. They are required to receive and pursue complaints of sex discrimination, start investigations or surveys and publish reports on the issue. Member states must lay down penalties that are effective, proportionate and dissuasive. Reports must be communicated every three years.

This legislation is now likely to go to a process of conciliation between the European institutions.

### Other Issues

Other issues highlighted in the most recent European Briefing provided for the Equality Authority include:

- Pressure on the European Commission to release its proposals on public procurement, which include proposals to take companies' records on equal opportunities into account.
- Five-point programme of the Belgian Presidency, which includes the fight against discrimination and the promotion of social inclusion.
- Council of Ministers attacked for not giving one of its officials, who has a registered gay partner in his native Sweden, the same allowances as a married man.
- Romania suspends law against gays; Slovakia's record on discrimination against gays under investigation.
- Commission under investigation for racism.
- Case for reserving a seat in the European Parliament for Roma.
- Commission proposals for the measurement of the quality of workplace, including the measurement of diversity in the workplace having regard to the representation of ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and older workers.
- Discrimination criticised in the 2000 Report on Human Rights in the European Union.
- 2000 Employment Figures mark progress regarding the employment rate of women.
- European Parliament to consider report on equal pay for women in the EU.
- Progress towards gender equality in research and science.
- European Court of Justice ruling that maternity benefit cannot be made conditional on residence.
- Commission introduces draft directive on free movement for EU citizens.
- Equality features in 2001-4 work programme of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

The above is a summary of the most recent European Briefing provided by Brian Harvey for the Equality Authority. The full briefing is available from Majella Walker (Telephone +353-1-4173354 or email Majella\_Walker@equality.ie)

# G.R.O.W. & LEONARDO DA VINCI:

By Paul Kelly,  
Down District Council



## WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

By Niall Crowley

### 'Diffusion & Employability For The 21st Century

G.R.O.W. (Greater Opportunities for Working), is a computerised tool providing essential information aimed at job seekers, in particular women returners to the labour market. The GROW system was designed in the U.K. to ensure that individuals had access to high quality and up to date information regarding training courses, further educational opportunities, the mix of skills required for a range of career choices, lists of family friendly employers as well as links to general local job vacancies. The aim was for GROW to become a 'One-Stop-Shop' for quality information and a gateway access for individuals to training and related services. It was a UK project under the EU Leonardo Da Vinci programme. GROW developed against the following backdrop: The need to address employability and 'Family Friendly Policies' in the workplace.

A predicted rapid rise in the number of women who would be entering or re-entering the labour market from the year 2000 and beyond.

Adequate access to further education, training and jobs for women and massive 'hidden labour market' within member states: this is defined as groups who do not appear on official unemployed registers, for example women returners, individuals recovering from long-term illness, carers and those who have been working in the black (illegitimate) economy.

GROW attempted to address these issues by raising awareness of the business case in favour of family friendly policies in the workplace enabling employers to recruit people who although available for work had caring responsibilities involving children or sick and elderly parents which prevented them from

working regular hours. The lack of quality and affordable childcare was, and remains, a fundamental barrier discouraging women from returning to work.

GROW offered project partners the opportunity not only to raise awareness of the benefits of family friendly policies and to promote the benefits of Work-Life Balance within their own regions, but also to influence thinking and workplace reforms by employers and government. GROW was at the forefront of the movement to help create a modern business society throughout Europe where traditional methods of recruitment and labour market interventions were rapidly becoming dated and irrelevant.

#### Current position

GROW is now a registered charity in the UK and operates under the brand name of 'The GROW Trust', with a database which provides a valuable bridge between employers and job seekers where the matching process of available work and skills becomes less difficult to achieve.

A Round Table Seminar was organized on 14 June 2001 in Trinity College Dublin by the Irish partner in this project, Dr. Eileen Drew of TCD. The objectives of the event were to disseminate information on the concept and activities associated with GROW and to relate these to the provision and development of 'Work/Life Balance' in Ireland. The Seminar was run jointly with the National Framework Committee for the development of Family Friendly Work Practices and was attended by approximately 40 participants.

The clock had to be stopped. Delegates frantically rearranged flights. Last minute motions were presented and defeated. Still the pessimists were proved wrong and the world conference against Racism adopted a Declaration and a Programme of Action. This is an important and significant achievement - especially when set against the fact that two previous world conferences held in earlier decades had failed to reach agreement.

Durban hosted the nations of the world. It was a very appropriate venue. South Africa is a symbol of hope given its defeat of the apartheid system. Equally South Africa is a symbol of challenge given the difficult and slow work of deploying new governance, legislation, resources and affirmative action to replace the outcomes of apartheid with equality.

The conference achieved headlines with the withdrawal of the United States of America and Israel. Coverage emphasised the passionate and important debates on colonialism, slavery and their legacy, the occupation of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, and the experience of India's Dalits and their struggle to have 'caste' identified as an issue in the final documents.

What didn't make news was the hard and painstaking work of piecing together a declaration and a programme for action that would have an impact on racism and that could

secure the agreement of this multitude of nations. Word by word, paragraph by paragraph these documents were assembled across the different meanings particular concepts had for different cultures, across the different ideologies and aspirations brought forward by different nations, and across the different histories and experience of those negotiating.

A significant Irish presence made its contribution. The official delegation was led by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform with the Department of Foreign Affairs. It included the Equality Authority as well as the chairperson of The National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and other NGO's. The Human Rights Commission was also present and made a presentation to the conference plenary.

A broad NGO presence represented refugee, asylum seekers, youth, Traveller and other minority ethnic group interests. A separate NGO forum preceded the conference and the NGO representation stayed on to accompany and monitor the world conference. This breadth of representation coupled with the partnership approach adopted by the Departments on the delegation provides an important basis for an effective follow up in Ireland. Relationships were built and mutual understandings forged that will be crucial if we are to meet the challenge of addressing racism in Ireland along the parameters established by the World Conference.



## National Action Plan

The follow up to the World Conference will focus around the preparation, implementation monitoring of national action plans and programmes to combat racism. This was a key agreement in the programme of action and allows the World Conference to have an impact into the long term future. A number of important themes are established in the programme of action which will need to be given practical expression in the National Action Plans. These themes include:

- Effective measures and policies to encourage all to take a stand against racism and to recognise, respect and maximise the benefit of diversity.
- The need to review legislation against the principle of non-discrimination.
- Health and the challenge to address disparities in a health status.
- Education and the need to secure access to education and to invest in anti-racist education.
- Employment, the creation of workplaces free of discrimination and economic development within minority ethnic communities.
- Anti-poverty programmes taking account of the needs and experiences of those experiencing racism.
- The importance of reviewing immigration legislation, policy and practice so as to ensure there is no place for racism.
- Policing and the importance of anti-racist initiatives within the police.
- The media and the need to find ways to ensure the media does not contribute to racist stereotyping.
- Multiple discrimination with particular reference to women and people with disabilities

who experience racism.

- Data and the need for data adequate to inform and assess policies for their impact on racism.
- The importance of participation in governance and the contribution to addressing racism to be made by political parties.

Now we need to pick up and develop these themes in an Irish National Action Plan. We need to build on the different relationships developed across the different interests at the conference to secure a participatory process for preparing this plan. Our plan could usefully establish a vision for an inter cultural Ireland. It could build on and involve our legislative and institutional framework for combating racism. It could implement already agreed policies and develop new programmes to address economic, social, health and educational disparities experienced by Black and minority ethnic people (including Travellers). It could further develop our knowledge base of the experience, situation and identity of Black and minority ethnic communities so that needs can be accurately identified and addressed.

The World Conference has given a crucial, timely and valuable impetus to the fight against racism in Ireland and across the world. It provides a shared political will to effectively address racism which should allow for mutual encouragement to do more and better in this task. Ireland contributed fully and progressively to its success - we must now contribute equally effectively to its impact.



## A PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH TO DISABILITY: SOME REFLECTIONS ON GB PRACTICE AND PROPOSALS

By Caroline Gooding, Special Adviser, Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

The law tends to focus entirely on individual wrong-doers and victims. Equality is understood as involving nothing more than consistency: treating likes alike, and discounting irrelevant and purely prejudicial distinctions such as race and gender. It is perhaps particularly obviously why such an approach will have limited impact in disability discrimination cases, but even in the context of race and gender discrimination this limitation was recognised when the SDA and RRA were drafted.

Institutionalised discrimination - in the sense of discrimination that is designed into the structures of an institution as opposed to stemming purely from the actions of single individuals - plays a key role in perpetuating structural disadvantage.

If equality legislation is to substantially reverse the deep-rooted disadvantages experienced by certain groups within our society it must first of all explicitly acknowledge that this - fair representation - is its goal, rather than the restricted and ambiguous target of "equal opportunities". This will then require positive

social policy measures such as education, training and family friendly measures, alongside anti-discrimination laws which explicitly seek to establish substantive equality, in the sense of a fairer, a more balanced society.

**To implement effective change requires above all moving beyond considering individual instances of 'unfair, unequal treatment'.**

To implement effective change requires above all moving beyond considering individual instances of 'unfair, unequal treatment'. In the United States affirmative action programs and contract compliance

have been shown to be particularly powerful means of moving towards substantive equality, but have only had restricted use in United Kingdom outside of Northern Ireland.

The Disability Rights Taskforce recognized that tackling discrimination and disadvantage solely through individual complaints was not enough. Anti-discrimination legislation is a powerful weapon in creating a climate where discrimination, whether on the grounds of disability, sex or race, is seen as unacceptable. It empowers traditionally disadvantaged groups to assert their rights to equal treatment and signals that society will not tolerate unfair discrimination. However, the experience of two

decades of sex and race discrimination legislation has shown that a duty not to discriminate unfairly is insufficient to eliminate inequality.

The Taskforce proposed that the public sector should be required to adopt a proactive approach to opportunities for disabled people, which might include the adoption of equal opportunities plans; voluntary workforce monitoring; the setting of targets; and using purchasing power to promote compliance with legislation among contractors and suppliers.

The Government has indicated that they will bring forward legislation to place a positive duty on the public sector to promote disability equality. (The public sector in Northern Ireland is already under a duty to promote equality for disabled groups, amongst others).

Another way to strengthen the ability of individuals to promote change is to strengthen the impact of cases when they are won. The Taskforce also called for employment tribunals to have the power to make recommendations regarding the future conduct of the respondent and mechanisms for the DRC to enforce this should be developed.

The Task Force was focusing attention on the desirability of the tribunal being able to make policy recommendations to an employer where this is precluded under existing law because there is no direct link to the complainant. For example, if an applicant establishes that they were discriminated against by being harassed because of their disability and they resigned as a

consequence, under the law as it stands a tribunal cannot make an action recommendation that the employer should adopt an anti-harassment policy because that would have no effect on the former employee. Some tribunals have made informal recommendations to this effect. But they have no formal power to do so, nor to enforce any recommendations.

Two existing mechanisms within current GB law and policy which helpfully supplement the basic anti-discrimination approach. The DRC has the power to launch formal investigations into particular organizations, or a particular sector, where they feel the discrimination may

have occurred. They can enter into binding action plans with organizations, or in the last resort, make a non-discrimination notice. If used appropriately, these investigations have been shown to be powerful mechanisms for achieving change. The DRC has not yet launched an investigation, but aims to do so next year.

The Government provides powerful backing to the individual right of employees to have reasonable adjustments made. The Access to work scheme funds a significant proportion of the costs of equipment, adaptation to premises, additional assistance or travel costs. The budget is about £30 million, and is widely considered to be well spent. I think that this has been an important element in the relatively smooth adoption of the disability provisions in relation to employment.

**The Government has indicated that they will bring forward legislation to place a positive duty on the public sector to promote disability equality.**

## MENTAL HEALTH ACT – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Pat Seager & Aoife Clabby,  
Schizophrenia Association  
of Ireland

In July of this year the new Mental Health Act went onto the statute books. The Act deals in the main with the issue of involuntary detention. It also provides for the setting up of a Mental Health Commission will oversee the running of the tribunals, manage the Inspectorate of Mental Hospitals, register approved centres and promote the establishment of high standards in the delivery of mental health services.

The main policy document which has governed the delivery of health care for the last decade or so is "Shaping a Healthier Future". In this policy statement the Department of Health identified three fundamental considerations to the provision of a good health care system - equity, quality of service and accountability. The new strategy for health is about to be launched very soon now and it would be difficult to find three more suitable considerations, though we might wish for a couple more added on!

This month sees the introduction of a new Mental Health Act. In terms of the three fundamental considerations listed above, the Act deals directly and comprehensively with the issue of accountability - for 10% of people who access psychiatric services through their involuntary detention. The other 90% of those who access in-patient services are sometimes confusingly and only occasionally mentioned.

A person can now be involuntarily detained for up to 21 days before a formal review takes place, a situation which may be inconsistent with Article 9 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a covenant which this country has ratified.

In the Dail debate on the Act in May Minister of State at the Department of Health Mary Hanafin said "if once the system is up and running, it is found that the volume of cases is lower than

anticipated, or that the administrative process is quicker...the Minister is prepared to revisit this issue and to change the Act if necessary". In other words, the length of time a person can be involuntarily detained in a psychiatric hospital, before a formal review takes place is dictated by available resources.

The aim of good mental health legislation should be to reduce the need for using powers of detention not just to clarify and regulate its practice (necessary as this is). It requires that adequate alternatives to involuntary detention are in place in order to ensure that the least restrictive, most appropriate intervention is available. Involuntary detention of an individual should be the final option utilised in seeking appropriate treatment. What this Act fails to recognise is that a range of appropriate, accessible, alternative services is not currently available for people who experience mental illness or their relatives.

The proposed Mental Health Tribunals will ensure that the process of detention is legal, they will not however address the fact that for many families committal of a relative who is ill, occurs

**The aim of good mental health legislation should be to reduce the need for using powers of detention not just to clarify and regulate its practice ...**

because there is simply no alternative. When the primary care-givers, the family, can no longer support an individual and if that individual refuses to voluntarily enter hospital, what are the options? In many parts of the country there are no home base teams or crises intervention teams and if it is after 6 or a weekend, there might not even be a Community Psychiatric Nurse to attend and advise or provide support.

Ireland's involuntary admission rate is currently twice that of the UK. The need to use involuntary detention will remain the same unless there is substantial investment in improving all other aspects of service provision. This would include not just provision of accessible and appropriately resourced acute admission units, but crucially, the provision of true multi-disciplinary teams, crisis outreach 24-hour services and appropriate after-care and support for both the service user and their relatives. If we are to begin to effectively meet the needs of people experiencing mental distress we have to fundamentally change the way we do things. Service users and their families have to be involved in the process of deciding what and how services will be delivered.

The delivery of medical interventions is only a part of the process of treatment and recovery.

There is justifiable concern that the move from Victorian Asylum to New Modern Unit will mean just that - an upgrade in the physical environment, Without the promotion of, or investment, in a comprehensive, holistic approach to service provision by the State One must wonder if only the structures will change.

The Green and White papers that preceded the current Act hinted at a far more comprehensive reform of the psychiatric services and it is clearly now to be the role of the Mental Health Commission to endeavour to influence the development of future standards and practices.

This aspect of the legislation is welcome, particularly the inclusion of three places on the Commission for service users and their support organisations. Membership of the Commission is to be made up of thirteen people from a variety of disciplines and will serve for a term of five years - which will see it in place for the first statutory review of the Act. It is unclear yet what authority it will have to initiate change and development or indeed to challenge current practices. The obvious concern is that administration of the tribunals, monitoring of approved centres and management of the Inspectorate will leave only a small amount of time, energy and money to tackle the enduring results of decades of fear and neglect.

The time is right, for the Minister for Health and Children to convene a full and complete review of the present mental health care system in Ireland, with a view to planning the way forward for the future. Considerable funds have been made available recently for the building of new acute units, however, progress on the development of a whole range of other essential services is stalled or painfully slow.

In a recent article in the Irish Times, Consultant Psychiatrist Kate Ganter talked convincingly about the need for all of us to find new ways of talking, new language if we are to seriously grasp the nettle of stigma. Nothing increases stigma more than the belief that people who are mentally ill are dangerous. Here we have a "Mental Health Act" which says nothing about mental health, nothing about the minimum services required to assist people to manage their mental health and nothing about the community services essential to the process of support and recovery. Of course, legislation cannot do everything but it can and should set the standard for an enlightened and progressive service. With legislative language such as "promote, foster and encourage", the Mental Health Commission has a mighty task ahead of it.

## ANTI-RACIST WORKPLACE WEEK 5TH - 9TH NOVEMBER 2000

Anti-Racist Workplace Week provides an opportunity for staff and management to focus attention on racism. Anti-Racist Workplace Week offers employers and employees a chance to develop small initiatives that can have a big impact.

Anti-Racist Workplace Week is organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Congress), the Irish Business and Employers Federation (IBEC), the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) and the Equality Authority. The week is organised in association with the National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme.

### WHAT TO DO DURING THE WEEK...

- Contact a trainer from the Equality Authority panel of anti-racism trainers and organise a training event for staff and management.
- Explore the case studies published in the free Resource pack on good anti-racist practice in the workplace and implement one of the examples that is relevant to your workplace.
- Draft (or redraft) your organisation's equality policy to include a focus on cultural diversity and combating racism.
- Organise an exchange with Black and minority ethnic groups in your area.
- Develop an awareness initiative to send out a clear message to staff and customers that racism is not acceptable in the organisation.
- Work with other local enterprises, trade unions and community groups to develop a joint initiative in your area on the issue of racism.



### HOW TO FIND OUT MORE...

Both employers and employees can get involved in organising activities to support Anti-Racist Workplace Week. Contact any of the Anti-Racist Workplace Week partner organisations for further information or to get any of these resources:

- Listing of Anti-Racism Trainers.
- Anti-Racist Workplace Week Resource Pack
- Case Studies of Good Anti-Racist Practice in the Workplace
- Guides to the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000.

Contact us for these resources and any further information:

**Ann Butler**  
Equality Authority  
2 Clonmel Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 417 3336  
Fax: (01) 417 3366  
Text phone: (01) 417 3385  
Ann\_Butler@equality.ie  
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In association with the National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme



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# "GOVERNMENT HAS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CALL A HALT TO PLUNDER"

James Doorley, NYCI President

A new report on young drivers and motor insurance entitled "The Plunder Years" has been published by the National Youth Council of Ireland. The report outlines the high and escalating cost of motor insurance for young drivers, details these causes and recommends a range of measures and actions. The NYCI has urged the Government to address the growing crisis of insurance costs, not just for young drivers but for all drivers.

"Young drivers on a provisional licence have long endured high insurance premiums", according to the NYCI report which found that "young male drivers with a full licence for a number of years and a good driving record were still paying between £2,000 and £3,000 for third party insurance".

NYCI explained that "a 24 year old male driver with a full licence for two years and two years' no claims bonus, living in Dublin (which has a low accident rate) was quoted £2,213 to insure a 1998 Fiat Punto".

The NYCI report also found that many young drivers are forced to pay insurance premiums by instalment as a result of the high insurance costs. This form of payment incurs an interest charge of 18.6%. This has resulted in a growing number of young drivers (20%) taking out loans to pay their premiums.

"Motor insurance costs in Ireland are almost double the EU average and are set to rise next year at four times the rate of inflation, according to NYCI. We believe that the current cost of motor insurance for young drivers is not justified on economic grounds".

NYCI is seeking Government action to:

- Reduce the cost of motor insurance in Ireland
- Reduce the excessive cost of motor insurance for young drivers

NYCI believes that the Government needs to adopt an overall strategy that address the following:

- The continuing high number of road accidents
- The high cost of claims and legal costs
- The lack of consumer information and protection
- Inadequate competition
- Lack of incentives for good driving records
- Inadequate regulation, information and research into the insurance industry.

"As a demonstration of its commitment to tackling the current crisis in motor insurance, NYCI is calling on the Government to abolish the 2% Government levy on all motor insurance premiums. This levy adds a further £60 for a young driver paying £3,000", the statement added.

The report also includes a number of key recommendations. NYCI is also proposing good driving record rebate. All drivers paying more than £1,500 for motor insurance, with an accident free record would be entitled to a rebate funded by a levy on the profits of insurance companies. This would encourage safe driving, while offering some respite to the hard-pressed young driver.

NYCI is also calling for an immediate investigation by the Competition Authority to examine the competitiveness of the insurance industry. Over the last ten years the number of active motor insurers in Ireland has reduced from 25 to 12. This has driven up process, particularly for young drivers.

With motor insurance prices soaring NYCI believes that Government action to address the inadequate competition, lack of consumer protection, inadequate regulation in the insurance market and the continuing high level of road accidents is urgently required. In particular the Government needs to tackle the outrageous prices. Young drivers are forced to pay for motor insurance. Without a proper public transport system and with motor insurance being compulsory by law, young drivers are not in a position to simply take it or leave it. Government has a social responsibility to end the current exploitation of young drivers, to call a halt to the plunder.

# COMING OUT & COMING HOME

By Tom Shakespeare,  
Director of Outreach at  
the Policy, Ethics and  
Life Science Research  
Institute, Newcastle on  
Tyne, UK



Being disabled and being gay have similarities: accounts by young disabled people echo the narratives of isolation and loneliness familiar from the stories of young gay men and women. They may face an assumption that to have an impairment, or to have same-sex desires, is wrong, sick, unfortunate, or unforgivable. Faced with such prejudice, the route for many who are disabled or gay is to try and become invisible: to hide the difference, or to "act straight", although this may be impossible for people with obvious impairments. For others, often through joining with the wider community of disabled or gay people, the answer is to "come out" - to identify publicly, to reject negative attitudes, to join the collective on the basis of pride. Just as theorists of lesbian and gay identity have argued that it is necessary for gays and lesbians to "come out", a process of privately coming to terms and publicly affirming sexual difference, so it is suggested that disabled people have to go through a similar process. This is not the same as "coming to terms with impairment", but is about assuming a social identity as a disabled person, and often about taking on a politicised understanding of disability. Jeffrey Weeks has described the concept of identity as like finding a map for a strange country: there are many parallels between the process of coming out for disabled people, as well as lesbians, gays and bisexual people.

Our research for the book, "The Sexual Politics of Disability" (Cassell, 1996) found that there are also contradictions and confusions between sexual and disabled minority status, which can render disabled lesbians, gays and bisexuals doubly disadvantaged, trying to resolve two contradictory identities, eternally seeking for a home. Not least of these is the dominant attitude that disability equals asexuality,

that disabled people cannot possibly be sexual, let alone lesbian or gay. Discourses of sexuality and disability interrelate in complex ways, both in attitudes to disabled lesbians and gays, and in the personal accounts people construct of their own identity. Sometimes this is about the ways in which disabled people are seen as being "de-gendered" - that is, not fully or appropriately masculine or feminine.

Having to come out as disabled, and also as gay or lesbian, meant different things to different people. The two identities seemed sometimes to be mutually reinforcing, sometimes to conflict. Some people were proud of one aspect of their selves, ashamed or unhappy about the other. For some people, one or other identity had more salience than the other; others spoke in terms of a composite identity of "gay disabled" rather than "gay and disabled".

For others, coming out as disabled enabled them to come to terms with their sexuality, and perhaps freed them from expectations and pressure to conform.

Kit told us:

"Taking on the identity of a disabled person was absolutely vital in coming to terms with my identity as a lesbian... I think, looking back on it, I think I've been a lesbian forever, but I had no contacts with that, I had no way of dealing with that, and every time, I know now, that it came into my head, and I would push it away say, go away, go away, it was so unbearable."

Some respondents felt it was more acceptable to be disabled than gay: Jo said:

"You can influence disability, you can make an impression on how people see it and you... whereas being lesbian or bisexual is about perversions and it is not acceptable. So one's an acceptable difference and the other is just disgusting..."

Having said that, you don't always have to be out about your sexuality, and often impairment is a visible difference, as many respondents pointed out. Finding an identity and a community can be particularly difficult for people who are both disabled, and also lesbian or gay. The gay community is not always always welcoming of its disabled members, nor is it any more accessible than the straight world. One of the most distressing things for many who are both disabled and gay is the

hostility which they face in one or both of their communities of identification. There are also particular problems for those who live in residential situations, or else are dependent on services or carers, and are not "out" about their sexuality because of homophobia: many disabled people are "closeted" because of such dependence.

Many respondents who had gained impairments later in life, especially after coming out as lesbian or gay, were more likely to identify with the lesbian and gay community than with the disability movement. Those who experienced congenital impairment, and often those whose profound impairments meant they were denied access to the scene, were more likely to identify with other disabled people.

Some respondents felt that disabled people were more accepting of gay people than gay people were of disabled people, and so they felt more at home in the disability community. Nonetheless, people had experienced homophobia in the disability movement and disablism in the lesbian and gay community.

Many people did not feel fully at home in either the lesbian and gay scene, or the disability movement. Many respondents told us that they felt most at home with other disabled lesbians and gays, where they could relax and feel safe, with others who understood both aspects of their identity: it was not necessary to explain matters, prejudice was not such a problem, and experiences could be shared and compared.

However, many disabled lesbians and gays succeed in finding a home and creating a community around them in which they feel strong and supported. Many of the stories told in the research were of resistance and survival and celebration, about mutual recognition and gaining permission to be both disabled and gay. As Dafydd said about discovering such a "home":

" I think the biggest thing was talking to other disabled lesbians and gay men, it was just wonderful, and I learned so much. At last I've got this forum where I can talk about what was happening without feeling like losing control, feeling not attractive, all that stuff. I could talk to other disabled lesbians and gay men and be understood..."

## GAY VICTIMS OF THE NAZI REGIME NOW ENTITLED TO CLAIM COMPENSATION

In recognition of the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazi regime and the climate of repression that prevailed after the Holocaust with regard to homosexuals, the Swiss Bank and German compensation programmes administered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) seek to redress the exclusion of this group. The programmes indicate that homosexual victims need to be finally included in the history books concerning this horrific period in the history of mankind.

Dirk de Winter, Director of IOM's Compensation Programmes, points out that not many homosexual victims survived the Nazi era and that survivors were reluctant to publicize the intimate nature of their so-called crimes against the Nazi regime. Therefore, De Winter emphasizes, homosexual victims of the Nazi regime were hard to locate. Many homosexuals sought refuge in foreign countries in order to avoid persecution. The goal of this campaign is to promote networking and target media initiatives that will have a snowball effect and spread to other countries where homosexuals sought shelter from Nazi persecution.

All claims have to be filed with IOM by 31st December 2001. Heirs of homosexual victims who died on or after February 16, 1999 are also entitled to claim for compensation. If a victim who filed a claim dies, the heirs must assert their rights with IOM within six months of the date of the victims death. IOM in Geneva provides claim forms and assistance free of charge: Hotline +41-22-7179204, IOM/HVAP, 17 route des Morillons, P.O. Box 71, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland.

# SINGLE EQUALITY BILL

By Maggie Beirne

Glaring social inequalities have fed and fuelled the conflict in Northern Ireland. These inequalities are in part due to political and religious divisions particular to this jurisdiction, but they also reflect the problems of many other societies. As elsewhere,

Northern Ireland experiences social and economic divisions along gender and race lines; unequal treatment as between people with and without disabilities; injustices because of one's sexual orientation, or one's socio-economic status, or one's age. Gradually over time, a raft of anti-discrimination legislation has evolved, in part of course in response to developments at the European level. There are, however, lots of discrepancies between the protections offered different social groups, and serious inequalities still persist.

To try and develop a more coherent and harmonised approach to discrimination, inequality, and the need for positive action to promote greater equality throughout society, the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister issued a major consultation document "A Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland" earlier this year. Civil servants are currently studying the responses received and are drafting legislation

which will hopefully seek to make our equality legal framework much more effective than it has been to date.

The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is a Belfast-based human rights group that, together with the public service trade union UNISON, coordinates a broad coalition of non-governmental groups called the Equality Coalition. The Coalition consists of groups such as Disability Action, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Help the Aged, Save the Children, the Coalition on Sexual Orientation, and many local community groups active in both deprived nationalist and unionist communities seeking to promote a broad equality agenda. There has been extensive agreement across the various constituencies about the crucial elements of a single piece of equality legislation, and this article will give a flavour of that consensus.

**There has been extensive agreement across the various constituencies about the crucial elements of a single piece of equality legislation, and this article will give a flavour of that consensus.**

First and foremost, there is a strongly shared view that this new legislation should be very broad in scope. It should refer to all the various equality constituencies and not create some kind of hierarchy as between those forms of discrimination that are illegal and those which are not. This coverage

is also vital if one is to address multiple discrimination. It should moreover extend beyond employment and cover goods, facilities and services. And, very importantly, it should move beyond a traditional anti-discriminatory approach and pro-actively promote equality. Moreover, CAJ's submission noted that "A practical framework for achieving lasting equality must focus on more than equality of opportunity. Equality demands addressing disadvantage and focusing on achieving equal access, fair participation, and equality of outcome".

Secondly, the legislation should of course harmonise the current protections upwards. In certain areas the protections against racial



# [CASE REPORTS]

## Young drivers want cheaper insurance

The Government must regulate the motor insurance industry so young drivers are charged reasonable premiums, a young motorists' organisation has said. The motor insurance justice action group (MIJAG) delivered a letter of protest to the Fianna Fáil ardfheis at Citywest, Dublin.

## Epilepsy sufferer wins £15,000 after dism

In September the Labour Court granted an award of £15,000 to an employee on the disability ground under the Employment Equality Act, 1998. The Labour Court established that the employee had been discriminated against on the grounds of her disability, and she was supported in her case by the Equality Authority.

The Equality Authority welcomed the first such successful case taken which relates to the disability ground and the high level of the award made to the employee. The Equality Authority stated that disability-based discrimination is widespread in the Irish workplace. It is based on mistaken assumptions as to the ability of people with disabilities to do the job. This decision shatters these assumptions and will have a profound effect on the treatment of employees with disabilities.

The decision will clarify that employers cannot assume a person with disabilities cannot do the job but must take steps to establish whether an employee has the capacity to perform duties attached to a job. Employers are required to provide specific facilities or work procedures that would allow people with disabilities do their jobs effectively (subject to a nominal cost limits).

It is illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities and stiff penalties can be expected. The successful prosecution of this case provides encouragement to people with disabilities and signifies that people with disabilities can now

approach the workplace with a confidence that they have rights.

The claimant suffers from epilepsy but her condition is well controlled by medication. She had worked as a packer in the computer plant for a number of weeks without any difficulty. She was told by her supervisor that her performance was very satisfactory and that the company would like to take her on on a permanent basis. There was no interview but she was required to undergo a medical. The claimant had declared her epilepsy on the application form. The doctor informed the company's personnel officer by phone that the claimant suffered from epilepsy.

The personnel officer then dismissed the employee with immediate effect. The company did not discuss its concerns with the employee. It did not carry out a safety assessment which could have identified the extent, if any, to which the working environment presented a danger to the claimant and how such danger would be overcome. The company did not wait for the written medical report of the doctor which stated that the claimant's epilepsy presented no problem for the type of work in which she was employed but that she was not fit to operate heavy machinery. The doctor also suggested getting a second opinion.

The company admitted that it dismissed the complainant because she suffered from epilepsy but said it did so on medical advice. It was

## Woman who lost job over epilepsy to get £15,000

company policy that all employees should be competent to undertake all tasks associated with the production function and that in the case of the claimant this would involve the operation of machinery. It believed that this working environment posed a danger to a person with epilepsy.

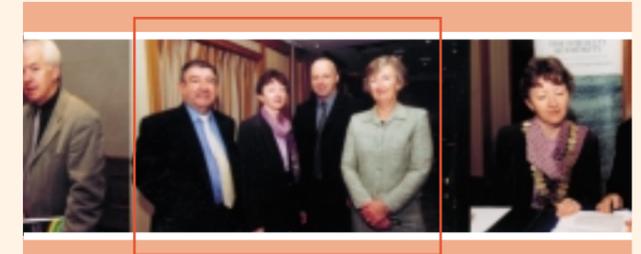
The court found that it was clear that not all production employees were required to use the this machinery all of the time and that if a problem resulted in relation to the claimant that arrangements could have been put in place whereby she would not be required to use this machinery.

On the evidence the court didn't accept that the respondent could reasonably and effectively have come to the conclusion that the claimant was not fully competent or capable of performing the duties of her employment. If the respondent did conclude that the claimant lacked full capacity to safely undertake the duties of her employment, it appeared to have done so precipitously. Even if the respondent did reach such a conclusion it was abundantly clear that the company didn't give the slightest consideration to providing the complainant with reasonable facilities which would overcome any difficulties which she or the respondent might otherwise experience.

The Court awarded the claimant £15,000 which reflects equivalent high awards in the UK on disability grounds.

## THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY AND ASTI CONFERENCE

The Equality Authority and ASTI held a conference on Equal Opportunities on September 29th 2001. The Conference explored the impact of the Equal Status Act on teachers, students, school management and the Department of Education and Science, in order to create an environment free of discrimination in second level schools.



Pictured at the conference were: (L-R): Leonard Hurley, Vice-Chair, EA; Catherine Fitzpatrick, President, ASTI; Niall Crowley, CEO, Equality Authority; Maire Mulcahy, ASTI.



PJ Sheehy, Vice-President, ASTI with Maire Mulcahy.



Catherine Fitzpatrick, President, ASTI and Leonard Hurley, Vice-Chair, EA.

Photographer: Tommy Clancy

## Employers risk facing prosecution over harassment codes of practice

by Evelyn Ring

EMPLOYERS risk a criminal record if they fail to comply with new codes of practice on bullying and harassment to be published later this month, a legal expert has warned. Under the Health and Safety Authority codes, employers who fail to comply with their terms may also be open to a future criminal prosecution for psychological trauma suffered by employees. Raymond

Byrne, a barrister and lecturer in law at Dublin City University, warned the consequences for individual managers who engaged in bullying and harassment might be dismissal, and, in extreme cases, prosecution under the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997. Mr Byrne said an employee could use anything in the codes of practice as evidence of an offence under the legislation to prosecute employers. Mr Byrne, who addressed a Nifast

conference in Dublin on workplace bullying said the new codes of practice dealing would have very clear legal status. Up to now, bullying and harassment have been dealt with primarily either by way of civil litigation or within the employment/industrial relations context. Employers are currently vulnerable to civil litigation, unless they have in place appropriate management procedures to prevent bullying and harassment.

An ESRI survey on workplace bullying conducted last year found that 7% of the workforce are bullied with women almost twice as likely to be bullied at work than their male counterparts. The Health and Safety Authority's 1998 leaflet entitled Bullying in the Workplace states organisations should have anti-bullying policies in place. It also provided an outline of the management strategies needed to put

these in place. Mr Byrne said the Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying had taken matters a step further by recommending the Health and Safety Authority take the lead regulatory role in bringing forward more binding proposals. Three parallel codes on bullying and harassment will be published under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989; the Industrial Relations Act 1990 and the

Employment Equality Act 1998. Mr Byrne said such codes might be used as evidence of what was required to comply with the general requirements of the legislation under which they were made. Any manager facing a criminal prosecution for bullying or harassment faces a fine of £1,500 at District Court level but there is no limit on the fines imposed by any of the higher courts. There is no law provision as it stands for a prison term.

# REVIEWING THE GROUNDS COVERED BY THE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY ACT 1998

By Niall Crowley

The Employment Equality Act, 1998 currently covers the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. This is a wide coverage and is progressive in relation to other EU member states. The Act also contains a commitment to review these grounds within two years of its enactment. This review is currently taking place. It has involved dialogue between the social partners. The Equality Authority also developed a detailed position on the review.

In pursuing such a review it is important to have a clarity of objective. Three objectives suggest themselves. These are to:

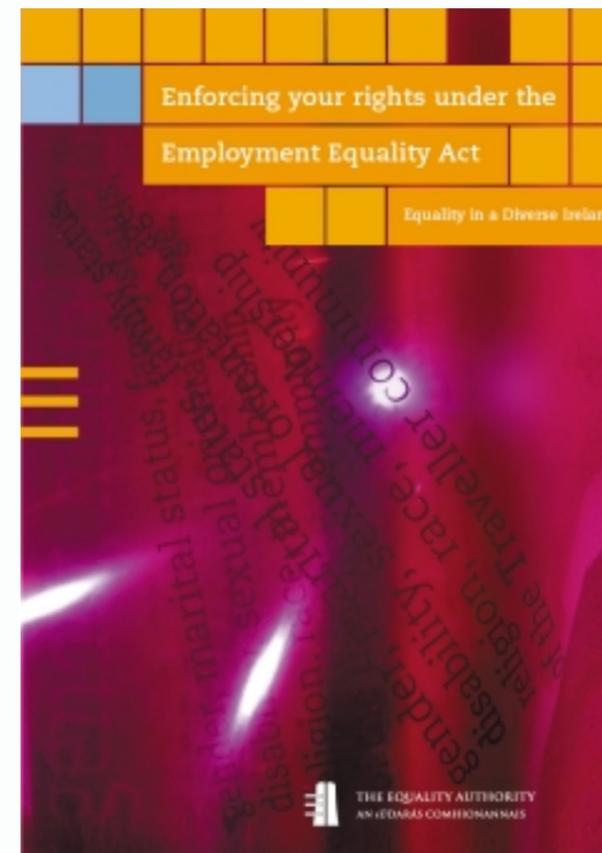
- build greater COMPREHENSIVENESS in the coverage of the legislation so that it can move towards addressing all forms of discrimination;
- maintain a COHERENCE to the equality agenda such that integrated approaches can be pursued. Such approaches link up and bring forward all grounds simultaneously, thus making multi-ground equality strategies feasible;

- secure an EQUIVALENCE of rights between Ireland and Northern Ireland thus reflecting commitments in the Belfast Multi Party Agreement. In this, the review is timely, as it coincides with debate on the coverage of the Single Equality Act proposed for Northern Ireland.

In gathering evidence of the need for any change a number of sources need to be explored. These include:-

- The experience of applying the Employment Equality Act 1998
- The experience of developing integrated approaches to multi-ground equality agendas in the workplace
- Dialogue with those who are experiencing inequality
- The need to achieve coherence between the legislation and other policies and programmes contributing to equality
- The need to reflect the provisions of international covenants and treaties that Ireland is a party to
- Good practice and effective experience in other jurisdictions.

The Equality Authority, in pursuit of these objectives and drawing from these sources of evidence, decided that there was a need to change the existing grounds as defined in the



legislation, as well as a need to add four further grounds.

The Equality Authority recommended that:-

- the upper age limit of 65 and the lower age limit of 18 be removed from the age ground.
- the definition of the gender ground be expanded to explicitly cover gender expression, gender identity and transgender issues.
- a socio-economic status ground be added to

address the discrimination experienced by people on the basis of factors such as family background, geographical location, housing tenure, educational background and/or economic situation.

- a trade union ground be added to address discrimination experienced by employees on the basis of their trade union membership.
- a criminal conviction ground be added to address the discrimination experienced by ex-offenders and ex-prisoners.
- a political opinion ground be added to address discrimination experienced on this basis.

The debate between the social partners highlighted two trends. The first, held by IBEC and the employer pillar, was that, while an extension of the grounds was not precluded in the future, they should not be extended at this point in time. The second, held by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and by the Community and Voluntary sector Pillar, sought an expansion of the existing grounds towards a more comprehensive coverage by the Employment Equality Act, 1998.

The first trend highlighted that the legislation was already comprehensive by European standards and was also a complex piece of legislation. It suggested that there were difficulties in expanding the grounds covered as time had yet to allow sufficient case law to develop or codes of practice to be prepared. Workplace initiatives to change workplace cultures and to manage diversity needed further time to evolve before further change.

The second demonstrated an important

# SLIGO: THE MAP TO EQUALITY

By Michael Waugh  
Equality Co-ordinator,  
Sligo LEADER-Partnership

consensus behind the need for the legislation to cover the grounds of socio-economic status (with social origin also named), trade union membership, criminal conviction (or ex-prisoner) and political opinion. There was also support for removing the age limits from the age ground. It was pointed out that these recommendations were not new departures for the legislation and that many had been suggested during the preparation of the legislation - as such their inclusion could not be deemed to be premature. An early achievement of a more comprehensive coverage by the Act would allow more comprehensive, coherent, and therefore long lasting workplace initiatives addressing culture of the workplace and diversity in the workplace.

The debate among the social partners, as well as the Equality Authority position, also made reference to the importance of using this moment of change for a wider revision of the legislation. This would allow the new EU directives to be incorporated. It would also allow for problems in the provision of the Act,

**“An early achievement of a more comprehensive coverage by the Act would allow more comprehensive, coherent, and therefore long lasting workplace initiatives addressing culture of the workplace and diversity in the workplace.”**

in the remedies available under the Act and in the powers of the Equality Authority to be addressed.



Back in October of 2000, I had just had the good fortune of being appointed the Equality Co-ordinator for the Sligo LEADER-Partnership, who had just created this Equality post. As an American with a civil rights background, just arriving to the shores of Ireland, I thought I should make a beeline to the Equality Authority for some guidance and support. I found my way to Dublin and as I was clumsily searching for the Equality Authority, I stopped to ask a man if he could give me directions to the Equality Authority. He looked at me as if I were joking and with a wry grin he said "equality? WE have no equality in Ireland!" Then, with a full smile, he continued "and if we did, we CERTAINLY don't have anyone who is an authority on it". We both had a good laugh, and then I looked up and saw a sign that said "Harcourt Street". We were only a block away!

I believe many people in Ireland are only "a block away" as well, from understanding their rights and obligations under new legislation. I have found that people have become aware that there is new equality law, but still are not sure how to assert their rights. To help change this, in Sligo, we tied right into the Anti-Racism in the Workplace Week last year with a public awareness campaign and cultural observance. Additionally we worked with the Equality Authority to bring about Sligo Equality Week, which was a huge success. Along with these initiatives we have been holding diversity seminars for people within our own organisation as well as opening them up to the public. These activities have been invaluable to building up a network of people from diverse backgrounds. We have several programmes that place social inclusion, valuing diversity, and combating inequality at the forefront. However, good equality practices begin "at home".

With this in mind, Sligo LEADER-Partnership has initiated a pro-active Equality Programme for its 150

employees. All employees, board members, volunteers must initially meet with the Equality Co-ordinator, where they will get a briefing on the equality programme. Within two months of this meeting they attend a Diversity seminar. From there, within one year, everyone receives training on the prevention of sex harassment, bullying, and equality training. This is a condition of employment written into the contract.

We are also working with the local government bodies to establish a Diversity and Equality Council which will be an essential means of preventing discrimination, and the many other ways people may act out prejudice. The newly formed Sligo Multi-Culture Forum is working with the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (yes, I found the building on Harcourt Street). Sligo LEADER-Partnership is particularly proud of its Women Traveller Programme, headed by Brid Boland, and Bernadette Comiskey, who herself is a proud member of the Traveller community. This programme recently received a large grant from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to purchase a premises for a pre-school for Traveller children in Sligo. It will cater for 20 children under 5 years old. We hope this will give Traveller children an advantage to prepare them for primary school, thus reducing absentee levels and early school leaving. The environment will promote a positive experience of learning, of play, and of Traveller identity. People in Need Trust and the North West Health Board are also supporting this programme.

Sligo LEADER-Partnership also has an ambitious Equality for Women "train the trainer" project beginning in November as part of the Gender Equality Initiative from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. There is ongoing work with people from the Gay and Lesbian community as well as People with Disabilities in Ireland. In fact, PWDI and Sligo LEADER Partnership Co. are co-sponsoring an information night on how one can assert their rights under the new legislation. Our equality office has also assisted 12 people from the

Social Inclusion Multi-Culture Forum Valuing Diversity Pro-active Equality Programme Diversity and Equality Council Combating Inequality Tra

## Sligo: The Map to Equality cont from page 23.

Traveller Community in regards to the Equal Status Act. We are also looking forward to yet another live internet "chat" with Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority, on our new web site [www.equalitypartnership.com](http://www.equalitypartnership.com).

This is an exciting time to be in Ireland, especially if you are a person who cares about equal opportunity and the basic principles of justice and fair play. I have

been amazed by the level of commitment to equality of people here in Sligo. The years of hard work in development and education is paying off now with all the new legislation. All we need to do now, it seems to me, is let people know that their certainly IS equality in Ireland, an Authority, and just give them damn good directions on how to get there.

## EVENTS/DIARY

The Herzog Centre for Jewish and near Eastern Religion and Culture will be hosting a series of lectures taking place in Autumn/Winter 2001 dealing with Judaism in a multicultural world from antiquity to modernity. The lectures will take place in Trinity College, Arts Block at 8.00pm. Fee is £30.00 for the full series. Contact Jane Welch on 6081297.

The Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin, will be hosting a series of seminars during the Michaelmas Term, 2001-2 in the Arts Building, Room 3071, TCD, between 12.00 and 2.00pm on Friday 2 November, 16th November and on the evening of the 22nd November 2001 between 7-9pm in Room 3, 1 College Green. The seminars will include Multiculturalism and Freedom, Lessons of the World Conference Against Racism, and Sexuality, nationalism, sectarianism and citizenship in Belfast, Northern Ireland. For more information contact Dr Ronit Lentin, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Department of Sociology, TCD on 01-6082766.

The Department of Education and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland are co-sponsoring a conference entitled "Racial Equality in Education". The conference will take place in the Ross Park Hotel, 20 Doagh Road, Kells, Ballymena on Wednesday 31st October 2001. Contact 02890 664020 for further details.

The Irish Penal Reform Trust will be hosting their fifth Annual Conference entitled "Prisoners Under Scrutiny - A Human Rights Perspective". The event will take place on Saturday 3rd November between 10.00am and 3.00pm at the Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9. Information and registration details available from Anne Wayne, on 01-8620344 or by e-mailing [info@penal-reform.ie](mailto:info@penal-reform.ie).

A conference is being organised by the Higher Education Equality Unit entitled "Rural Issues in Higher Education". The conference will address some of the issues for rural learners and provide a forum for discussion on barriers, practices and initiatives in this area. The event is being held on the 22nd to the 23rd November 2001 at the Tipperary Institute, Thurles. For further information contact: Angela O'Connell on 021 4902038 or e-mail [a.oconnell@ucc.ie](mailto:a.oconnell@ucc.ie).

Educate Together is organising a conference entitled "Delivering an Inclusive Ethos - Practical Issues in the Work of Educate Together Schools". The conference will take place at the Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny on the 30th November to 1st December 2001. Details regarding fees and application forms are available by contacting Educate Together at 01- 6263089 or e-mail [info@educatetogether.ie](mailto:info@educatetogether.ie).