THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

Equality News

Spring **2008**

Contents

Meet the Equality Authority Board

The current Board of the Equality Authority was appointed in 2007 and has a four year term. The members are:

Dr Angela Kerins,
SRN, SCM, LLD
Chairperson

Angela Kerins was appointed Chairperson of the Equality Authority in September 2007. She also holds the position of Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Angela has been actively campaigning on equality issues for many years, in both her professional capacity and as a board member of several state and not for profit organisations in Ireland and abroad. She is Chief Executive of the Rehab Group, which provides a broad range of services such as training, education, health and social care, employment and other commercial activities services to more than 60,000 people in 208 locations, in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Poland. Angela is the permanent NGO Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Mr Denis O'Flynn

Ms Finola McDonnell

Ms Louise O'Donnell

Mr David Joyce

Mr Kieran Rose

Mr Frank Goodwin

Mr Nigel Brander

Ms Salome Mbugua

Ms Betty O'Leary

Ms Ellen Mongan

Ms Theresa Murphy

Update

By Niall Crowley,
Chief Executive Officer,
Equality Authority.

Strategic Plan
Work has now begun on preparing a new Strategic Plan for the Equality Authority. This will cover the period 2009 to 2011 and will be submitted to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in October this year.

A strategy and organisation review has been commissioned. This will explore the external environment for the Equality Authority, the outputs and impact of the work of the Equality Authority, the culture, style, resources and structure of the organisation, and relationships and interactions with stakeholders. The review is being carried out by PA Consulting and will involve wide ranging consultation with organisations from the community and voluntary, statutory, private and trade union sectors.

Three regional consultation events are being organised in Waterford, Galway (9th May) and Athlone (10th June). Meetings have already been held in Waterford and involved a strong turnout from business, trade union and community and voluntary sector representatives. These meetings were supported by the Waterford Chamber of Commerce and the Waterford Area Partnership and provided valuable ideas for consideration by the Equality Authority.

Stereotyping
The Equality Authority is currently developing a strategy on stereotyping with representatives of the community and voluntary sector. This strategy should be implemented over a number of years.

A working group has been established to coordinate and assist the implementation of the strategy. This group involves a partnership between the Equality Authority and national community and voluntary organisations concerned with and working on issues of stereotyping across the nine grounds.

The aims of the strategy are to:

• Raise awareness and create understanding of stereotyping and of the negative impact of stereotyping for people across the nine grounds

• Promote critical thinking about the way groups are represented across the nine grounds and in different environments (community, education, employment, health, accommodation, public services, media)

• Identify and support appropriate ways in which stereotyping can be challenged and addressed by Government departments, State agencies, NGOs, the media and wider civil society.

A background paper is now being commissioned on current stereotypes across the nine grounds, where these stereotypes are being generated and are being given expression, and on initiatives already taken by the community and voluntary sector on this issue.

There are two areas of work in the strategy – raising awareness of stereotyping and supporting a challenge to stereotyping. The work on raising awareness will make use of a European Commission exhibition on stereotyping which will be shown in a range of regional venues and will serve as a focus for a range of regional initiatives. The work on supporting a challenge to stereotyping will have a particular focus on the workplace, the provision of public sector services, educational contexts and media and advertising.

Access to Rights
A programme of work is being developed on access to rights. It builds on work done during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and on joint research with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The focus for this work is to develop new approaches to raising levels of knowledge of rights under equality legislation within groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds.

During the European Year a number of statutory organisations with responsibility for information provision jointly commissioned research on good practice in other jurisdictions in providing information on systems of redress. This work was led by the Office of the Ombudsman, the Equality Authority and the Citizens Information Board. It has now been agreed by the organisations involved to use the research to develop a joint initiative to explore and identify new channels of communication with Black and minority ethnic communities.

The Equality Authority and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland jointly commissioned and published a research report on *Enabling Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Individuals to Access their Rights under Equality Law*[1]. This report examined the particular barriers for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in taking cases under the equality legislation and made a number of recommendations to address these barriers. The Equality Authority has begun a series of meetings with lesbian and gay organisations and trade unions to develop a programme of work on these issues. This work will include a specific engagement from the Equality Authority with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities on their rights under equality legislation.

A further initiative in this area is being developed by the Equality Authority through EQUINET, the European network of specialised equality bodies. This will involve an international training event on access to rights initiatives to explore and develop good practice by specialised equality bodies in this area.

Age Discrimination
The Equality Authority represented a claimant in a significant and successful case on the age ground. The Equality Tribunal found that the Office of the Revenue Commissioners had discriminated against John Fagan[2] under the Employment Equality Acts on the ground of age in relation to promotion. The Equality Officer of the Equality Tribunal awarded €60,000 to John Fagan and ordered that if the Office of the Revenue Commissioners continued to operate the consistory method of promotion, it must take steps to ensure the process is conducted in an open and transparent fashion.

The Equality Authority highlighted this as "a landmark case" stating that "all promotion processes within the civil service should now be reviewed to ensure they are open, transparent and free from discrimination. A civil service wide strategy should be developed to promote equality for older employees, to support the effective management of age diversity and to seek to eliminate age based discrimination".

The age ground has emerged as the highest area of casefiles for the Equality Authority under the Employment Equality Acts. These casefiles predominantly relate to allegations of discrimination by older people. The main areas covered by these allegations of discrimination include working conditions (including the use of age limits for retirement or for entry to jobs) and access to employment, followed by equal pay and harassment.

1. This publication can be downloaded from www.equality.ie/research

2. Please see Case Report on page 19.

The Right Living Space

Report on the Housing Needs
of People with Disabilities

By Michael Browne

Mr. John Gormley, TD Minishter for Environment
Heritage and Local Government speaking at the
launch of *The Right Living Space*

The Right Living Space, a report recently
published by the Citizens Information Board(CIB)
and the Disability Federation of Ireland(DFI),
describes the experiences of people with
disabilities, their families, and their support
organisations in accessing both appropriate
accommodation and the community supports
necessary for independent living. The report
sets the experience and perspectives of
people on the ground alongside existing
housing policy for people with disabilities.

The report takes as its starting point the fact
that, while the term 'people with disabilities'
is used generically, the population of people
with disabilities is in fact a very diverse one
and that, therefore, identifying and meeting
their housing and related support needs is
a very complex and challenging process.
The report notes that low incomes/borderline
poverty levels are crucial factors in preventing
equality of access to adequate housing by
people with disabilities. The report also notes
that housing and accommodation for people
with disabilities frequently requires more than
'bricks and mortar'.

Main Findings
Innovative Developments
There are some innovations and good
practice in accommodating people with
disabilities in existence at local level. These
include responses by local authorities and
joint initiatives involving a local authority, a
voluntary/community organisation and the
HSE. Such initiatives generally involve strong
inter-agency collaboration and the provision
of supports to allow for optimum independent
living. While the voluntary housing sector is at
the forefront of providing suitable housing for
people with disabilities, access to innovative
schemes is limited due to short supply and
uneven geographical spread.

Principles of Housing Policy
Despite progress in recent years in the area
of policies for people with disabilities, there

is a substantial discrepancy between the aspirations and principles of Irish housing policy and the day to day social realities for people with disabilities. This arises because of an ongoing shortage of suitable social and community-based housing. Significant principles of housing policy, especially person centred planning, supports for independent living, accessibility and integrated delivery, are aspirational in many instances of housing need among people with disabilities.

Hidden Housing Need
There is a hidden and unmet housing need among the population of people with disabilities. People with unmet housing needs include:

- adults with disabilities in family homes when they wish to and/or would be better off living elsewhere;

- people living in accommodation with inadequate accessibility;

- some people in long-stay residential settings /hospitals/hostels; and

- some people in nursing homes inappropriate to their needs, for example, people with an acquired brain injury, people with MS, people with Alzheimer's or other dementia.

There has been a substantial underestimation to date of housing needs of people with disabilities by local authorities. (The report notes that a revised process is being put in place for the next (2008) statutory assessment of housing need and that provisions have been put in place for the assessment of needs under the provisions of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005).

Private Rented Sector
Landlords in the private housing sector are often reluctant to accept people with disabilities or rent supplement/rent accommodation scheme (RAS) tenants. Also, in the private rented sector, accessible dwellings are in short supply and the rent cap for eligibility for rent assistance makes it very difficult to find accessible and appropriate accommodation.

House Adaptations
A range of problems were experienced in relation to the Disabled Person's Grant (DPG), including maximum grant levels being inadequate to cover the cost of adaptations, difficulty for people with disabilities in making up the shortfall between the grant and actual building cost, problems locating builders to undertake the work, significant delays in processing applications by local authorities and inadequate funding for the scheme. (The report notes that two new schemes were introduced in November 2007 to replace the DPG).

Impact of Social Attitudes to Disability
The report identifies social attitudes to people with disabilities as a key factor in shaping responses to their housing needs. It is suggested that society has not to date fully subscribed to the right of people with disabilities to live independent and autonomous lives and to form separate household units and that this impacts significantly on choice and equality of access.

Accessibility
Current building regulations and their enforcement fall short of delivering fully habitable housing for people with disabilities. For example, many so-called accessible houses are not suitable for larger wheelchairs. Also, the built environment continues to pose significant problems of accessibility.

Absence of an Integrated Approach
The report refers to an absence of a systematic co-ordinated approach to meeting the housing needs of people with disabilities. The involvement of a number of statutory agencies and the absence of adequate streamlined funding sources makes it very difficult for both people with disabilities and their support organisations to put in place and sustain adequate integrated packages of housing provision and related supports.

Key Factors Going Forward
The report identifies the following as key factors which should underpin the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities which is currently being developed:

Pictured at the launch of the The Right Living Space were from left: Geraldine Glare, Chair, DFI, John Gormley, TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Martin Naughton, DFI and Board Member, Chris Glennon, Chair of CIB and Leonie Lunny, CEO, of CIB.

- enshrinement of the concept of mainstreaming at the heart of housing policy for people with disabilities (in contrast to 'special needs' housing) to ensure more provision of mixed housing and more choice of tenure and housing style;

- a commitment to a person centred planning approach with the individual person with a disability at the centre of the process;

- equality of access to housing for all people with disabilities and an extension of housing options and choices accordingly;

- a commitment to the concept of independent living as a cornerstone of public policy and the provision of commensurate community supports;

- funding streams to promote innovative and integrated developments and to maximise the contribution of the voluntary housing sector;

- a continuum of housing provision to cater for various levels of ability/disability with in-built transition/progression options to more independent living; and

- a life-cycle approach to housing provision which incorporates accessibility and lifetime adaptability as essential components.

Right Living Space - Housing and Accomodation Needs of People with Disabilitiies is available from the **Citizens Information Board** tel 01 605900 or at www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Michael Browne is a Research Consultant and author of the '*Right Living Space - Housing and Accomodation Needs of People with Disabilities*'.

The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education on the nine grounds including the ground of disability. The Equality Authority currently has 216 casefiles under the Equal Status Acts. Sixteen of these casefiles relate to allegations of discrimination in accommodation provision by the public sector - six of these are on the disability ground.

Equality in Ireland 2007

A new report from the
Central Statistics Office(CSO)

By Mark Manto of the CSO

Central Statistics Office
An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh

Equality in Ireland was published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in November 2007. The report uses 2006 Census of Population data to analyse the demographic and socio-economic situation of persons in Ireland across the nine equality grounds.

What is the overall aim of the report?
The aim of this new thematic report on Equality in Ireland is to provide a broad analysis of the economic and social situation of people in Ireland using the nine grounds in equality legislation as a means of analysing their situation and quality of life. The report builds upon earlier CSO thematic reports on Women and Men in Ireland, Ageing in Ireland and Measuring Ireland's Progress. These thematic reports have been widely welcomed by many users and our intention is to continue by publishing further reports on individual grounds and areas of interest to policy-makers.

What was the genesis of the report?
The social partnership agreement 2003-2005 requested the CSO to support a move towards more evidence based policy making. Responding to this request, the National Statistics Board (NSB) asked the CSO to prepare a social indicator report covering all aspects of social statistics. The NSB placed considerable emphasis on the value of breaking down or disaggregating the social indicators by key characteristics such as the nine grounds in equality legislation. The CSO agreed with the Board a strategy of producing

a series of key thematic social indicator reports that would be structured around the nine equality grounds. The CSO has produced Women and Men in Ireland on an annual basis since 2004 and published a new report on Ageing in Ireland in 2007.

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All was a key stimulus for the CSO to produce this report. The report and indicators were selected by the CSO in close collaboration with the Equality Authority.

How is the report structured and how can it be used?
The report is composed of overview tables (Section 1) and tables on each of the nine grounds (Sections 2 to 10). Section 1 places eight of the nine grounds specified under Irish equality legislation in context. Tables relating to the ground of sexual orientation are dealt with in Section 5 due to the absence of necessary data. These main tables benchmark the position in Ireland and identify areas where particular groups will be more affected by policy changes and developments. The tables in Section 1 are presented under the domains of Population, Employment, Education, Accommodation and Discrimination.

Within Section 1, overview tables are presented across the grounds. These main tables are accompanied by a prime age cohort table (25-44 years) to assist the reader in understanding the effects of gender and age in the main table.

For example, widowed persons account for 5.6% of the population and women constitute 78.3% of widowed persons. Such a high percentage is largely due to females having a longer life expectancy. However, when we examine the situation for the 25-44 age group, we find that women account for only 65.8% of widowed persons in that age group and that widowed persons comprise 0.5% of that age group.

Similarly the figures for third level education by marital status (40.1% for single persons and 29.2% for married persons) are examined in conjunction with a similar analysis for the 25-44 age group (more even percentages for single and married) and also by age group. Readers interested in a particular ground should also refer to the context-setting tables in Section 1.

Sections 2 to 10 examine each of the nine equality grounds in more detail. In most cases the set of indicators describing each ground is preceded by an overview table in which these data are disaggregated by other equality grounds. Further prime age cohort tables are also included in some sections where appropriate.

Producing the individual ground reports is quite a lengthy process. By looking across the nine grounds in one report, we have accelerated the availability of cross cutting thematic data to users, and also provided users with an opportunity to identify indicators of particular interest so that these could be given more attention in more specific reports. We have particularly looked at the demographic, employment and education domains. It is hoped that a cross ground analysis of these domains will bring issues to the fore that are less visible in individual ground reports.

What does the report show?
The overview tables and the associated indicators for each ground contain many insights into the lives of people in Ireland. Key findings include:

- In 2006 there were over 1.45 million single persons in Ireland (43.1% of the population aged 15 and over) compared to over 1.56 million married persons (46.4%). 166,800

persons were separated or divorced (4.9%) while 190,400 persons were widowed (5.6%). Almost four in five of all widowed persons (78.3%) were females.
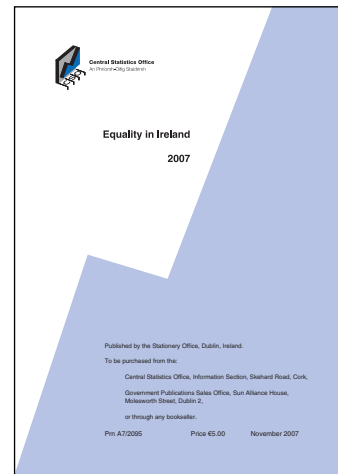
- There were 112,900 lone parents with a youngest child aged less than 18 (3.3% of the population). 90.9% of these lone parents were female. The percentage of lone parents employed was 54.8% compared to 74.1% for other parents.

- 86.8% of the population defined themselves as Roman Catholic in Census 2006. People expressing no religious affiliation comprised 6.1% of the population. Irish Travellers reported the highest proportion of Roman Catholics at 95.1%.

- 9.3% of the population described themselves as having a disability. Females aged 65 and over were more likely than males to have a disability whereas in the 0-24 age group males (4.9%) had a higher rate than the 3.4% rate for females.

- 88.8% of the population were Irish nationals, 2.7% were from the UK, 3.9% were from other EU countries and 3.5% were from outside the EU. Other EU nationals accounted for 8.5% of males and for 5.6% of females in the 25-44 age group. Non-EU nationals in the 25-44 age group accounted for 6.3% of males and 6.0% of females.

- 96.5% of the usually resident population described themselves as having a White ethnic background. People of Other White background (mainly British, Polish, etc.) were predominantly in the 25-44 age group (50.5%). People with Black ethnic backgrounds were concentrated in the 0-14 (40.9%) and 25-44 (44.5%) age groups.

- The percentage of women in employment was 48.5% in 2006 compared to 66.0% of men. Looking across the grounds, 7.2% of people aged 65 & over were employed, 21.6% of people with a disability, 81.7% of other EU nationals, 40.7% of Black ethnic people and 13.8% of Travellers.

- 23.2% of lone parents had achieved a third level education in 2006, less than the

34.4% rate for other parents. Persons with a disability were less likely to have a third level education. In the 25-44 age group, 28.3% of persons with a disability had completed third level education compared to 42.9% of all persons in that age group. 54% of Non-EU nationals had third level or higher education compared to 29.1% of Irish nationals. UK and other EU nationals also had higher rates of third level education (both 36.4%) compared to Irish nationals. 0.8% of Irish Travellers had attained third level education compared to 30.5% of the population as a whole. The rate for female Travellers (1.1%) was higher than the rate for male Travellers (0.6%).

- Carers were much found in particular sub-groups under each ground. For example, 62.3% of carers were women, 62.5% were married, 88.9% were Roman Catholic, 45.3% were aged between 45 and 64, 91.9% were of Irish nationality and 96.2% were of White ethnic background.

This report draws heavily on the results and special analyses from Census 2006. It is anticipated the report will become a regular release from the CSO following each Census.

Equality in Ireland 2007
is available from the CSO,
tel: 021 453 5000 or
email: information@cso.ie

Central Statistics Office
An Phríomh•Oifig Staidrimh

Equality in Ireland

2007

Published by the Stationery Office, Dublin, Ireland.

To be purchased from the:

Central Statistics Office, Information Section, Skehard Road, Cork,

Government Publications Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2,

or through any bookseller.

Prn A7/2095   Price €5.00   November 2007

Legal Conference to Mark Thirty Years of Gender Equality Legislation

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Speakers at recent conference in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin included:

1. Carol Baxter, Equality Authority and Sylvia Meehan, first CEO of the Employment Equality Agency;

2. Cathryn Costello, Oxford University and Robin Allen Q.C.;

3. Geraldine Hynes, Equality Authority, Mary Honan, B.L. and Carol Ann Woulfe, Equality Authority; and

4. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland

The National Employment Rights Authority

By Ger Deering,
Director NERA

The National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) is a new organisation set up to ensure that all employers comply with employment rights legislation and that all employees receive their entitlements.

NERA was established under the Social Partnership Agreement "Towards 2016". Whilst recognising that there is a broad level of compliance with employment rights across the economy generally, "Towards 2016" set up NERA to further improve this compliance.

Our stated mission at NERA is to achieve 'a national culture of employment rights compliance'. As a general principle, most employees in Ireland are entitled to the same basic employment rights, covering amongst other things; pay, hours, breaks, minimum notice and holidays. These rights are governed by a range of detailed employment legislation.

Whilst our remit does not cover the provisions of the Employment Equality Act, the principle of 'equality' is a key to our work. The basic rights to which all employees are entitled are essential not only in ensuring that all workers are treated equally and fairly, but also to ensure a level playing field for employers.

To achieve this aim our work focuses on three main areas:

1. Providing information to employers and employees on employment rights.

2. Monitoring a range of employment rights for all workers in Ireland through inspections.

3. Enforcing those rights and seeking redress in the case of non-compliance.

While inspection, enforcement and prosecution are key to securing compliance we are strongly focused on making sure that every employee knows what their employment rights are and that every employer knows their responsibilities.

NERA is here to help both employers and employees with a free and impartial service, primarily by telephone, email and through written information guides. These guides cover many aspects of employment rights and also provide information on complaints procedures.

NERA is committed to ensuring that this information is available to all in the most accessible format so many of our publications are published in up to eleven different languages as well as being available in audio, large print and Braille and we have plans to improve our provision of foreign language publications over the coming months.

NERA is also responsible for monitoring the range of employment rights for all workers in Ireland. Our inspectors operate in a fair and impartial manner, carrying out a variety of routine planned inspections throughout the country and also investigating alleged employment rights breaches.

There will be 90 inspectors operating nationwide, working out of offices in Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Shannon and Sligo, including inspectors with specific foreign language skills.

Part of NERA's strategy is to focus individual campaigns on specific industry sectors and specific legislation. In 2007, for example, NERA undertook over 400 inspections in a construction sector campaign and also completed targeted campaigns under National Minimum Wage and Protection of Young Persons legislation. Our first targeted campaign of 2008 is aimed at the security industry.

Our inspectors have a range of powers including the power to enter premises and examine the employers' records. They also have the power to interview and obtain information from employers, and to initiate legal proceedings on behalf of workers.

Where evidence of non-compliance with employment rights legislation is found, our inspectors also seek redress from the employer for the employee. In some cases prosecutions can be initiated against the employer. NERA will also, in certain circumstances, pursue the enforcement of awards made by the Labour Court and the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

We are currently undertaking a yearlong advertising campaign designed to reach 85% of the adult population in Ireland. It comprises a nationwide advertising campaign including elements of print, outdoor, online, radio and television advertising supported by our new website: **www.employmentrights.ie**

Our clear message on employment rights is that it's the law and you need to know. It is everyone's responsibility to get informed because the consequences on non-compliance can be serious.

NERA is already up and running and making a difference. Last year we recovered almost €2.5 million in arrears on behalf of employees. This year, we will continue to work closely with employer and employee representative groups to meet our aims and along with other statutory bodies such as the Equality Authority, help to improve the quality of our workplaces.

For more information on your Employment Rights you can contact NERA on:

Lo-call: 1890 80 80 90
Email: info@employmentrights.ie
Web: www.employmentrights.ie

Equality, Legislation and the Constitution Conference

Pictured at the opening of the Equality, Legislation and the Constitution Conference organised jointly by the Law Faculty, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and the Equality Authority on 6th October 2007 to mark the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and the 70th anniversary of Bunreacht na hÉireann 1937 were (left to right): Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority, Donncha O'Connell, Dean of Law and Brian Lenihan, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform. Conference took place at NUIG. Conference papers will be available shortly - please contact Lo-Call 1890 245 545.

Diversity Powering Success

By Kieran Rose,
Gay Lesbian and
Equality Network(GLEN)

DIVERSITY **POWERING** SUCCESS
LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF IRELAND'S PROGRESS

GLEN
GAY AND LESBIAN EQUALITY NETWORK

Kieran Rose,
Chairperson GLEN

In 'The Rise of the Creative Class' Richard Florida writes of how 'we live in a time of great promise. We have evolved economic and social systems that tap human creativity and turn it into economic value as never before. This in turn creates an unparalleled opportunity to raise our living standards, build a more humane and sustainable economy, and make our lives more complete.' He documents how central the creative industries and creative workers are in the new economy and in global competitiveness; and how openness to diversity especially in relation to gay people and people from diverse backgrounds and other countries, is critical to success.

Creative workers are those who add economic value through their creativity and these include scientists, engineers, designers, artists and those employed in knowledge based industries. Increasingly cities are drivers of national economies and cities are successful largely because creative people from around the world want to live there. From his research he found that people were drawn to places that are diverse, tolerant and open to new ideas. He writes of 'creative ecosystems – habitats open to new people and ideas'.

Places with a high concentration of gay people, he argues, tend to have higher rates of innovation and economic growth. He is not arguing that gay people literally cause cities to be successful, but that our presence in large numbers is 'an indicator of an underlying culture that's open minded and diverse' and thus conducive to creativity and attractive to creative workers. A place that welcomes gay people, welcomes all kinds of people. He quotes Bonnie Kahn who writes that:

A great city has two hallmarks: tolerance for strangers and intolerance for mediocrity

The Florida approach links together a wide range of issues such as globalisation, economic growth and prosperity, diversity and creativity, equality and social justice, planning and city making. Economic success is key. It is fundamental to social success, and should be welcomed for the life opportunities it offers and not to be decried as some do; prosperity, it would seem, is good for them but dangerous for others.

Issues of social justice and equality are crucial. In a challenging paper on educational

disadvantage, *Creating a Place for All in the Knowledge Economy and the Learning Society*, John Sweeney (NESC) rebuts a negative mindset, amongst even the well intentioned, that discounts Ireland's economic success. He states that 'our economic performance is much more part of the solution than part of the problem when it comes to ensuring *a better quality of life for all*.' Richard Florida makes a related point when he states that there is a huge reservoir of untapped creative potential that is being squandered because of social exclusion and that we must strive to tap the full creative capabilities of every single human being. Addressing these issues 'is not only socially and morally just; it is an economic imperative for any society interested in long-term innovation and prosperity.'

There are common themes across these issues; there are two different mindsets, liberating or limiting. The liberating mindset is characterised by embracing diversity, having high ambitions for a better quality of life for all, a confidence in our ability to deliver positive change, openness, flexibility, responsiveness to changed circumstances and prioritising real peoples lives over abstract ideological positions. This approach can deliver progress and optimise opportunities in all areas whether social, economic or city-making. The limiting or fearful mind-set is characterised by being change averse, having low ambitions, a lack of confidence; a resistance to diversity; and sacrificing ordinary peoples life opportunities to a glorification of a past that never was or a rigid ideological position. Max Page has written a great study of the redevelopment of New York that touches on all these issues including diversity and immigration. He states that in the various battles over new buildings, demolition and planning lay

the fundamental tension between a celebration of the metropolis – its dynamism and diversity – and a profound nostalgia born of a fear for what the modern city portended.

There are similar resistances at work in Dublin today. Richard Florida puts this well when he states that new creative cities can emerge and surpass established players very quickly. He analyses how some cities lose out and says the answer is simple, 'these cities are trapped by their past', in the culture and attitudes of a bygone age and so innovation and growth shift to new places.

Richard Florida brings together issues of economic growth, creativity, equality, diversity, social justice, planning and city making in a challenging and productive way. This approach provides a wide agenda for change and progress that could involve a broad range of agencies in an alliance for progress, including central and local government, planning authorities, trade union and business interests, equality, social justice and community organisations, economic development agencies as well as private enterprises and the development sector.

Kieran Rose is chairperson of GLEN, a member of the Board of the Equality Authority, a member of the Consultative Panel of Futures Ireland, and a planner with Dublin City Council. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of any of these organisations.

Action on Equality in Local Government – 2007 Equality Survey

By Jane Brophy
of the Local Government Management Services Board

A survey on equality practices (with a particular focus on disability) in the local authority sector in Ireland was commissioned by the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) and carried out on their behalf by Melior Management in September/October 2007. The Survey was funded by the Equal Opportunities Framework Committee as an initiative for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The survey covered the following 6 main areas;

- Roles & Responsibilities
- Policy Framework
- Action Planning
- Monitoring and Assessment
- Training
- Progress on Equality Issues

All 34 local authorities responded to the survey. There is clearly a high level of interest and commitment to equality among Local Authorities. From the information provided by respondents it is evident that the recommendations of the survey can build on the work done to date and assist in making further progress. The sharing of experience and best practice among Local Authorities and the opportunity to learn from the wider public service and from the private sector can significantly enhance the efforts and progress made to date at local level.

## Summary of Key Findings

Roles & Responsibilities
Overall, responsibility for disability issues generally has a strong customer service emphasis while responsibility for equality across all grounds focuses more on employment. Where more than one person is responsible for disability and/or equality, there are invariably interdepartmental teams/committees in place. (Responsibility for disability issues is shared by at least 2 people in 41% of Local Authorities, and for equality issues in 26%.)

Policy Framework
All Local Authorities have an Employment Equality Policy. Disability and equality feature strongly in the Strategic Planning and Policy frameworks of Local Authorities. Corporate Plans include disability issues in 79% of Local Authorities and equality issues in 88%. Departmental Plans include disability issues in 74% and equality issues in 71% of Local Authorities.

Action Planning
Action Plans on disability issues are in place/being developed in 94% of Local Authorities and 61% have/are developing action plans on the other 8 grounds. 79% of disability action plans are related to targets but only 41% of equality action plans. Where there are targets in place they are generally for service provider departments. The development of targets for disability and other areas of equality

Equality practices in the Local Authority Sector Ireland
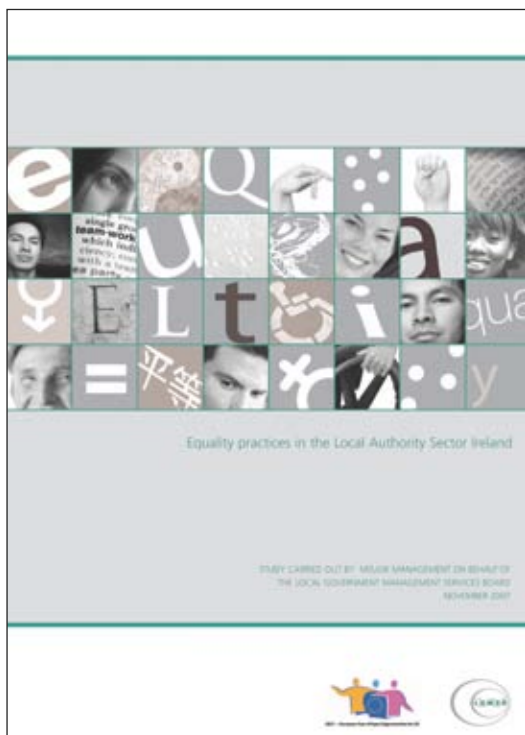
is necessary in order to provide a focus for actions and the ability to monitor and assess resulting progress on action plans.

Monitoring and Assessment
Monitoring is carried out in many Local Authorities, but the focus is on service delivery and disability and tails off for employment and for the other 8 equality grounds.

Training
There is a strong commitment to training with all Local Authorities carrying out training on equality in general and disability specifically. Attendance at training is mandatory for key categories of staff in all Local Authorities. Broadening the trainee base and developing more specific training are initiatives which would enhance the significant efforts already made.

Progress on Equality Issues
Respondents were asked for their opinion on progress regarding equality issues within their local authority. Almost half felt that disability issues were fully integrated into their Local Authority and 53% stated that they had recently becoming active, probably reflecting the national focus as a result of the Disability Act 2005. On equality issues, 44% felt it was fully integrated and 26% felt that there was

awareness of employment related issues but not service related.

When respondents were asked to identify the challenges facing Local Authorities in making improvements in disability and equality generally, 60% selected resources (time and funding) and 27% selected the need to effect cultural change. Consistent with this, resources and senior management support/prioritisation were the key internal supports identified by respondents. From the range of potential external supports, 82% selected visits to good practice sites, 74% support to disability and equality working groups, 62% training and awareness for staff and 65% coaching for project leaders.

The Local Government Management Services Board(LGMSB) is in a position to offer considerable direct support in its role as service provider (continuing its provision of expert assistance such as guidelines, templates, etc) and as facilitator (providing a forum for the sharing of knowledge and experience gained within the Local Authority sector, from the broader public sector and from the private sector). Support for the challenge of culture change should be an indirect benefit of the implementation of some of the recommendations contained in this report.

Respondents were asked if their Local Authority was willing to be audited and 74% responded in the affirmative. Informal discussions in several cases pointed to the desire to do this both to share the progress made with others and to benefit from approaches taken elsewhere. The range of work carried out in different aspects of this issue shows great potential benefit in facilitating the structured sharing of experiences among Local Authorities.

A full copy of the report *Equality Practices in the Local Government Sector, Ireland* is available on **www.lgmsb.ie**

Equality practices within the local government sector are informed by the Equal Status Acts an the Employment Equality Acts. Information booklets on this legislation are available on www.equality.ie

Multiple Discrimination

By Mandana Zarrehparvar,
Danish Institute for Human Rights

Introduction

With the incorporation of Article 13 into the EC Treaty in 1999 and the adoption of the anti-discrimination and equal treatment Directives in 2000, the EU and its Member States have experienced a dynamic development in anti-discrimination legislation and substantial initiatives to raise awareness of discrimination. With the addition to the gender ground of the new grounds of discrimination, such as race or ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation, the concept of multiple discrimination in the EU context has grown in importance. Equality bodies are meeting victims of discrimination who experience discrimination on more than one prohibited ground.

To understand the causes and effects of multiple discrimination, promote understanding for the phenomenon as well as identify good practice and provide practical recommendations on how to tackle multiple discrimination, the European Commission initiated a study on the subject in 2006 that was carried out by the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The study resulted in the report *"Tackling Multiple Discrimination – Practices, Policies and Laws"*[1] which was presented at a conference in Elsinore, Denmark on 6 and 7 December 2007.

Multiple Discrimination

Multiple discrimination basically means discrimination on more than one prohibited ground. In practice though, the multiple discrimination describes only one of three situations where more than one ground of discrimination is involved. The other two situations are called compound discrimination and intersectional discrimination. Multiple discrimination describes a situation where discrimination takes place on the basis of several grounds operating separately. For instance a minority ethnic woman may experience discrimination on the basis of her gender in one situation and experience being discriminated against because of her ethnic origin in another situation.

Compound discrimination in contrast to multiple discrimination describes a situation where a person suffers discrimination on the basis of two or more grounds at the same time and where the one ground adds to discrimination on another ground – in other words the one ground gets aggravated by one or more other discrimination grounds. An example of this situation is given by Moon in her article *Discrimination – problems compounded or solutions found?*[2] Moon refers to a UK case, Perera v Civil Service Commission (no 2) where the employer had set up a series of requirements, such as age, experience in the UK, command of English and nationality. Mr. Perera did not get the position - "the lack of one factor did not prevent him getting the job but it did make it less likely, and the lack of two factors decreased yet further his chances of selection for the job".

Intersectional discrimination refers to a situation where several grounds operate and interact with each other at the same time in such a way that they are inseparable. An example is a gay minority ethnic man who could not rent a flat when the landlord has seen the person and his partner after talking to him on the phone.

The Study

Four stakeholder groups and ten EU Member States were selected for the purpose of the study. The stakeholders groups were ministries, national equality bodies, NGO´s and social partners. Since the social partners were poorly represented (too few responded to the questionnaires and too few participated in the roundtable meeting) they have not been included in the report. The ten Member States were: Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. These ten Member States were selected to ensure geographical representation in the EU, ensure participation of both "old" and "new" Member States and thereby different traditions, experiences and practices working with anti-discrimination and equal treatment, and last but not least the ten where chosen to also include Member States with Roma and Traveller communities. The empirical data was collected by conducting a literature review, electronic questionnaires, roundtable meetings with the stakeholder groups in all ten countries and by individual face to face interviews of individuals who had experienced actual or perceived multiple discrimination. In conjunction with this the study also reviewed the legislative provisions in the EU and its Member States.

Addressing Multiple Discrimination

As it stands today, EU anti-discrimination and equal treatment legislation does recognize that different protected grounds can intersect but there is not an explicit prohibition of multiple discrimination. It can be argued that EU anti-discrimination and equal treatment legislation in employment does encompass the possibility of addressing the phenomenon on all the protected grounds and case law also shows that some Member States have identified cases where more than one prohibited ground of discrimination is involved.

In order to understand and tackle the phenomenon of multiple discrimination it is necessary to understand the different socio-economic, cultural, historical, legal and political contexts in which the stakeholders, interviewed in the study, operate. These contexts affect the extent of knowledge, awareness and willingness to address the causes and effects of multiple discrimination. While for some stakeholders multiple discrimination was a question of going beyond the EU Directives on equal treatment, for others it was an issue to be dealt with in the future as the present challenge was to tackle discrimination on an individual ground.

Among the stakeholders, interviewed for the study, it was widely perceived that gender (women in particular) and race are an intersectional group which is vulnerable to multiple discrimination. The observations put forward are not to suggest that this intersection of grounds is more vulnerable than other groups, but it could suggest that it is given more attention than other groups. A reason for mentioning the intersection of gender and race could be that legislation on the ground of gender has existed for a longer period of time than the other grounds and has a special focus in most Member States. Discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity has also a particular focus partly due to the Race Directive but also because individuals belonging to minority ethnic groups are more visible.

Reports and research material collected during the course of the study also confirm this tendency. Other intersectional groups highlighted as being vulnerable to multiple discrimination were disabled women, older women, young minority ethnic men, disabled LGBT people, older LGBT people, young LGBT people and older disabled people. The fact that people can and do belong to several disadvantaged groups at the same time is recognized among the stakeholders. However, the focus both among governmental and non-governmental institutions is mainly placed on one ground of discrimination, often due to strategic litigation reasons.

It was clear during the study that certain intersectional groups were largely invisible. The reason could be explained by the fact that data is lacking for these groups. Furthermore

it is likely that victims of discrimination in these groups are reluctant to bring forward claims of discrimination either because of a lack of awareness of their rights, or because it does not seem "worth the trouble". Another reason for this invisibility could be that for grounds other than gender and race, people are not protected against discrimination outside of employment.

To the question where do you think multiple discrimination manifests itself the stakeholders interviewed generally agreed that it was in the labour market. This was generally explained by the fact that anti-discrimination legislation is most developed in the areas of employment. It is in this sector where case law and data are available and where numerous studies have been conducted.

Next Steps
The study on multiple discrimination in the EU only touched the surface of a very complex issue and is indicative of the themes and challenges that need to be reflected upon. To follow up on the study, there is a need for further examination of the legal implications of multiple discrimination in order to provide solutions to challenges such as the burden of proof and damage assessment in cases involving more than more one ground. The study suggests that research be done on developing effective protection mechanisms and legal frameworks to handle multiple discrimination cases. It further suggests that research be done to develop the conceptual tools to analyse the experience, situation and identity of intersectional groups.

Since the scope of the existing EU anti-discrimination legislation does not provide effective protection against multiple discrimination in areas outside of employment and occupation the study recommends a levelling up of legislation so that it covers the grounds of age, disability, religion and belief and sexual orientation outside of employment and the introduction of specific provisions to combat multiple discrimination. It is further suggested that the ground of gender identity (or transgender) be recognised as part of equality policy and legislation through the explicit naming of gender identity within the ground of gender.

Legislation on its own cannot achieve the goal of creating a discrimination free society. Proactive initiatives are needed to meet the objective of equal opportunities for all. Ongoing initiatives such as campaigns to raise awareness, promoting good practice and training and education of the civil society, and professional groups such as the judiciary and the media on discrimination in general and in particular multiple discrimination are needed.

One key obstacle in combating discrimination is lack of data. In identifying multiple discrimination, existence of data becomes even more acute because the absence of data for particularly vulnerable groups renders invisible the situation of people with intersectional identities thus encouraging the assumption that discrimination does not occur. In order to circumvent this, the development of strategies to collect equality data that takes into account all protected grounds is needed and therefore recommended in the study. The study also recommends the promotion of multiple ground NGO's to build the voice of intersectional groups and to promote the agenda of multiple discrimination at Member State and EU level.

1. Tackling Multiple Discrimination - Practices, Policies and Laws. European Commission, 2007.

2. Moon, Gay (2006) "Multiple discrimination - problems compounded or solutions found?". Justice Journal pp.86-102

Case Report

€60,000 Award Made for Age Discrimination

Mr Fagan claimed that he was discriminated against by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners on grounds of age when his employer (i) failed to appoint him to an acting position of Assistant Principal Officer in April 2003 and (ii) failed to consider him suitable for promotion to the substantive grade of Assistant Principal Officer on the basis of seniority/ suitability in August 2003.

At the time of the alleged discrimination Mr Fagan had fourteen years service as a Higher Executive Officer. Mr Fagan contended that he was considered suitable for promotion to the position of Assistant Principal Officer from 2000 and became eligible for promotion to that grade on the basis of seniority/suitability in 2003. He claimed that in February 2003 having been asked if he was interested in acting up to the post of Assistant Principal Officer to cover a period of maternity leave, he was discriminated against on grounds of age when a younger colleague was assigned to the position. He further claimed that he was discriminated against on grounds of age when, in August 2003, he was not recommended as suitable for promotion to the grade of Assistant Principal Officer on the basis of seniority and other colleagues in his Unit, who were all younger than him, were put forward as suitable.

The Revenue Commissioners rejected Mr Fagan's assertions in their entirety and stated that his age had no bearing on the decision not to appoint him to the post of Assistant Principal Officer at any stage. Mr. Fagan was represented by the Equality Authority before the Equality Tribunal. The Equality Officer found that the respondent failed to furnish a single document to demonstrate how (i) the complainant's failure to be appointed to the acting up post in February, 2003 and (ii) the complainant's assessment and ultimately, his exclusion from the impugned Promotion Panel in August/September 2003 were wholly related to factors unconnected with his age.

The "consistory" method of promotion is still used by many Government Departments. The method involves the Principal Officer who manages a potential candidate for promotion to Assistant Principal Officer recommending that person as suitable for promotion. The Management Advisory Committee (which includes the Secretary General of the Department) makes a decision on that recommendation in the course of a Promotion Conference. Successful candidates are then placed on a panel for promotion to Assistant Principal Officer level. The Equality Officer noted that "the lack of transparency in the process can create an environment where discrimination can exist".

The Equality Officer found that the respondent discriminated against the complainant on grounds of age and ordered the respondent to pay the complainant €60,000 by way of compensation for the distress suffered by him as a result of the discrimination. The Equality Officer also ordered that should the Revenue Commissioners still operate the Consistory Method of Promotion that it take immediate steps to ensure that the process be conducted in an open and transparent fashion and that the reasons by which decisions are arrived at in the course of Promotion Conferences should be clearly identified.

Say No To Ageism in 2008

By John Heuston,
National Council on
Ageing and Older People

'Say No to Ageism' Week 2008 will run from May 19 – 24. This is a joint initiative of the Equality Authority, the National Council on Ageing and Older People (NCAOP) and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

It is widely acknowledged that ageism is an issue at all levels and in all sectors of Irish society. Ageism has been defined as encompassing negative thinking based on age which leads to stereotyping of older people; negative attitudes which lead to prejudice; and negative behaviour which leads to discrimination against older people. Ageism promotes the idea that older people are a burden and this can lead to neglect and social exclusion. It can also diminish older people's self esteem and reduce their participation in society.

'Say No to Ageism' Week was initiated in 2004 by the Equality Authority, the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Health Service Executive with the aim of promoting awareness of ageism and how ageism lies at the root of many of the barriers which older people encounter when accessing goods and services. The partner agencies involved in 'Say No to Ageism' Week share a common concern at the prevalence of ageism in Ireland and at the manner in which ageism can be expressed in terms of individual attitudes and organisational practices in different sectors.

Practical actions
The impact of 'Say No to Ageism' Week has

grown since its inception and the joint initiative is acknowledged in the National Partnership Agreement 'Towards 2016' which states that the three agencies 'will continue to promote public information campaigns to tackle ageism over the course of the Agreement'.

A key element of 'Say No to Ageism' Week involves the development of practical actions to combat ageism within particular sectors. In that context, initiatives have already been undertaken to promote age friendly services in the Health sector[1] and in the Transport sector[1]. This year, the sport and leisure sector and the hospitality sector in Ireland will be the focus for anti ageism initiatives.

The Sport and Leisure Sector
The value of physical activity in promoting health, physical strength, endurance, social integration, and psychological wellbeing is of little doubt and it is not difficult to understand why such activity is so important for the wellbeing of older people. Nevertheless, despite the enormous benefits of physical exercise for people of all ages, as Irish people get older, their participation in any form of physical activity decreases significantly.

Greater numbers of people than ever before in Ireland are participating in sport and physical activities of all kinds. However, it is apparent that younger age groups account for much of the increase, including children and those in their teens, but particularly people in their 20s and 30s.

The sport and leisure sector has been selected as a focus for Say No To Ageism Week 2008. Negative attitudes and prejudices about ageing and older people can present a range of barriers which deter people from adopting and maintaining physically active lifestyles in middle and later life.

For instance, there is an attitude that older people should confine their activities to forms of exercise "more appropriate to their age". This attitude is reinforced by a youth culture that equates youth with strength, stamina, boundless energy and the attainment of a perfect shape. How often are older people portrayed on television or in the print media as participating in physical activities?

Other factors that militate against older people's participation in sport include:

- Lack of information on exercise and lack of expertise to advise on exercise in middle and later life.

- Lack of knowledge of the needs of older people among staff of sports and leisure facilities;

- Inadequate sponsorship and coaching for older people;

- Social isolation, including lack of companions who could facilitate/assist older people to access facilities and exercise programmes when required;

- Lack of transport to enable older people avail of exercise facilities when available;

- Lack of awareness on the part of local authorities of the need to create environments that facilitate exercise for people in middle and later life;

For middle aged or older people, these barriers give rise to feelings of being out of place in gyms and other sports facilities, to being conscious about being 'out of shape', as well as to fears about being hurt or even worse for many - being ridiculed.

Action for Age Friendly Service Provision

Given the barriers that deter people in their 40s, 50s, 60s and older from engaging in beneficial levels of physical activity, the Irish sport and leisure sector is an important focus for an initiative designed to promote age-friendly service provision in that sector. This will be developed in partnership with the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management and the Irish Sports Council
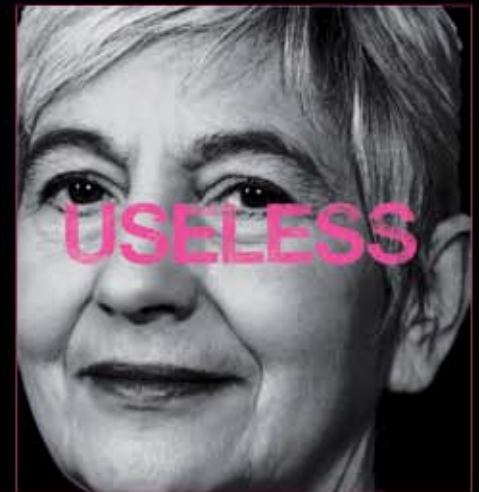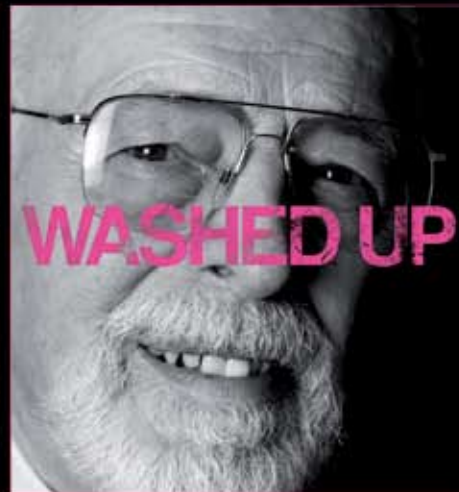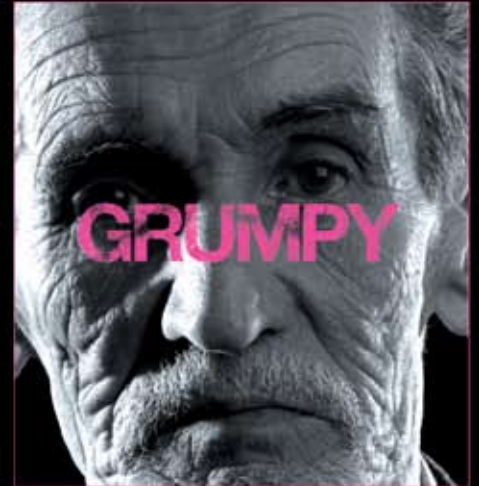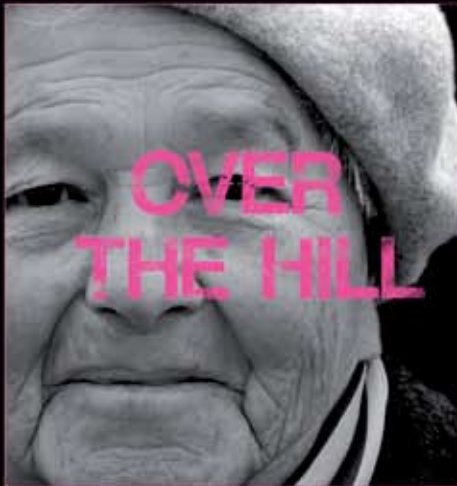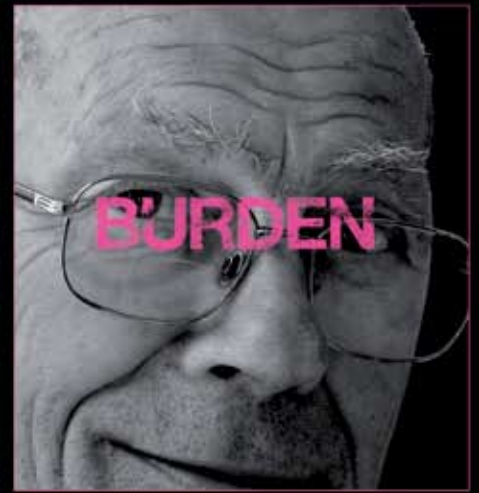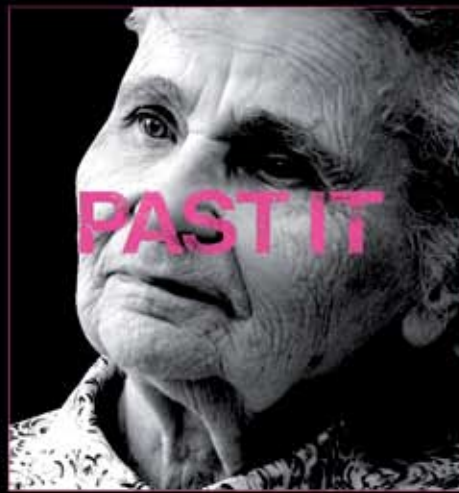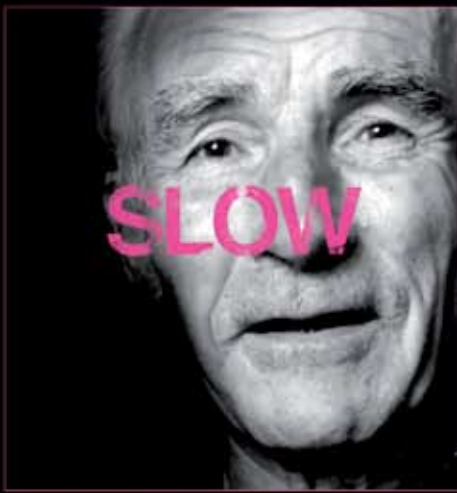
The sport and leisure sector has grown substantially in the past decade and is increasing in importance. Government policy recognises the contribution which sport and physical activity generally makes to the social and economic development of the country and emphasizes the benefits in terms of "physical and mental well-being of the population, social and cultural development, education, personal development and economic impact"[2]

In that context, the barriers to participation to physical activity which many older people currently encounter must be of widespread concern. The partner agencies involved in Say No to Ageism 2008 believe that this year's anti ageism initiative in the sport and leisure sector will offer significant opportunities to achieve health and social gain for middle aged and older people by ensuring greater access to facilities throughout the sector.

It is clear that as Ireland's older population grows substantially in the coming decades, it will be important to improve the physical activity experiences of increasing numbers of middle aged and older Irish people by promoting greater access for older consumers to sport and leisure services. In that regard, it is hoped that the work of Say No To Ageism Week will be of interest to a range of individuals and organisations involved in the organisation and provision of sport, physical activity and physical education, training and coaching in Ireland.

1. These guideline documents are available from the Equality Authority at LoCall 1 890 245545 or download from www.equality.ie

2. National Partnership Agreement - Towards 2016

SLOW

PAST IT

BURDEN

OVER THE HILL

FORGOTTEN

GRUMPY

LISA

WASHED UP

USELESS

What's *your* attitude to ageism?

SAY NO TO AGEISM WEEK
19th - 23rd May 2008

INCOMPETENT

GRUMPY

OLD

OVER THE HILL

WASHED UP

WASHED UP

PAST IT

BURDEN

STEVE

www.equality.ie

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

National Council on
Ageing and Older People
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um
Aosú agus Daoine Aosta
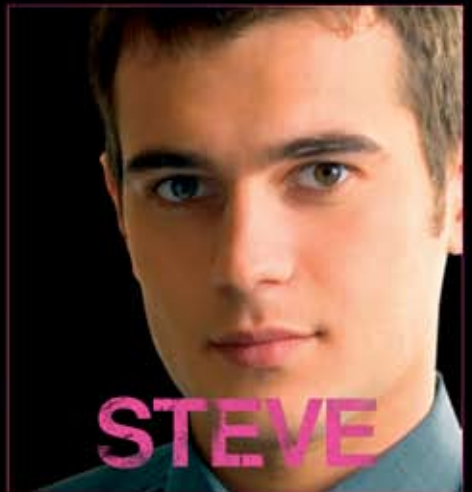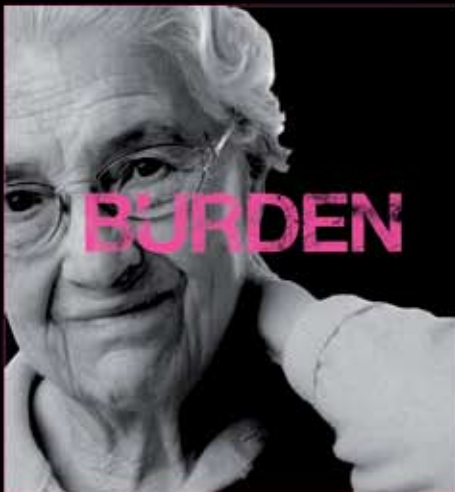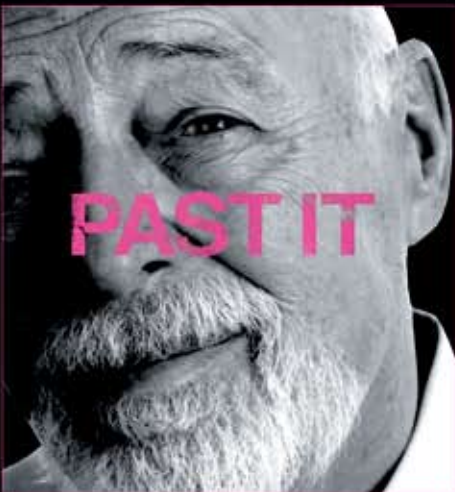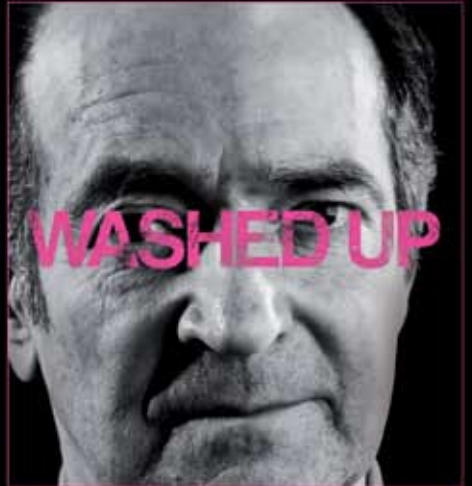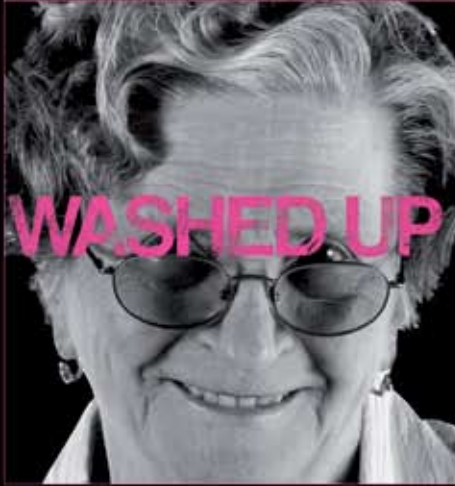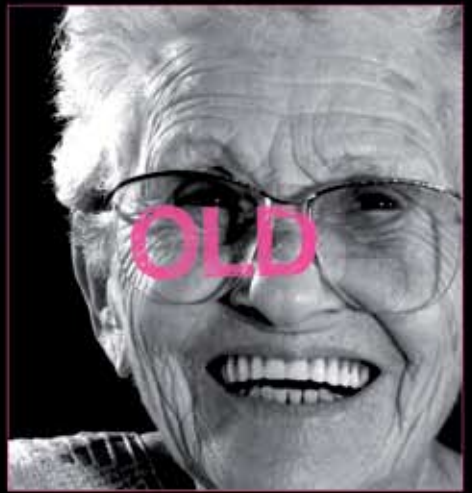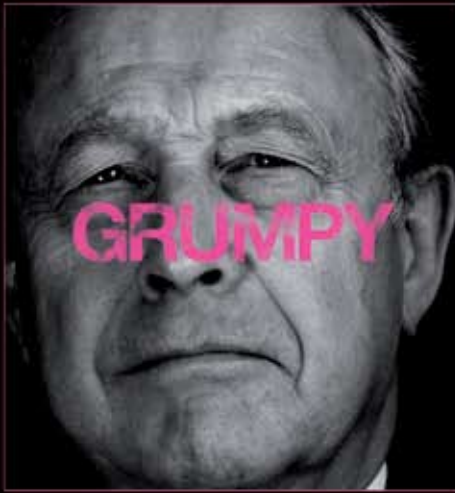
European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008

By Philip Watt,
Director, National Consultative Committee
on Racism and Interculturalism

The decision by the European Commission to designate 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EY/ID, 2008) is a unique opportunity to focus on the challenges of living and working in a more diverse Ireland.

The In this context it is particularly appropriate that the Year follows and seeks to build on European Year of Equal Opportunities in 2007 and the National Action Plan against Racism. The Year also seeks to be consistent with and bring added value to the work of the Office of the Minister for Integration.

'Intercultural dialogue' can be defined as 'creating the conditions for all to engage in an open conversation about living and working in a multi ethnic society'.

The adoption of the theme of intercultural dialogue by the European Union is crucial from a number of aspects. We may be from diverse backgrounds but that we share a common space in Ireland and the European and beyond. In seeking to celebrate and accommodate cultural diversity there is also a need to strive for consensus and cohesion.

In Ireland the Year is being coordinated by the NCCRI. President of Ireland Mary McAleese was guest of honour at the launch in January 2008 when over 650 people participated in a multi media event in the Mansion House Dublin. As part of the launch a DVD of the strategy for the Year was presented (this can be downloaded from the NCCRI website **www.nccri.ie**).

The Strategy
In Ireland the Year is built around six programmes which include:

1. Service providers, including a particular focus on education

2. Communication and the Media

3. Arts and Culture

4. Community Participation and Sports

5. Business

6. Cross-cutting themes, including women, young people, North/South cooperation and EU/International issues

The emphasis in these programmes is on strategic, sustainable and partnership initiative's that will have an impact after the Year is concluded. This is reflected in some of the key initiatives that are planned for the near future or which have already taken place including:

• The launch of a National Intercultural Health Strategy by Minister for Health, Mary Harney T.D. and Minister for Integration, Conor Lenihan T.D. In February 2008

- The development of city and county integration strategies building on the ARD plans developed as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism

The Year is in many ways a 'space' for civil society to organise events and the calendar **www.nccri.ie** gives a comprehensive list of events organised across the country which are consistent with the aims of the Year.

Ambassadors for EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008

At the launch of EY/ID, six ambassadors for the Year were announced. These are:

Mícheál O Súilleabháin, *Professor at the Centre of World Music, University of Limerick*

Chinedu Onyejelem, *Editor of Metro Eireann*

Anastasia Crickley, *Chair of NCCRI and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency*

Catherine Joyce, *Coordinator Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group*

Sean Og O hAlpin, *Cork GAA All Star*

Anna Lo, *MLA , Member of the legislative assembly in Stormont, Northern Ireland.*

National Forums

A key part of the Year is Ireland a series of national forums will take place, beginning with the largest communities in Ireland, which are the Polish and the Chinese communities. These include both a policy focus and a social/ cultural focus.

For example in August the NCCRI in Association with the Polish community in Ireland and Basketball Ireland will be hosting an information and intercultural fair to coincide with a sporting event involving the Polish national basketball team in August 2008.

European Level

At a European level, an excellent website **www.dialogue2008.eu** provides an overview and details of what is happening in each member state of the European Union and European-wide initiatives. As part of the Year the Council of Europe is currently finalising a White Paper, which seeks to develop further the concept of intercultural dialogue. The

- The commitment by the Department of Education and Science to develop a National Intercultural Education Strategy and to host a high level conference in September 2008

- The launch of a research project to inform and Intercultural Arts Strategy by the Arts Council

- The launch of a stamp to mark the Year and as a visible sign of the Irish Government's commitment to the Year in March

- There will be further follow up to a major scoping research on interpretation and translation facilities which will be completed shortly as part of the NCCRI's work with the Office for Integration

- The commitment by the Gardaí and RTÉ and the those involved in youth services to develop intercultural strategies

In terms of public awareness initiatives

- A toolkit on intercultural dialogue for schools has been published and circulated to all schools

- The outcome of major research projects on housing policy will be published in May

- A series of national debates organised by the European Commission representation in Ireland

Children from schools in Blanchardstown at the launch of An Post stamp celebrating 'EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue' photo courtesy of An Post/ NCCRI.

President of Ireland, Mary McAleese at the launch of European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

Photo: Paul Kelly

approach outlined in the draft White Paper is in large measure consistent with the approach being developed in Ireland, where intercultural dialogue is increasingly being perceived as an essential component of an intercultural approach to cultural diversity and integration policy. In particular there is recognition of the need to move beyond the anachronistic assimilationist approach and to learn from the strengths and also the weaknesses of the multicultural approach.

In Ireland integration policy is still at a relatively early stage and the emergence of an Office of the Minister for Integration is a welcome policy development. While much has been achieved in a relatively short time, there remain many challenges. Some of the most pressing issues include:

- The linkage between the integration of new communities and long standing minorities, including Travellers;

- The resources available to local authorities and non governmental groups working with minority ethnic communities in support of integration

- The further embedding of anti racism, equality, human rights and social inclusion strategies within the integration agenda

- The need for further consultation and national conversations with the diverse communities that are part of Ireland now.

What's Not Done Yet for Women?

A list of personal priorities of what's left to be done to achieve women's rights in 2008!

By Gráinne Healy

100 years ago on 8th March a group of women garment workers in New York took to the streets in protest at their poor wages and appalling working conditions. The violent response of the police and the refusal of their employers initially to improve things put the women's demonstration onto the front pages of newspapers across the world. As the labour and feminist movements grew the 8th of March became a day to celebrate women internationally and to call attention to women's employment rights in particular and to women's rights globally.

Women and employment
Women in Ireland in the 21st century are moving (as Ursula Barry tells us, in her new book *Where are we now?*, 2008). We are moving from being unpaid carers to becoming carer-earners. We see this in terms of the entry of women in general to the paid labour market and to married women in particular in recent decades. In spite of these large movements into paid employment, we still have up to 30% gender pay gap and many women in part time employment, while horizontal and vertical segregation remains problematic. In other words; women get into most places of employment nowadays but generally we stay bunched in the lower grades.

Despite policy and legislation to counter employment related economic discrimination against women we still have glaring policy gaps like no paid parental leave, which leaves women, literally carrying the baby and all the care that goes along with this.

This reminds us that while men continue to do 1.5 hours of housework or care work at weekends to every 8 hours that women do, (O'Toole, Irish Times, 3 March, 2008), the personal will remain political and unresolved until personal relationships alter their patterns and having children stops becoming a point of discrimination against women only.

Barry talks about women moving into the labour market by describing women's move into four economic worlds:

- **The Official Economy World** where pay and conditions vary and even in the relatively well paid and unionised public sector women are still hitting their heads against the glass ceiling;

- **The Unpaid, Unrecognised Family and Community World** where most women make invisible or uncounted contributions to societal well being through child and elder care or love labour and community labour;

- **The Commercial Sexual Exploitation World** of sex trade, commercial sexual exploitation, slavery and trafficking of women and children; and

- **The World of Domestic Service** where women are the nannies, domestic care workers and cleaners, a space where women are vulnerable and exploited.

Thus according to Barry we have two groups of women emerging: the well paid professional women of the Official Economy World, some of whom have done very well and the second group of low paid, exploited vulnerable women.

Women and poverty
In talking about women's poverty the 2005 Survey of Living Conditions report (CSO) tells us 19% of the population in Ireland are 'at risk of poverty', while the figure rises to 21% for women. Who are these women?

Lone parents and women with disabilities. Lone parents, without an increase in their earnings and without proper childcare provision will never move out of being 'at risk' in Ireland. It is no wonder that the percentage of women with disabilities in employment is so low, without skills and educational qualifications, added to the barriers to their entry to the labour market from negative employer attitudes to disability and consequent poor disability planning. Unless the costs to people with disabilities entering employment is met by the State, this figure has little chance of changing.

Lesbian exclusion
Other women experiencing social exclusion in modern Ireland are lesbian families. They are excluded from the protections of the legal framework provided to heterosexual families based on marriage. This exclusion is discriminatory to lesbian families and their children.

27% of households are now made up of traditional mixed gender couples with children. The other two thirds of households are made up of 'others' such as mixed gender couples without children, single people, lone parents, and same sex couples. Yet these families do not get equal family protections.

MarriagEquality is a new initiative seeking access to civil marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Ireland. It is the equality response to the exclusion of gays and lesbians. Any other response whether civil partnership or civil union, in the absence of the civil marriage option, is an unequal option and unacceptable. The support of the Equality Authority in recognising and naming civil marriage as the equality solution is most welcome.

Violence against women in Ireland
The American Surgeon General spoke of violence against women as being of epidemic proportions and a gender based crime, where being a woman is the risk factor. One in four Irish women are likely to experience violence at the hands of a male partner in their life (Kelleher & O'Connor, 1999 - *Safety and Sanctions: Domestic Violence and the Enforcement of Law in Ireland*). Being female in Ireland is a risk factor in relation to the threat of violence and to homicide at the hands of a male partner.

The legal system has failed women, failed to protect them, failed to dissuade perpetrators, failed to make those who harm women see that there are consequences for their actions. The National Domestic Violence Intervention Agency (NDVIA), a small NGO funded by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) over the last 3 years has made efforts to get the legal and judicial systems to work better with the Gardaí, probation and court services working together with a view to protecting women victims of violence and holding perpetrators accountable. While continuation funding of this independent NGO is in serious doubt, despite positive evaluations of its work, NDVIA will continue to inform practitioners of how to improve their work and how to carry out risk assessments for the benefit and protection of women. Internationally female homicide rates in Minnesota, USA and closer to home in the UK have been reduced by introducing such inter agency interventions. This is a gender issue and it is a human rights abuse issue and an equality issue which requires serious attention if women are to have a right to live without violation.

Violence against women internationally
Eleven years ago the European Women's Lobby created the EWL Observatory on Violence against women. As chair of that body of experts, the EWL has recognised domestic violence, sexual assault and rape, sexual harassment, prostitution, trafficking and pornography as forms of violence against women and human rights abuses. Attrition is the process by which rape cases fall out of the legal process. Dr Liz Kelly (2003) in her research for the Rape Crisis National Ireland, found that 'while prosecutions have risen

alongside reporting of rape, convictions have fallen in both percentage and absolute terms. Ireland has the worst attrition rates in rape cases in the EU.

The Observatory began to hear about trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation from experts from Greece and Italy in the mid 90s. In 2003 the UN told us that 88,000 women and children were being trafficked into Western Europe per annum, while in 2005 the US State Department (Trafficking in Persons Report) reckoned that there were between 600,000 and 800,000 victims globally of trafficking and that 80% of them were women and children for sexual exploitation.

Growth in demand for women and girls for commercial sexual exploitation is driving the demand for trafficking (including so called sex industry outlets like lap dancing clubs, pole dancing clubs and porn making outlets). The Swedish approach to criminalise the purchasers of sexual services has had a direct impact on trafficking to Sweden. It has discouraged trafficking and forced traffickers to go elsewhere where prostitution allows them to provide fresh supplies of women and children.

In Ireland we have the opportunity to follow Sweden. We have the opportunity to say clearly that we do not believe that we have two groups of women – one group of trafficked or drug dependent and vulnerable women, mostly migrants, whom it is ok to buy and abuse and a second group of us who are protected from such assaults by the law. There are no such acceptable divisions of women. It if is not acceptable to sexually abuse my son or daughter or sister than it is not acceptable to do so with women who happen to be migrant or poor or in need of a job. There is no acceptable division of the right to bodily integrity and the right to freedom from violation. These rights cannot be given away and the State must ensure that they cannot be taken away.

Gráinne Healy is an Independent Consultant and former Chair of the National Women's Council of Ireland.

Equality Authority Meets in Waterford

Employer, trade union and community groups attending workshops to discuss the Equality Authority's forthcoming Stategic Plan for 2009 - 2011

(left) Dr. Angela Kerins, Chairperson of the Equality Authority, addressing delegates.

Caterine Power of
Waterford Area Partnership

Conference delegates

Andrew O'Neill, President and
Monica Leech, Chief Executive of
the Waterford Chamber of Commerce

Diversity@Dell

By Ingrid Devin,
Diversity Manager, Dell

Dell Inc was founded in 1984 on a simple concept: that by selling directly to customers, Dell could best understand their needs, and efficiently provide the most effective computing solutions to meet those needs. Dell now employs approximately 82,000 people across 34 countries worldwide, with about 5,000 employees in Ireland based in their sites in Dublin and Limerick.

The business case for diversity at Dell is clear. In order to communicate effectively with a customer base that is becoming increasingly diverse, its employee base must become equally diverse.

Dell recognises that the first step towards building a truly diverse company is to ensure that talented people from a wide range of back-grounds want to work there. Therefore Dell is committed to delivering a diversity strategy that permeates throughout the entire business to achieve a working culture that is fully inclusive, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or any other aspects of diversity.

At Dell we don't see diversity as a stand alone policy, but rather as an essential element in every decision we make within the business. Empowering our people to be the best they can be is a key component of being a progressive company.

The right blend
Culture plays a significant role in companies that do business across the world. At Dell diversity is about embracing differences to

ensure the company can respect, understand and compete effectively in global markets. By creating an inclusive culture, Dell aims to build the necessary diverse teams that can deal effectively with customers externally. In its Dublin site alone, over 65 nationalities are represented. "I talk to colleagues daily from across the globe, many of whom are based in my office!" says Cristian Varela who works in Dell's Reporting & Analysis Team. "We've dedicated international days to provide a taster of the markets in which we work."

Other initiatives aimed at supporting different cultures and religions include the provision of prayer rooms and a flexible approach to taking leave for religious observance. Dell's intranet site publicises regular celebrations and feast days. The annual Work Life Effectiveness week, which commenced on the 31st March this year provides an ideal opportunity to showcase work from Dell's various global cultural networking groups. The key issue is that all our people feel comfortable being themselves. If they have talent, we aim to support them in whatever way necessary so that they can perform to the best of their ability. That for us is the bottom line.

Supporting women
Dell's supportive culture is evident in the company's extensive range of employee networking groups. Female employees in Ireland are particularly well supported with women's networks on the Dublin and Limerick sites. "The role of the women's network is essential in attracting, retaining and developing

female talent, and feedback from our networking groups provides us with the relevant data we need to ensure that Dell provides an environment that meets the needs of its female employees," says Judith Browne, EMEA Senior Marketing Operations Manager, and co-leader of Dells Women's Network in Limerick.

Each women's network is managed internally by senior women and provides a forum for women to discuss issues that affect them both inside and outside of work, network with colleagues and share knowledge. In 2007 Dell introduced an initiative called "Taking the Stage". This programme provides participants with advice on how to define and achieve their career goals, covering issues such as networking, seizing opportunities and 'creating a dynamic presence'. Courses are led by senior female managers, who are able to demonstrate how they've shaped their own careers at Dell using skills developed throughout their working lives. Progressive initiatives such as these have contributed to Dell being included in The Times/ Aurora Where Women Want to Work TOP 50 for the last two years running, being shortlisted for the 2008 Blackberry Technology Awards for Women and receiving a CSR Award from Chambers of Ireland for our Gender and Work life initiatives.

Dell: where women want to work

Sandra Murtagh, European Sales and Marketing Manager, is one of the co leaders the Dublin branch of Dell's Women's Networking Group.

"Dell has a highly developed strategy for supporting women. When I first came to Dell five years ago I was intrigued by Michael Dell's vision of bringing technology to the masses, but as with anyone looking to develop a rewarding career, I looked at the company and asked, "What's in it for me?" The answer was "Whatever I want!" Dell has a very flexible and proactive approach to supporting its staff. The thinking is that by treating each member of staff as an individual and listening to their needs, the appropriate solution can be reached. Through the women's network I can express myself and develop my career with the range of tools available, but I can also encourage other women to take ownership of their careers by acting as a role model. This philosophy also impacts on our recruitment process, where

female applicants are encouraged to engage with senior women in the company. After all, it's no good being able to boast a range of work/life balance policies if they can't be seen to work in 'real life'. As a mother of three children I'm a working model of how in the right company you can enjoy a challenging and rewarding career, without ever having to miss a school play!"

Getting the balance right

Dell's progressive family friendly initiatives, including flexible working are available to every employee, not just parents. There's a new work culture emerging now, where people are demanding a better work life balance. So our policies are not just aimed at working women, but anyone who wants more flexibility in the way they work. If the business can support it, we'll do our best to make it happen. Dell's Work Life Effectiveness Week (commenced on March 31st 2008) encompasses seminars to promote flexible working, recognising that all its employees lead busy lives with pastimes and passions beyond work. Policies include flexi time, (variable hours and part time options) telecommuting and family friendly plans spanning maternity, adoption, parental and paternity leave. Dell also constantly monitors progress on flexible working through employee dialogue. Staff can make suggestions on the 'Employee Storm' website where they can share thoughts and ideas with colleagues. Recent changes inspired by discussions include options to take a leave of absence of up to six months and to buy more holiday time. As Aoife Mooney, Site Programme Manager, observes: "I'm a keen scuba diver and purchase additional holiday time so I can spend more time under the water. I've more freedom to pursue my passion than I'd have in any similar business."

Freedom to pursue passion is perhaps a good way to describe the way that Dell approaches diversity. "We aim to give our people the freedom to be passionate about the work they do, in order to exceed our customers' expectations," says Cathy Farrell, HR site lead of Dell's office in Cherrywood in Dublin. "By listening to our people we're making great progress at Dell, but the focus now must be on continuing to find creative new ways to attract and engage the most talented people out there who can drive our business to even greater success."

'Stamp Out Stigma' Campaign

By Ciaran McKinney,
Director of Gay HIV Strategies, GLEN

I have listened
to the loneliness
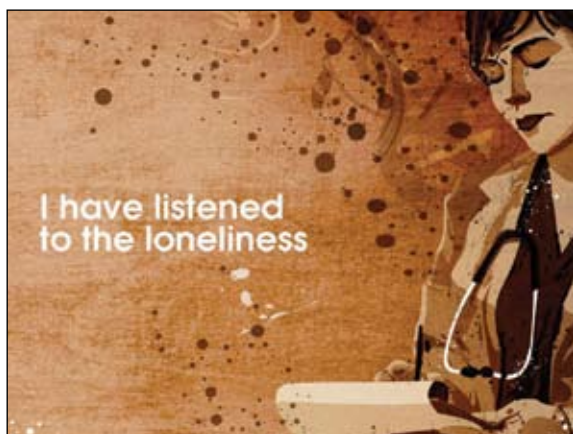
"Many people suffering from AIDS are not killed by the disease itself. They are killed by the stigma and discrimination surrounding everybody who has HIV and AIDS"

Nelson Mandela –
Former President of South Africa

Although it is almost 25 years since AIDS became recognised, its impact continues to be serious. However in countries with access to the latest medical care and treatment it is now considered to be a long term manageable condition. The life expectancy for people living with HIV (PLHIV) or AIDS is approaching the population norm, though this does not mean that we no longer have people dying from AIDS related illnesses.

In developing countries however, HIV and AIDS continue to have a devastating effect, having the potential to slow if not reverse gains made in standards of living in recent years. Although antiretrovirals are available in some settings there are often considerable cultural, economic and social barriers to achieving universal access to prevention, care and treatment for all.

There is one highly significant parallel in both Ireland and developing countries, that of stigma and discrimination. In both settings the stigma associated with HIV seriously compromises the quality of life of PLHIV even in Ireland today. While the treatment and care of HIV positive people in Ireland continues to be of a very high standard there has been a growing acknowledgement that the stigma and discrimination experienced by HIV positive people needs to be challenged

The national *Stamp Out Stigma* campaign is the result of a unique partnership of domestic and international development agencies working in the field of HIV and AIDS, statutory agencies and HIV positive people. This partnership is called the Multi Stakeholder Forum (MSF).

People living with HIV played a central role in developing the concept of this national campaign co-funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs (Irish Aid) and the Department of Health and Children

The Taoiseach's statement in June 2006 " As a first step we will have a national campaign to combat stigma and discrimination against people infected with HIV in Ireland" led to funding from Irish Aid and the Department of Health and Children to develop the *Stamp Out Stigma* campaign. The objectives of the campaign are to promote an understanding of HIV while highlighting the irrationality of stigma and discrimination in Ireland and other countries, to consult with PLHIV and document their experiences and to commission a study to bench mark the reality of HIV stigma in Ireland.

The first year of the campaign had a highly successful media campaign which included the production of postcards, print adverts and a series of TV adverts featuring household names such as: Andrea Corr, Sinead O'Connor, Eamonn Dunphy, Larry Mullin and John Rocha. The *Stamp Out Stigma* website, launched by An Taoiseach on Irish AIDS Day (June 15th) continues to be a source of information for people at www.stampoutstigma.ie . The publication "*Personally Speaking*" links the stories and experiences of HIV positive from

around the world highlighting the shared phenomenon of stigma. (Available as a pdf on www.stampoutstigma.ie).

"..I was told that my position at the office was no longer available.. I think my employer found out about my HIV but I can't prove this" (Personally Speaking)

The Committee is very aware that the issue of stigma is not one that can be resolved in a year long campaign. For this reason we are especially pleased that the Equality Authority has included a focus on HIV stigma in its business plan for 2008. We hope that this will significantly increase awareness among people living with HIV of their rights and make clear to employers and service providers that they have legal responsibilities not to discriminate against people with HIV.
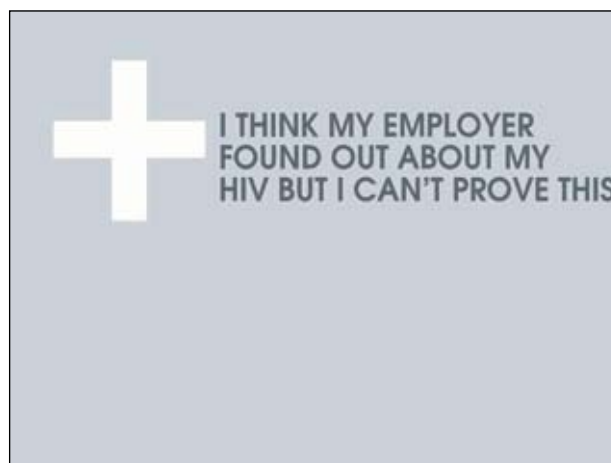
We will continue to work with the Equality Authority to promote the rights of HIV positive people and challenge stigma and discrimination in Ireland.

"HIV and AIDS do not stigmatise. People do. It is an assault on human dignity and worth"

Fr Michael Kelly,
Former Professor of Education at the University of Zambia

Stamp Out Stigma Campaign.

Irish Bank Officials Association (IBOA) – Promoting Equal Opportunity

IBOA held an extremely successful Equality Conference with a great line-up of quality presentations and a lively dialogue between speakers and audience.

By Marian Geoghegan, IBOA

Larry Broderick, General Secretary and Marian Geoghegan, IBOA Training Officer greet the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Brian Lenihan at the IBOA Equality Conference

The Conference "IBOA – Promoting Equal Opportunities for All" took place on Saturday 24th November 2007. A large number of IBOA members gave up their Saturday to attend the Conference. Both AIB and NIB sent Management/HR Representatives to the Conference.

Brian Lenihan Opens Conference
The Conference was opened by Mr Brian Lenihan, TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Minister stated that "this conference reflects the commitment towards equality expressed by IBOA in its Equality Policy. The IBOA programme ranges over a whole spectrum of equality issues, which have real impact on people's working lives."

IBOA promotes Equality in Banking
Larry Broderick, General Secretary, outlined the relevance of the Conference being held during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and also on the 90th Anniversary of the foundation of IBOA as a Trade Union. He stated that "The Financial Services Industry is extremely profitable but, unfortunately, the progress on equality issues has not been as significant as it should be. Irish Banking should be taking the lead position in relation to gender equality, work life balance, disability and migrant workers." He referred to the goal of a better quality of life for all IBOA members and this means tackling equality issues in a practical way.

Equality Chiefs, North and South
Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission, Northern Ireland gave an overview of the developments and challenges in establishing equality in the workplace in Northern Ireland. She also referred to the high degree of co-operation that exists between the Equality Agencies north and south of the border. Niall Crowley, Chief Executive, Equality Authority, Republic of Ireland stated that "We need to highlight the significant and persistent inequalities in the Irish workplace. These include a gender pay gap for women, the under representation of Travellers and people with disabilities, an under-employment of many migrant workers and barriers to older people remaining in the labour force. It makes good business sense for all enterprises to put in place an equality policy, to provide equality and diversity training for all staff and to implement an equality action plan."

People with Disabilities
The challenge of achieving full participation in the workplace for people with disabilities was presented by Angela Kerins, speaking in her role as Chairperson, National Disability Authority. For example, she referred to the fact

that whilst 70% of people knew someone with a disability only 6% knew a work colleague with a disability. In addition, Ms Kerins said that 90% of people with disabilities in employment stated that no assistance is provided by their employer to facilitate their employment. One of the key challenges to be addressed she said includes improving the retention in work of people who develop disabilities in later life.

There were a number of questions from the audience on the subject of disability in the workplace and Ms Kerins said that there is a need for employer based training – the State supports are there and employers need to be more pro-active. It was suggested that IBOA could encourage the Banks to aim for 3% of the workforce to be comprised of people with disability, similar to the Public Service.

Gay and Lesbian Workers
There was discussion amongst the conference participants and the panel of speakers on the subject of the experiences of gay and lesbian workers in the workplace. There was a consensus amongst the panel that there is a need for greater visibility for this issue in banking. Niall Crowley of the Equality Authority, referred to the ICTU *Guidelines for Negotiators on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights in the Workplace* and to the role of unions in raising awareness. Larry Broderick pointed to the cultural challenges in banking and stated that trade unions, in general, and IBOA, in particular, could play their part in taking the lead on this issue.

Gender Role Attitudes
"Some equality in marriage is a good thing, but by and large the husband ought to have the main say in family matters".

This was quoted by Dr Margret Fine-Davis, Senior Research Fellow, in TCD as part of her presentation on the changing gender roles attitudes in Ireland over the past number of decades. In 1978 some 54% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. By 2005 this had fallen to 20%.

As well as reporting the findings on changing gender role attitudes, Dr Fine-Davis' presentation covered her research on work life balance, which is a comparative European study. Ireland has the highest number of hours worked per week for men as well as the highest commuting time for men and women.

Work Life Balance
Dr Fine-Davis also explored the attitudes to flexible working in Ireland and there appears to be a high degree of support amongst the public e.g. 90% of respondents agreed that "Working hours should be more flexible so that men and women can better meet family needs" and 90% agreed that "men who work flexible hours can be just as serious about their career as anyone else."

Dr Fine-Davis said that there is "pressure on people to work long hours, often at the sacrifice of their health, happiness and family life. There will be no real equality until employers allow all employees to have flexible working". She added that "The pervasive belief that management jobs demand a full time commitment needs to be challenged", pointing out that "some workplaces have discovered that this is a myth and that allowing managers to work shorter weeks or fewer hours can work".

Experiences of Migrant Workers in Irish Banking
William Lyons presented the findings of a study carried out by DIT students as part of their Master of Science course. This is a comparative analysis of the experiences of Irish and migrant workers within the financial and banking sectors. For example, he cited a finding that up to the last quarter of 2006, 4,000 of the 15,000 employees in financial and other business services sector were Non-Irish nationals. Whilst the overall findings were that migrants are adjusting well, some problems cited were difficulties in adjusting to dialects, existence of 'cliques', the fluid nature of the workforce and the emerging issue of temporary contract workers.

Conclusions
The conference was facilitated by media expert Ciana Campbell. Larry Broderick closed the conference with a summary of the main themes. He emphasised that this conference, including the participants' feedback, would be instrumental in forming IBOA Policy and in influencing the equality agenda in the Finance Sector. He thanked the IBOA Equality Committee for organising the conference.

If anyone is interested in further details of the Conference please contact **Marian Geoghegan** at IBOA. **marian.geoghegan@iboa.ie**

Investigating the Business Case for Equality

By Laurence Bond,
Equality Authority

In a 2005 EU Commission report, 83% of companies with a diversity policy in place said that it had brought real business benefits. The reality of such benefits to firms and organisations is increasingly supported by international research evidence. In recent years, investigating the 'business case' in Ireland has been a key joint research theme for the Equality Authority and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP).

In 2007 the Equality Authority and the NCPP published *The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity: the International Evidence*[1] by Professor Kathy Monks of Dublin City University. This study, which reviews and synthesises existing research on the business case, shows that:

- at a strategic level, policies in relation to positive action and equality appear to enhance organisational performance

- diversity in top team membership also appears to enhance organisational performance

- there is a positive relationship between the existence of equality policies and employee wellbeing and organisational commitment

- there are positive employee performance outcomes from the introduction of equality and diversity initiatives with reductions in absenteeism, labour turnover, improved employee relations and innovation and creativity.

- there is evidence that diverse work groups can be a source of creativity and innovation within organisations. However, they require active management if they are to work successfully. In this regard, as more generally in the delivery of equality and diversity strategies, the role of line managers is crucial.

Overall the evidence regarding the relationship between equality and diversity initiatives and organisational performance suggests that organisations see performance outcomes from investments in such initiatives in four inter related areas:

- human capital benefits such as the ability to resolve labour shortages and recruit and retain high calibre staff;

- increased market opportunities with access to more diverse markets;

- enhancement of organisational reputation to suppliers, customers and prospective and existing employees; and

- changes to organisational culture such as improved working relations and reductions in litigation.

The links between investment in equality strategies and business performance have been empirically examined in two further Equality Authority research studies.

Equality at Work? Workplace Equality Policies, Flexible Working Arrangements and the Quality of Work[1] by Professor Philip O'Connell and Dr. Helen Russell of the ESRI, published in 2005, examined the impact on employees of having formal equality polices in the workplace. This study, which was based on a nationally representative sample of over 5,000 employees in Ireland, found that a formal equality policy in the workplace impacts positively on employees perceptions of workplace fairness, on workers well being and on their attitudes to their jobs and employers. Specifically it showed that having an equality policy in the workplace:

- is strongly and unambiguously associated with lower levels of work stress, even when a wide range of personal, job and organisational characteristics are controlled

- is strongly associated with higher levels of both job satisfaction and organisational commitment, even when all other relevant variables are taken into account

One important mechanism by which the implementation of equality policies produces these positive benefits is through their positive impact on employee perceptions of workplace fairness:

- employees who work in organisations that have implemented equality policies are much more likely to consider that opportunities for recruitment, pay and conditions and opportunities for advancement and career development are fair and equal in their organisations, even when other factors that could influence such perceptions are controlled for

In line with the international evidence this study suggested that, given these positive impacts on employee well being and organisational commitment, equality strategies were likely to also have a positive impact on business outcomes. Subsequently the Equality Authority and the NCPP jointly commissioned a specific survey to investigate this issue.

New Models of High Performance Work Systems: The Business Case for Strategic HRM, Partnership and Diversity and Equality Systems[1] was published in January of this year. This study was carried out by a research team led by Professor Patrick Flood of DCU[2]

and draws on a detailed survey of 132 medium to large companies in Ireland. It shows that active management of equality and diversity is positively associated with measurably better business performance – specifically with higher levels of labour productivity, business innovation and employee retention. On the basis of these findings the study concludes that:

> "..it is becoming increasingly clear that companies may find competitive advantage through more effective approaches to managing employee involvement and participation, and diversity and equality in the workplace. Such issues should no longer be considered as issues to be managed only for purposes of regulatory compliance, but as organisational factors that can impact significantly on productivity and innovation levels in the company"

How can firms turn the potential gain from investment in equality into actual improvements in the bottom line? According to Kathy Monks "the success of equality and diversity initiatives depends on their integration into both the organisation's strategy and its culture so that they shape the way in which business is under-taken and the ways in which individuals work"

In her report she identifies key success factors for equality and diversity initiatives in the workplace. These include the need for:

- Leadership and top management commitment and support to equality and diversity policies and practices;

- Training to raise awareness and develop staff skills, understanding and buy-in to equality and diversity policies and practices; and

- Staff involvement in the design and implementation of equality and diversity policies and practices.

On this issue research confirms what common sense suggests - the major benefits are achieved by organisations with pro-active and systematic strategies.

1. These publications can be downloaded from www.equality.ie/research

2. Professor Patrick C. Flood, Professor James P. Guthrie, Dr. Wenchuan Liu, Dr. Claire Armstrong, Dr. Sarah McCurtain, Thaddeus Mkamwa and Cathal O'Regan

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Visit www.equality.ie or contact our Public Information Centre directly at 01 417 3333 or Lo Call number 1890 245 545 for information on the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2007 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004. Information is also available on the Maternity Protections Acts 1994 and 2004, the Adoptive Leave Acts 1995 and 2005 and the Parental Leave Acts 1998 and 2006.