

# Equality News

Spring - Summer 2007



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All



- Putting Diversity Management on the business agenda in 2007
- Taoiseach Opens EU Equality Year for Ireland

- The 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All
- Work-Life Balance: Experience Across Europe





# SAY NO TO AGEISM WEEK 18 JUNE - 24 JUNE 2007

The contributions to Equality News are welcome and appreciated. The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the position of the Equality Authority. We welcome your feedback on any article in Equality News. Please send information to Patrick O'Leary (contact details on back page).

# Contents

02. **Update**  
By Niall Crowley, Chief Executive Officer,  
Equality Authority
04. **Putting Diversity Management on the  
Business Agenda in 2007**  
By Turlough O'Sullivan, Director General,  
Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
06. **Taoiseach Opens EU Equality Year  
for Ireland**  
By Patrick O'Leary, Equality Authority
08. **The 2007 European Year of Equal  
Opportunities for All**  
By Ursula von der Leyen, German Minister for Family,  
Senior Population, Women and Youth and Vladimir  
Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social  
Affairs and Equal Opportunities
10. **European Perspectives on 2007 Year of  
Equal Opportunities for All**  
Denmark  
By Mandana Zarrehparvar, Danish Institute for  
Human Rights  
Finland  
By Sinikka Keskinen, Ministry of Labour  
France  
By Néphéli Yatropoulos, Haute Autorité de Lutte contre  
les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité
16. **Cultural Diversity**  
Announcing New Research Initiative on  
Cultural Diversity  
By Elaine McMahon, Irish Management Institute
18. **Diversity and Inclusion at  
Medtronic Vascular Galway**  
By Dorinda Ryder, HR, Medtronic Vascular Galway Ltd.
21. **Burning Issues:**  
Accommodation and Lone Parents  
By Camille Loftus, OPEN  
National Women's Council of Ireland  
By Joanna McMinn, Director, NWCI  
The 'Yellow Flag': Celebrating Diversity  
Schools Programme  
By Damien Walshe, Irish Travellers Movement
25. **Case Reports**  
By Partick O'Leary, Equality Authority
28. **NESF Report 34: Improving the Delivery of  
Quality Public Services**  
By Gerald Walker, Policy Analyst (NESF)
30. **Thirty Years of Changing Behaviours and  
Attitudes to Equality through Legislation**  
By Peter Cassells, Chair, National Centre for Partnership  
and Performance
33. **Work-Life Balance: Experience  
Across Europe**  
By Robert Anderson, European Foundation  
for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

# Update

By Niall Crowley, Chief Executive Officer, Equality Authority



## European Year Of Equal Opportunities For All

This edition of Equality News has a particular focus on the European Year of Equality Opportunities for All. Turlough O’Sullivan offers a business sector perspective on the importance and relevance of the European Year. A further series of articles highlight the approach to the European Year being developed in other members states. A number of projects being supported as part of the European Year are also highlighted.

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All was launched in Berlin in January. The Irish launch, by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, took place in Dublin Castle. The Equality Authority strategy for the year aims to celebrate progress in the promotion of equality, to acknowledge the significant inequalities that persist in Ireland and to support a renewed commitment across all sectors to a more equal Ireland.

The implementation of this strategy is progressing with some significant potential. Developments since the launch of the year include:

- Congress has identified “Equality for All” as the banner for their biennial delegate conference and will dedicate a special session to this theme.

- IBEC are developing a networking process within the private sector to support workplace initiatives to promote equality.
- FAS will chair an event for public sector agencies on April 26th to develop a public sector network with a focus on equality for clients and customers.
- The IVEA (Irish Vocational Education Association) has established a working group to develop an approach to equality proofing key policies and plans.
- The equality officers within the Irish Universities Association are exploring approaches to embedding a focus on equality within university structures.
- The Local Government Management Services Board are developing a survey to explore the systems in place within the local authority sector with a capacity to drive planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality.
- The Department of the Taoiseach, the National and Economic Social Council and the Equality Authority are planning a colloquium on the life cycle approach to policy making and the commitment in 'Towards 2016' to have due regard to equality in implementing the Life Cycle Approach.

These are just some of the initiatives being organised for the year. The strategy also sets out fourteen 'burning issues'. These are equality issues identified for each of the groups covered by the nine grounds in the equality legislation. Thirteen projects, led by non governmental organisations are now being developed to build a focus and stimulate new progress on these issues.

## Decentralisation

In line with the government's decentralisation programme, an advance party of Equality Authority staff are in place Roscrea. They will be based in Birchgrove House located just outside Roscrea and will work on administration, information provision and developing a regional presence. This will initially involve five staff and will grow to at least fifteen staff by the end of the year.

## Research

A significant body of research work is now being completed for publication.

- a report on access for lesbian, gay and bisexual people to healthcare will be published jointly with the Health Service Executive;
- two reports on the business case for workplace equality will be published jointly with the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. The first report examines the international evidence for the business impact of equality. The second report examines the focus on equality and diversity within high performance work practices; and
- two reports have been prepared for the Equality Authority by the ESRI. One report examines the experience of discrimination and the other report examines gender inequalities in time use. Both reports make use of existing data sources.

## Casework

There have been a number of significant developments in the casework of the Equality Authority. The Equality Authority appeared for the first time as *amicus curiae*. This role was played in judicial review proceedings between Paddy Doherty and Bridget Doherty and South Dublin County Council, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland and the Attorney General. The applicants were unsuccessful and have appealed the case to the Supreme Court.

In another case a claim of discrimination in relation to a local authority switching off audible crossing signals at pedestrian crossing was settled without admission of liability. The settlement involved a payment to the claimant and agreement by the local authority to switch back on audible signals at functions where the poles are at least three metres apart, to develop a range of other approaches where the poles were closer and to consult with the NCBI in relation to any future developments in relation to audible signals.

# Putting Diversity Management on the business agenda in 2007

By Turlough O'Sullivan, Director General, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)



The concept of equal opportunities has become embedded in Irish society in recent years. The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, and the establishment of the Equality Authority have rightly created an environment where discrimination on the nine grounds set out in the legislation is outlawed. The legal framework has been secured and we have developed a solid infrastructure to deal with any discrimination that may occur, especially in the workplace. However, as most people will recognise, building an integrated, cohesive and diverse society requires much more than compliance with legislation. The 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All challenges us to move beyond compliance and to develop a more sophisticated vision for equality and diversity.



From the business perspective, this European Year provides a real opportunity to highlight the importance of diversity management in a changed and still changing business environment. One tenth of our current workforce is of non-Irish origin, and without this large group, our economy and individual businesses would suffer. Having large numbers of employees and customers with different cultures, languages, educational backgrounds and experiences poses a challenge to business. Creating a non-discriminatory workplace and offering equal employment opportunities is no longer enough to meet this challenge. Proactive, planned and effective strategies to foster integration, promote understanding and ultimately reap the business benefits of diversity are now essential.

It is not only managing cultural diversity that poses a challenge to business. In 2006, the percentage of working age women in the workforce rose above 60% for the first time. Many women are balancing family commitments with busy working lives and employers are considering ways to support and retain them in the workforce through the use of work life balance policies and other initiatives. People with disabilities, older workers and all of the other groups covered by the nine grounds have significant contributions to make to individual enterprises and to the economy as a whole. However, a skilled and considered management approach is needed to bring out the best in people and tap their full potential.

Managing diversity is a business strategy that when handled astutely brings positive results. It goes well beyond recruiting and supervising workers with different backgrounds. It involves utilising the diversity of staff, suppliers, customers and management to the optimum advantage. A successful business should reflect and understand the community in which it operates, whether here in Ireland or overseas. Having a diverse team and deploying that team in a way that maximises business opportunities is a real competitive advantage. Finding ways to tap into an individual's potential is rewarding for business. But it is also rewarding and fulfilling for those employees and customers who realise they have something unique and important to offer or to gain. Ultimately, everyone wins.

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All gives us an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come in recognising, understanding and accommodating diversity in the business community to date. Our legislation is robust and employers understand the legal framework. However, diversity management is a relatively new and complex area for many employers who are dealing with rapid change and are anxious to turn diversity into positive business advantage. This Year will give the impetus to many organisations to think more proactively about the diversity agenda.

The Equality Authority has developed an ambitious plan for the Year in Ireland, for which many stakeholders have offered support. One of the named priorities is to build 'equality competence' in organisations, which would see their capacity to promote and support equality and diversity increase. IBEC has agreed to lead a competence initiative in the private sector, which will enable businesses to better manage and facilitate diversity. Building on our existing work in the areas of equality and good employment practice, IBEC will engage its members in exploring diversity issues and sharing best practice. By the end of 2007 we anticipate that many organisations will have benefited from this initiative and will take a fresh approach to the promotion and management of diversity.

This Year is significant for all the people now living and doing business in Ireland. IBEC recognises that it is a time for business to give leadership in advocating and promoting the positive aspects of diversity. We wish the Equality Authority and all of those involved in this important work every success and look forward to useful collaboration and learning throughout 2007.

# Taoiseach Opens EU Equality Year for Ireland

By Patrick O'Leary, Equality Authority



An Taoiseach launches the EU Year at Dublin Castle

On Monday 5th February 2007, in Dublin Castle An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD launched the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in Ireland. A large gathering drawn from state agencies, private companies, government departments, trade unions, politics the judiciary, and the non-governmental sector were present to celebrate the event.

The EU Council and the European Parliament have designated 2007 as European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. They have established four objectives for the year:-

- To raise awareness of rights under the equality legislation.

- To promote the participation of under- represented groups in all sectors.
- To encourage a celebration of diversity in society.
- To support social cohesion and good relations between groups.

A demand for progress on equality in Ireland is evident in the Eurobarometer survey published by the European Commission to mark the European Year. This found that:

- 86% of Irish people think that we need more women in management, more people with disabilities in the workplace and more women in the Dail.
- 82% of Irish people think that we need more people over 50 in companies.
- 49% of Irish people think that we need more minority ethnic people in the Dail.

The Equality Authority is the national implementing body for the year in Ireland and has published a national strategy for the year. This strategy seeks a European Year of Equal Opportunities for All that reinvigorates and expands the commitment and ambition of all sectors for a more equal Ireland; that challenges and seeks to dismantle the barriers of discrimination and exclusion that currently face groups and individuals experiencing inequality;



and that engages all sectors of Irish society in responding to a demand for progress towards a more equal society.

The Year takes place at a time when the situation of groups covered by the equality legislation continues to demonstrate significant inequalities. The 2005 CSO survey on equality which found that 12.5% of the population aged 18 and over (382,000 people) had experienced discrimination in the previous 2 years is highlighted in the strategy.

The Equality Authority strategy for the European Year sets out six priority action areas. These are:-

#### Priority 1: Information and advocacy

Initiatives will be taken to enhance the provision of information on rights to groups experiencing inequality. Comhairle and the Office of the Ombudsman will work with the Equality Authority to explore new approaches to the provision of information. Public awareness campaigns to promote a valuing of diversity among the general public will be organised on Work life Balance, Ageism, cultural diversity in the workplace and disability issues.

#### Priority 2: Equality mainstreaming

Activities will be developed to support public sector bodies to incorporate a focus on equality in planning and policy making. The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science will examine their policy making systems to identify how best to include an equality mainstreaming approach in these.

#### Priority 3: Equality competence

Two learning networks will be established to support institutional change so that organisations are planned and systematic in combating discrimination, making adjustments for diversity and promoting full equality in practice. FAS and the HSE will lead a learning network in the public sector and IBEC will do so in the private sector.

#### Priority 4: Equality debate

This will involve activities to engage key sectors and interests in a national debate on issues of equality, diversity and discrimination in Ireland. Congress, the Local Government Management Services Board, and the Equality Authority will all seek to support this debate at events and conferences during the Year.

#### Priority 5: Multiple discrimination

This will involve initiatives on older migrants, women with a disability and older people with a disability alongside work to develop a framework for exploring multiple discrimination experienced by women.

#### Priority 6: Burning issues

Initiatives to stimulate progress in addressing key equality issues will be funded under the strategy. Non governmental organisations will be resourced to develop projects for each of the following issues:

- The sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women, the status and standing of those who play caring roles and the role of the State in supporting caring.
- Gender conditioning in men and the role of men in pursuit of gender equality.
- Recognition for transgender people in the gender with which they identify.
- Family diversity in Irish society.
- Provision of accommodation to meet the needs of lone parents.
- Developing a national strategy for carers.
- Combating negative stereotyping of young people
- Access to health services for older people.
- The experience of people with disabilities in institutions.
- Supporting service providers to ensure accessibility of their services for people with disabilities.
- Partnership rights for same-sex couples.
- Integration for minority ethnic groups and the emergence of an integrated intercultural society.
- Majority community attitudes to Islam and the Muslim community.
- Achieving educational outcomes for Travellers.



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

# The 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

By Ursula von der Leyen, the German Minister for Family, Senior Population, Women and Youth and Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

2007 is a symbolic and important year as the European Union celebrates its 50th birthday and Germany takes over the EU Presidency. Over the past 50 years the EU has changed dramatically, growing from the original six Members to today's Union of 27 Member States. Even up until recently, an European Union stretching from the Arctic region of northern Finland to the sunny beaches of Cyprus, and from the Balkans to the farthest western tip of Ireland would have seemed impossible. This impressive geographical diversity is matched only by an increasingly diverse society, not least because of our ageing population but also because of immigration. Fighting discrimination is at the heart of the European Union and from its conception the EU has fostered equal opportunities for all.

Nevertheless, discriminatory attitudes or behavior grounded on old-fashioned stereotypes and prejudices still exists. A recent Eurobarometer poll on 'Discrimination in the European Union' shows that more than half of Europeans think that discrimination is widespread. Just as worrying is the fact that barely a third of us claim to know our rights if we are the victim of discrimination or harassment. Even though one of Europe's most precious resources is the rich diversity of its people, there are citizens that are being deprived of equal opportunities. For example, many women cannot fully develop their career

because they are discriminated against for becoming pregnant; children with a migration background have difficulties communicating in school simply because their language skills were not developed in early childhood; and older people are pushed out of the labour market because experience and life long learning are not valued as much as they should be by prospective employers. Everyone deserves to be treated equally - it is our right - that is why 2007 has been designated the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

How will the European Year work? The main participants in the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All will be the citizens of Europe. With this in mind, the vast majority of activities will take place at local, regional and national level. National governments, together with stakeholders including local and regional NGOs, employers and trade unions, have put together individual plans and are deciding on actions and initiatives to promote equal opportunities for all in their country, region or locality.

European legislation for equal opportunities has taken the form of 3 laws, reinforcing existing Irish legislation, which have been adopted in all Member States over the past number of years, introducing a common level of protection against discrimination. Two of the laws prohibit discrimination in employment, education, social security, healthcare and access to goods and services on the basis of racial or ethnic origin and gender respectively. The third law focuses specifically on employment and training, applying the principle of equal treatment of workers irrespective of religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. Other EU initiatives include a major action programme aimed at helping to change attitudes and behavior. In terms of gender equality, last year's roadmap for equality between women and men is driving this agenda forward.

While all these actions have achieved a great deal, much more remains to be done. One of the goals of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is to stimulate a wider debate on how to make citizens more aware of their rights and how existing laws can really become part of daily life. Results from the

recent Eurobarometer survey showed respondents regarded schools, parents and the media as the most effective carriers of the diversity message.

Business has a particularly important role to play as any form of discrimination represents a massive waste of talent and skilled resources. In a recent survey by the European Commission, 83% of companies with diversity policies said these policies had brought benefits to their businesses. Business leaders have found that by making their workforce more diverse they promote innovation in the workplace and can better recruit and retain the skilled workers they need.

A diverse society is something to cherish. It enriches individuals and benefits communities. Differences and diversity are at the very core of the European Union. The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All wants to encourage people to appreciate these differences, celebrate this diversity and bring about concrete action on the ground.



Opening ceremony at the launch of the EU Year in Dublin Castle.



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

# European Perspectives on 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities for All

Throughout the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, Equality News intends to focus on other EU member states and their activities.

In this edition Denmark, Finland and France provide some insights:

## Denmark

By Mandana Zarrehparvar,  
Danish Institute for Human Rights

On Saturday the 27th of January the Minister for Social Affairs and Gender Equality, Eva Kjer Hansen, officially kicked off the Danish action program for the Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The ministers opening statement made it clear that equality is quite simple: “We look different, we have different talents, we all have different goals in our lives and we do things in different ways. However one condition should be common: the individual should be in focus. Each of us should have the opportunity to choose the life we want – free from traditions and prejudice. Equal opportunities and equal treatment is the road to take to promote a progressive Denmark, where everybody’s special talents contribute to the common good. It is actually quite simple.”

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality is the Danish coordinating body for the Year. In order to ensure the participation and involvement of as many stakeholders as possible the ministry established a steering committee consisting of 27 members including NGOs, social partners, public authorities and ministries. An executive committee consisting of six members was chosen from the steering committee. The purpose of the steering committee is to contribute their respective expertise in the field of equal treatment and non-discrimination and to organise and facilitate dissemination of information on the Year to their respective constituencies. It is the committee’s task to make overarching decisions on activities and strategy for the Year. The executive committee’s task is to prepare and realise the Year.

Apart from the respective ministries activities, the Danish Government has allocated 8.25 million Danish Crowns (€1.1 million) for new initiatives and activities for the Year. As the aim of the action programme is to involve and generate a wide awareness for the Year and for the principle of equality, the activities are divided into three “pools” with each pool targeting different stakeholders. The first pool of activities involves nationwide initiatives that target groups or the public in general. An aspect of these activities must be to ensure information dissemination, debate and coordination of activities during the Year. Nationwide activities

must spread the message of equal opportunities for all as far as possible and will be developed jointly by organisations, ministries, etc. One such activity is the making of a short film, raising awareness of the citizens' right to be free from discrimination. The film will be available for public service TV stations, at libraries and other public facilities nationwide.

The second pool of activities entails government initiatives which target the general public or special groups, business, education sector, etc. The Danish Government is giving the Year high priority, implementing a wide range of initiatives focusing on diversity and reinforcing the fight against discrimination. Some initiatives will continue ongoing work while other initiatives are new. An example of activities in this pool is the Department of Gender Equality's initiative to implement a 4 year public awareness campaign on gender related prejudices and gender role patterns in families with non Danish ethnic backgrounds as an element of the action plan.



An Taoiseach meets Nicola Twamley and Orla Fogarty of the Equality Authority at the EU Year launch

The last pool of activities consists of community initiatives that can be realized by NGOs, businesses or private persons. Activities will comprise counselling, awareness raising, analysis, fact-finding results, debates, dialogues or partnerships on non-discriminatory treatment rooted in gender, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation. Applications will be weighted to ensure that initiatives targeting all six grounds will achieve support. Further, priority will be given to applications aimed at creating lasting partnership relations across different interest groups beyond the Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Initiatives in this pool of activities must target at least two of the six protection criteria and must include a gender perspective.

Denmark's vision for the Year of Equal Opportunities is to highlight non-discrimination and diversity across the areas of age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation and to raise awareness of all citizens' right to be free from discrimination. Denmark will further build on its current activities with initiatives that will in particular enhance vulnerable groups' opportunity for equal treatment by providing a single complaints board. The complaints board will be where all people can lodge their complaints of discrimination in regard to the labour market on grounds of age, disability, gender, race and ethnic origin, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The complaints board will also be able to handle cases outside of the labour market – but only on grounds of gender and race and ethnic origin. The complaints board will be quasi-judicial and its decisions will be binding.

Furthermore, it is the Danish Government's intention to take initiatives in particular with regards to senior citizens, disabled persons, ethnic minorities, the gender mainstreaming strategy and efforts regarding active citizenship, social inclusion and diversity in the labour market.

In summary, the Danish Government will use the Year to focus on promoting diversity, eliminating prejudice and protection against discrimination and exclusion.





2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

## Finland

By Sinikka Keskinen, Ministry of Labour, Finland

### Horizontal approach

The activities of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All will be implemented in Finland through horizontal network projects and with the assistance from the Information Desk established by the National Implementing Body (NIB) – Ministry of Labour. For several years a horizontal approach has been a regular working model in Finland in anti-discrimination activities, and there are already structures and networks to enable NGOs and other organisations to work together. The implementation process will be led by a broad based Steering Committee in which the following organisations are represented: NGOs, social partners, national, regional and local authorities, equality bodies, advisory boards and self-governance bodies (e.g. Advisory Board for Roma Affairs and the Sámi Parliament).

### Objectives and expectations

Concerning the EU objective of Rights, the emphasis will be on the practical implementation of the national and European anti-discrimination legislation in everyday life situations. Also a specific project will be carried out to launch debate on the unfulfilled rights from the point of view of the discrimination-affected groups.

Concerning the EU objective of Representation, measures will be taken to increase the participation of underrepresented groups by the identification and removal of the barriers in the fields of media, art life, sports and employment. Information will also be shared on the already existing positive action to promote equal participation.

Concerning the EU objective of Recognition, promotion of diversity policies, strategies and management will be the most important objective in Finland during the European Year 2007. This is seen as a crosscutting issue and therefore it will be reflected in all measures, events and other activities included in the Calendar of the Year.

Concerning the EU objective of Respect, the elimination of negative attitudes, stereotypes and hate-behaviour in every-day situations, and specifically in sports and in working life, will be carried out.

### Activities

The Launch Event has taken place on the 8th of February and the Information Desk was established at the beginning of the year. The website of the Year is available on the national equality portal [www.equality.fi](http://www.equality.fi)

The six network projects to be carried out during the Year are:

1) **Visibility Campaign on Equal Opportunities for All**

is co-ordinated by the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE and implemented jointly with organisations representing people exposed to discrimination on different grounds.

2) **Culture Is Meaningful for All** project is co-ordinated by the Finnish National Gallery. It is targeted to promote diversity in arts and improve access to art institutions (as employees) and performances (as audience).



3) Sports – Arena for Everyone project is co-ordinated by the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF), which is an umbrella organisation for sports in Finland with 127 national member organisations and 9,000 local sport clubs and associations.

4) Diversity in Employment project is carried out by social partners in co-operation with organisations representing different minorities and people with disabilities, and consists of several components such as seminars, training modules, publications etc.

5) Unfulfilled Rights project is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice. A consultative process will be carried out to discuss issues, which have been promoted for a long time without success by NGOs and interest groups representing people exposed to discrimination. As a result of the process, a book will be published on unfulfilled rights to raise further debate.

6) The first Annual Report on Discrimination and Equal Opportunities will be prepared and published during the Year covering all grounds of discrimination and multiple discrimination, especially concerning gender and age. The project is co-ordinated by the Finnish League of Human Rights.



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

## France

By Néphéli Yatropoulos, Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité

Upon the French Government's request, the High Authority against Discrimination and for Equality (HALDE) has been given responsibility for the organisation of the European Year in France.

The principle of equal opportunities for all is now firmly anchored in French institutional life, with a ministry delegated to its promotion, a high authority against discrimination and for equality (HALDE), a national agency for social cohesion and equal opportunities (ACSE), and, on a local level, departmental commissions for equal opportunities (COPEC). France also has a range of regulations and legislation in this area, with the recent addition of the equal opportunities law of 31 March 2006.

The objectives for 2007:

- the participation of public and private actors working for equality in national events;
- 45 projects, selected in a competition launched in 2006 by the HALDE. Projects are planned in accordance with the six criteria of the year and in the areas of employment, housing, access to services and education.



An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Karen Ewrin, Chairperson of the Equality Authority and Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority at the EU Year launch in Dublin Castle

The projects will involve national, regional and local events. The objective is to involve sections of the public, in both rural and urban areas, which are often not reached by institutional action.

Some of the selected projects include:

- Homophobia in the workplace
- Discrimination and the law (« Droit au Cœur »)
- Between two languages
- Careers for women in the scientific, technological and industrial world
- A Multimedia Management Case Study on diversity in enterprises
- Network of tenants, owners and intermediaries: discrimination and housing
- Education against racism
- "Why you and not me?" From discrimination to violence
- A guy, a girl: from the media to reality.

The Year is organised by a steering committee (consisting of representatives of ministries and associations involved in the promotion of equality).

Among the highest priority targets for awareness-raising are those being discriminated against themselves: the aim is to ensure that the public knows just what discrimination is and understands the rights of each person in their environment as well as the possibilities for appealing to various courts and to the HALDE.

Particular attention will be paid to gender equality. Each of the selected projects will make sure that women are represented in the targeted public, regardless of the theme treated.

The steering committee has already identified a certain number of projects in addition to those selected; they will be included in the 2007 schedule:

- In many regions, a considerable amount of education through the media (audiovisual and the press) is being set up. The media and secondary schools (teachers, pupils and parents) will take action this year on the theme of equal opportunities.
- In November, the Minister of Cultural Affairs and Communication and the minister delegated to the Promotion of Equal Opportunities presented to the council of ministers, the organisation of an image collection called "Pictures of diversity". Managed by the National Agency for Social Cohesion (ANCSEC) and the National Centre of Cinematography (CNC), the collection will support cinematographic and audiovisual creation dealing with diversity and equal opportunity in France.
- In order to raise public awareness of discrimination and to bring together people involved locally, there will be events, conferences and forums in various French cities.

This list is not exhaustive, and all through the year 2007, many other initiatives will be added.

There will be an on-line newsletter on the internet site (<http://equality.europa.eu>). It will inform the public, associations and institutions of the various events in each region.

#### The budget:

The total budget for 2007 is €1,248,000, financed equally by the European Commission and the French State. The budget is to cover the preparatory work (such as the conference to launch the Year) and also the setting-up and follow-up of the selected projects.



EU Year launch in Dublin Castle

# Cultural Diversity

## Announcing New Research Initiative on Cultural Diversity

By Elaine McMahon, Irish Management Institute

The Irish Management Institute (IMI) is delighted to announce a joint research initiative with the National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR) and the Equality Authority to explore the issue of Cultural Diversity in the workplace. In recent years, a growing body of knowledge has come to recognise that cultural diversity, increasingly an ethical and legal imperative, can also have a marked impact upon organisational effectiveness and ultimately the bottom line. In countries, such as the U.S.A. with a longer history of cultural mix, businesses have long recognised workplace cultural diversity as a challenge and, more recently, an opportunity. Many organisations have invested in initiatives to unlock the potential benefits of a culturally diverse workforce, viewing this as a strategic asset. By placing diverse human capital at the heart of organisational strategy, some organisations have successfully accessed these potential benefits, and have made significant progress in terms of overall effectiveness and success.

In Ireland, the challenge of wide ranging cultural diversity is relatively new and as such, we are presented with an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and from the existing body of research. If we can successfully collate international knowledge in this field, extrapolate the key principles of successful diversity management and adapt these to the Irish context, we can create the foundations for Irish based organisations to develop the optimal policies and practices to ensure greatest business benefit.

The intended objectives of the initiative are:

- To conduct research to explore and identify the primary issues in management of cultural diversity and establish a business case for investment in cultural diversity management;
- To identify good practice in the field;
- To support the transfer of learning from research to workplace practice through publications, workshops/events and training programmes; and
- To raise senior level awareness of cultural diversity issues.

The management of cultural diversity can be said to be the process by which an organisation succeeds in recognising, valuing and celebrating the differences between its employees, whilst ensuring that these assessments are equal and fair. At the same time, diversity management is based upon the belief that by bringing various groups together, the organisation will ultimately benefit from this mix of perspectives and achieve an advantage over those organisations that reject the processes of diversity management.

There is an extensive range of reasons why the effective management of cultural diversity makes sense for today's organisations. Of course, compliance with the legislation is required but this should be seen as a baseline level activity meeting the minimum requirements and should by no means be perceived as the only driving force behind change. Beyond the legal requirements, there is a business case for cultural diversity which this initiative aims to investigate in the context of today's Ireland.

The initiative aims to benefit high performance organisations employing a culturally diverse workforce, serving a culturally diverse customer base, and operating in an increasingly global environment through a mix of research, publication, and learning outputs. These will be produced in the context of a Cultural Diversity BizLab, or business laboratory.

The BizLab concept was announced by IMI earlier this year and reflects a research approach that is applied and practitioner led. Essentially, IMI BizLabs are active communities of interest focused around specific organisational challenges and are composed of business practitioners, IMI faculty and researchers, working together to address shared business issues and devise practical solutions to these challenges. The Cultural Diversity BizLab will be a dynamic learning forum in which participants will have the opportunity to drive the IMI research agenda, stay informed of best practices, be involved in a network of cultural diversity practitioners and thinkers and find actionable solutions to their organisations' challenges around cultural diversity issues.

The BizLab will run until December 2008 and over the coming months we will be seeking interested business partners from a cross section of organisations and sectors who are looking to successfully harness cultural diversity from a business perspective. If you would like to learn more about this initiative please contact;

**Deirdre Crowe** Research Officer  
Telephone. 01 207 8404  
email. [diversity@imi.ie](mailto:diversity@imi.ie)

**Mary Hogan** IMI Faculty  
Telephone. 01 207 8551  
email. [diversity@imi.ie](mailto:diversity@imi.ie)



L to R Michael McDowell, Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform, Lucy Gaffney, Chairperson, National Action Plan Against Racism, Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority and Dr Tom McCarthy, CEO of the Irish Management Institute at the launch of Cultural Diversity BizLab

# Diversity and Inclusion at Medtronic Vascular Galway

By Dorinda Ryder, HR, Medtronic Vascular Galway Ltd.

Medtronic is one of the world's leading medical technology company, providing lifelong solutions for people with chronic disease.

Every 5 seconds, Medtronic products are helping to improve somebody's life all around the world. Medtronic's establishment in Galway came via its 1999 acquisition of Arterial Vascular Engineering (AVE). AVE had previously acquired the cardiovascular business of CR Bard Inc, including the Galway facility, which was set up by Bard in 1982.

Medtronic employs over 2,000 people in Galway. These people are involved in the research, development and manufacture of a range of leading-edge, minimally invasive product technologies for the Vascular Division, including stents, stent delivery systems and angioplasty balloons. These products are used to treat arterial vessel disease in the heart and other regions of the body. The Galway site is also a centre of excellence for the Cardiac Rhythm Management Division, developing and manufacturing products to support heart failure therapy applications.

From a workforce of approximately 1,100 in 1999 to over 2,000 in 2007, Medtronic Vascular Galway has grown significantly. 2006 saw the fastest growth in the number of non Irish nationals entering the talent pool in Medtronic Galway. From 26 recorded nationalities in January 2006, there are currently 41 different nationalities working at the Galway site employed in all areas and levels of the business. These include people from Albania, Bangladesh, Gambia, New Zealand, Thailand and many more. This culturally diverse workforce prompted us at Galway to put our first Diversity and Inclusion plan in place in early 2006.





Our first steps in this area involved carrying out an analysis of diversity and inclusion at the Galway site, reviewing achievements and planning how we could leverage these to move diversity and inclusion forward. This analysis included studying the diversity profile of the workforce in the areas of gender and age among the current population, new hires and promotions. A database was set up to record any diversity-related information that could be captured in the recruitment process. Employment processes and procedures were reviewed and updated to reflect our commitment to diversity. A Diversity and Inclusion statement was added to all appropriate policies and all contracts of employment to emphasise our dedication to creating an environment in which human differences can be explored and truly valued.

Our first Diversity and Inclusion plan was formulated to lay out the actions that we hoped to deliver on throughout 2006/07. This plan focused in particular on the integration of our non Irish national employees into the Galway site. One of our first goals centred on the area of language. A local translation service was used to translate key policies and information into various languages. The company's Mission Statement was translated into 12 different languages and displayed around the site acknowledging our diverse workforce.

Medtronic Galway has taken significant steps in the area of disability in particular accommodating the needs of those with restricted mobility and hearing impairments. In 2004, two project teams were formed including members from our Facilities, Health & Safety, Production, Quality Assurance and Human Resources departments. These teams' actions resulted in Medtronic being the first company in the country to facilitate a wheelchair user in a clean – room environment. This has removed the barriers that previously existed within Medtronic to accommodate future candidates who are wheelchair users. Similar headway has been made in adapting an area of the facility to suit the needs of hard of hearing and deaf (sign language users) people. Employees in this area volunteered to take sign language classes in order to be better able to communicate with their new colleagues.

Medtronic Galway continues to liaise with local agencies who work with people with disabilities. Over the years, we have had some great successes in integrating people with severe mental and physical disabilities under a supported employment scheme. The employees work a reduced hour's week accompanied by a support person from the agency. A number of these employees attended our Mission and Medallion ceremony earlier this year, where they were presented with medallions by the Company's CEO. The Mission and Medallion ceremony is an important part of the Medtronic culture and unites employees worldwide in their commitment to the Mission. We have also worked with a local agency in sourcing potential candidates, whose disabilities have in the past hindered them from entering the workforce even though it would not prevent them from fulfilling their job requirements.

This year saw the roll-out of Diversity and Inclusion Training for all People Managers on site entitled 'Maximising Performance Through Inclusion'. This was the first time Medtronic has delivered this training outside of the US sites. The purpose of the training was not only to create an understanding and awareness of diversity and inclusion at the Galway site, but also to provide support to managers in advising and guiding others around cultural competency, identifying strategies for promoting an inclusive culture and enhancing the personal leadership skills and behaviours required to promote an inclusive culture. Twelve employees from our Training and HR Departments took part in a Train the Trainer Programme equipping them with the necessary skills to deliver this programme effectively. These trainers will be involved in the roll-out of the training to all other employees on-site in the coming fiscal year.

Our next steps in the Diversity and Inclusion plan include holding an Intercultural Week in March. A team of employees has been formed to make this week a great success. This team is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds working at all levels of the business. The initiative has given people the opportunity to educate their co-workers about where they come from.

One of our main initiatives for the coming fiscal year will be the establishment of a Site Diversity Council. The council will start by including all site senior staff, but will also include a few other members to ensure representation from various groups and levels in the organization. This council will further clarify the long-term vision of the Diversity and Inclusion plan at the Galway site with specific goals going forward.

We will also be focusing on the area of Talent Management whereby we now have the opportunity to capitalize on the specific development of our diverse top talent, so as to ensure that this diverse top talent will be viable contenders for future job openings within the company.

In Medtronic Galway we have come to realise that embracing diversity and inclusion is more a journey than a destination. Along with continued HR support, Senior Management commitment and involvement from employees throughout the site, we will work together to identify new ways to leverage our diverse workforce to further increase our effectiveness in serving our patients and physician customers around the world. This will allow us to further the Medtronic Mission to ". . . alleviate pain, restore health and extend life. . ."

# Burning Issues

During the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, some Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) will be resourced to develop projects for key equality issues.

In this edition we look at three such projects from OPEN, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) and the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

## Accommodation and Lone Parents

By Camille Loftus, OPEN

OPEN, the national network of lone parent groups, was established in 1994 to represent the diversity of interests of lone parents – our 91 member groups are made up of all types of lone parents: men and women; never married, previously married and those with partners who are in institutions or otherwise unavailable to fulfil their parenting role.

Self-help is central to the OPEN ethos - lone parents recognising their own ability to deliver services and to pool their experiences to campaign for more inclusive social and economic policies and structures. OPEN's policy work is driven by this collective experience; we have a particular focus on inequality that leads to poverty.

## Why housing and accommodation is a 'burning issue' for one-parent families

While one-parent families constitute less than 12% of all households, 38% of those assessed as being in housing need, and 23% of Rent Supplement recipients are lone parents<sup>1</sup>. Securing appropriate and sustainable accommodation plays a critical role in tackling inequality for one-parent families establishing an appropriate and sustainable 'base' enables lone parents to put in place the range of supports they need to achieve social inclusion – for example, family and social supports, childcare and schools for children, accessing training, education or employment for parents.

However, as the statistics indicate, one-parent families experience considerable difficulties in accessing appropriate accommodation. OPEN has already conducted research on this area, and among the issues identified were:

- the allocations system, as well as current social housing stock and future build programmes, frequently resulting in very long waiting times;
- the inappropriate living conditions many one-parent families endure while waiting for social housing;
- the need to incorporate the availability of family/ social supports and access to key public services in allocations policy;
- specific accommodation requirements for families; and
- issues of discriminatory attitudes by staff.

### How OPEN plans to address this 'burning issue'

OPEN has been funded through the Equality Authority as part of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All to develop an initiative in this area.

OPEN is planning a programme of work focused on developing actions with the capacity to bring about practical and positive changes in the accommodation situation of one-parent families. This project will:

- highlight the inequality experienced by lone parents in accessing appropriate accommodation and challenge myths associated with this issue;
- raise awareness and build consensus among key policy and decision makers and implementing staff in relation to the accommodation needs of one-parent families and the change agenda required to address these effectively;
- develop the capacity of local lone parent groups to engage with policy and to develop on-going dialogue and relationship building with local authority officials; and
- produce policy resources and models of good practice to support better housing policy and practice at local and national level on an on-going basis.

These actions will form a springboard for on-going activity by OPEN at national and local level: by developing resources, building relationships, and building capacity, this project will lay the foundations for real and meaningful change on the inequality faced by one-parent families in securing appropriate accommodation.

<sup>1</sup>Census 2002; Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government: Assessment of Housing Need, 2005; Department of Social and Family Affairs: Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services, 2005

## Imbalance in the Sharing of Care and Household Responsibilities

By Joanna McMinn, Director, National Women's Council of Ireland



The EU Year of Equal Opportunities for All has opened up possibilities for addressing and promoting equality across a wide range of issues. The National Women's Council of Ireland, (NWCI) has chosen to focus on the imbalance in the sharing of care and household responsibilities between women and men. The CSO in 2006 highlighted the statistic that men constituted less than 1% of persons whose principal activity was looking after home and family. It is clear that women's participation in all aspects of – society, economic, civil and political – is severely limited due to the almost exclusive social responsibility for care and household work that women undertake. If women are to do more outside the home, including participating in public and political life, then men must take a greater share of work inside the home.

The NWCI plans to host a symposium/roundtable this year to discuss the sharing of care and household responsibilities between women and men. We are inviting key decision makers from Government Departments, members of the National Economic and Social Council and National Economic and Social Forum, representatives of Trade Unions, Employers organisations, Community and Voluntary sector organisations, as well as key academics. Our aim is to increase awareness about the impact of women predominately having responsibility to provide care and household work in Irish society, and to bring the discussion on care and household work to a more public level. We will be inviting international speakers from countries that have a much higher level of participation by men in care and household work. We know that other countries do have comprehensive national state policies aimed at the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities for women and men. We want to be better informed about good international practice and to engage in discussion that would identify ways forward to ensure a more equal representation of women and men in care and household work.

As an outcome of the seminar, we hope that social partners, civil servants and government will have a greater understanding of the impact of care work, paid and unpaid, on women's lives and on achieving women's equality. The seminar will identify strategies to progress to a greater sharing of care and household work between women and men. The NWCI also plans to build on the seminar to identify strategies on this issue, which we can develop in collaboration with other NGOs and social partners.

This event will provide a foundation to address a critical structural inequality for women in Irish society. The fact that women take the predominant care role in society is severely limiting their access and participation in all areas of civil, economic and political life in Ireland. The event will be the basis for a follow up report to help secure long term impact, promoting future strategies to achieve gender equality in reconciliation of family and work responsibilities for women and men.



## The 'Yellow Flag': Celebrating Diversity Schools Programme

By Damien Walshe, Irish Travellers Movement

The 'Yellow Flag: Celebrating Diversity in schools programme' aims to develop a structure (parallel to the Green Schools programme that is run by An Taisce) to promote Diversity and Interculturalism within the education system. This pilot programme would be both a programme for schools to adopt and an award scheme for schools that successfully complete the programme. The awards scheme is an incentive for schools to become engaged in the 'Yellow Flag' programme.

Practical progress on intercultural education has been slack despite there being a host of documents at a national and local level relating to intercultural education. Many initiatives remain simply statements of intent and put unrealistic expectations on schools and teachers to deliver an intercultural approach without the necessary supports.

This pilot programme will be designed to promote and acknowledge that whole school action is required to develop an intercultural approach in schools. The pilot-programme will be based on practical measures that bring issues of interculturalism into the day to day running of the school and will look to build practical actions into school planning that deliver intercultural education in the education system. It will look to engage all members of the school and wider community. Management, staff, parents and pupils will contribute through various steps in order for a school to qualify for a 'yellow flag'. This programme will focus on the development of policy and practice in the school rather than the development of another aspirational policy document that is difficult to directly apply to the school setting.

The Programme will aim to parallel some of the success of the 'Green Schools' programme- so far almost 2,015 Primary, Secondary and Special Schools (almost 50% of all the schools in the country) are participating in the programme, and 651 schools have been awarded the green flag. One of the successes of the Green Schools programme is that a school-based initiative has had a wide impact on how communities view the environment. As there is an award for completing the programme, this serves as an incentive for schools to actively participate and engage in the programme. It is intended that the 'Yellow Flag' programme would build on this enthusiasm for participating in programmes that develop a school's ethos and where this work is then recognised with an award.

What could this intercultural project do for a school?

- Improve the whole-school environment for all: students, staff and parents;
- Promote cultural diversity in the school and the wider community;
- Involve local community, particularly local community groups;
- Gain local publicity and prestige for school and students; and
- Create links with other schools in Ireland and abroad.

Thus there is huge scope for developing this pilot into a mainstream national programme. The funding provided for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All would have a long-standing legacy, promoting equality and diversity.



# Case Reports

By Partick O'Leary, Equality Authority

## **Accommodation case in which the Equality Authority appeared as amicus curiae to be appealed to the Supreme Court. Equality Authority welcomes significant concession from Respondents on interpretation on obligations of local authority under Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004.**

Mr Justice Charleton delivered judgment on the 22nd of January 2007 in the judicial review proceedings between Paddy Doherty and Bridget Doherty (applicants) and South Dublin County Council, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland and the Attorney General (respondents).

The case was brought by two older members of the Traveller community who are in poor health and who seek habitable accommodation from their local housing authority (South Dublin County Council) through the provision of a caravan. The mobile home of the applicants is in poor condition and is parked on an emergency site with inadequate facilities. The key issue is whether South Dublin County Council and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have an obligation under the Housing Acts 1996 to

2004, when interpreted in accordance with the Race Directive, the Equal Status Acts, the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights, to provide the applicants with accommodation which is both:

- equal to that which would be provided to members of the settled community in the sense of being actual physical accommodation; and
- particular to the needs of the applicants as Travellers, being a caravan or mobile home.

The applicants were unsuccessful and have appealed the case to the Supreme Court.

Section 6 of the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004 prohibits discrimination in relation to accommodation and any services or amenities related to accommodation. Section 6(b) then provides:

“(6) Nothing in subsection (1) shall be construed as prohibiting—  
(b) a body approved under section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992, from providing, in relation to housing accommodation, different treatment to persons based on family size, family status, marital status, disability, age or membership of the Traveller community.”

Housing and local authorities regularly interpreted this as allowing local authorities to discriminate against persons such as the applicants and making discrimination provision of accommodations under the Housing Acts immune from challenge under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004.

At the beginning of the hearing before the High Court, it was conceded by the respondents that section 6(b) could not be construed as allowing less favourable treatment. This is a very significant and important concession. It is the experience of the Equality Authority that housing authorities around the country have sought to rely on section 6(b) to exempt the provision of housing services from review under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004.

## Dublin City Council Settles Equality Case on Audible Pedestrian Crossing Signals

A claim of discrimination under the Equal Status Acts in relation to a local authority switching off audible crossing signals at pedestrian crossings has been settled. Dublin City Council and Des Murphy, the claimant, agreed a settlement, without admission of liability, following one day of a two day hearing. The Equality Authority represented Mr. Murphy in the case.

In the summer of 2004, Dublin City Council switched off audible crossing signals at pedestrian crossings in Dublin where audible units were located close to each other. They claimed that this was done due to the confusion caused for sighted pedestrians who may have mistakenly crossed the road on hearing the signal from an adjoining crossing. The City Council did not have any written complaints to back up this concern. The decision to switch off the audible units was taken without any publicity and without any consultation with the NCBI (National Council for the Blind of Ireland).

As a result of the decision to turn off the audible units, Mr Murphy, who is officially blind, experienced great difficulty in being safely and independently mobile in the city centre. Mr. Murphy sought unsuccessfully to resolve the matter by correspondence. He subsequently made a claim of discrimination on the disability ground under the Equal Status Acts against Dublin City Council, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Transport.

The Equality Authority represented Mr Murphy and submitted, on his behalf, that:

- best practice in relation to making reasonable accommodation for people who are visually impaired required that pedestrian crossing signals with visible signage should be accompanied by an audible unit; and
- international best practice demonstrated that there should be no confusion between audible signals where they are at least three metres apart.

Dublin City Council agreed, without admission of liability, to:

- switch back on audible signals at junctions where the poles are at least three metres apart;
- move the poles, run the pedestrian signals concurrently or make use of tactile devices where poles are currently less than three metres apart;
- consult with the NCBI in relation to changes or the developments in relation to audible traffic signal crossings and to have meetings at management level at least twice yearly; and
- make a payment of €4,000 in compensation to Mr Murphy.

Mr Murphy agreed to withdraw his claims against the Department of Transport and the Department of Environment and Local Government.

The settlement in this case raises important issues for people with disabilities. The decision taken by Dublin City Council in relation to the audible units demonstrated an insufficient disregard for the needs of people with vision impairments. Equality for people with disabilities will only be achieved where their needs are accorded a priority and are taken into account in all decision making. In this regard, the agreement to consult with the NCBI in future represents valuable progress. This would be an important precedent for all local authorities to follow.

The NCBI welcomed the settlement. Des Kenny, NCBI's Chief Executive, said, "What this settlement does is create a new partnership between Dublin City Council and NCBI to ensure the interests of vision impaired people are properly considered in future. I would like to commend Des Murphy and the Equality Authority for brokering such a positive settlement for blind and vision impaired people with Dublin City Council."

Mr Kenny added, "Dublin City Council has taken major strides in introducing audible signals throughout the City and this new arrangement will ensure that this positive work continues. I hope that other local authorities take notice and will follow Dublin City Council's lead and introduce similar consultative measures in other areas."

# NESF Report 34: Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services

By Gerald Walker, Policy Analyst (NESF)

In a recently published report the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) argues for public services to be better adapted to meet individual needs. The main findings and recommendations of the report are outlined as follows.

## Aim of the Report

The focus of the report is on putting the citizen at the centre of public services reform. A central issue is how we can move from our present system, which often tries to fit complex individual needs into a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, towards one where services are 'wrapped around' people's needs and circumstances. Public services have a central role to play in promoting a more fair and equitable society and thus underpin our future social and economic development. A particular emphasis is placed in the report on the links between improved public services and the equality / diversity, social inclusion and rural / urban dimensions.

## Main Findings of the Report

While many improvements have been made here in public services over the last decade, there are still significant shortcomings particularly in relation to more complex social problems, as well as new and emerging challenges to be met.

As is the case across many other countries, there are rising public expectations for more choice, higher quality standards and value for money

A main finding from the NESF's own research and from submissions received from the public is that there is often a wide gap between what service providers believe they are providing and the services that users need. A focus by service providers on how people actually experience services by 'mapping the customer / user journey' would help to improve service design and delivery. User consultation models can help to inform the design and delivery of services. Good examples are those developed by the Simon Communities of Ireland, the Carers Association and the Consumer Panels of the Health Service Executive.



User consultation models could also be used to develop a hierarchy of needs within the 'life cycle' approach adopted in Towards 2016. For example, a hierarchy of needs could be developed in the case of older people who wish to live independently at home in terms of better health care, housing, transport, social services etc. Given the high level of immigration here in recent years, our public services need to become more culturally sensitive and accessible to minority ethnic groups as well as other vulnerable ethnic groups.

A 'mapping' of current public service provision against existing gaps/ deficiencies and the demands arising from demographic trends would greatly aid service planning. For example, general medical care services in Dublin tended to be concentrated in wealthier areas, with poorer areas less well serviced.

The focus for the planning, funding and provision of public services should be on early intervention / prevention to avoid problems becoming more chronic and costly to address in the longer term. For example, there are long waiting lists for children requiring educational, psychological and speech therapy services.

A single 'lead agency' in each area of concern (i.e. older people living alone, early school leavers etc) should be given responsibility for the overall design and coordination of services to provide the 'joined – up' services on the ground that people need. This partnership approach should be rewarded and recognised.

A 'case management' approach can help to improve services delivery especially for more vulnerable clients. This involves identifying a client's needs and securing the services that will best meet those needs. Examples of innovative approaches are those of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and the Local Employment Service Network. Vulnerable people may not complain about poor services, as they may be afraid that they could lose them altogether.

All Public Service providers should set out the agreed standard of service that users should expect to receive as well as clear information on people's entitlements to the service as well as their obligations. The quality / diversity focus needs to be strengthened as a key element of Customer Service

Action Plans.

This should include equality / diversity training for staff, equality reviews of service provision, partnership with groups across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation and gathering equality data. Specific reference to redress should be stated in the Quality Customer Service set of principles.

### Recommendations

The main recommendations are as follows:

- A new approach for delivering public services that puts the citizen at the centre of public service reform should be adopted. Its overarching principles are equality and fairness, transparency, accountability and evaluation. The main elements are: (1) designing/ planning services around user's needs (2) prioritising resources on early intervention / prevention (3) integrating service provision and providing multi-annual funding (4) setting quality standards and reporting on service outcomes.
- A medium–term perspective for the planning, funding and provision of public services should be developed to tackle key policy issues on a longer-term basis. There should be greater freedom and flexibility on a pilot basis over use of resources to innovate and experiment.
- Providers of public services should clearly set out the standard of service that users can expect to receive. Service outcomes should be reported upon. Information should be provided on the entitlements and rights of people to use a service.
- To provide the joined – up services that people need, responsibility for the design and coordination of services in a sector should be given to a 'lead agency'.
- A 'Case Management' approach should become the way service providers identify and meet the needs of their more vulnerable clients.
- A supportive Policy Framework document should be agreed to strengthen and develop the relationship between the Community & Voluntary sector and the State sector.
- A 'Standing High-Level Committee on Public Services' should be established to drive forward and implement a programme for the improvement of public services and with the capacity to do so.



# Thirty Years of Changing Behaviours and Attitudes to Equality through Legislation

By Peter Cassells, Chair, National Centre for Partnership and Performance



This article draws its inspiration from my own personal experience as a Board member of the Employment Equality Agency (EEA) in the 70s and 80s. It also draws on my involvement in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and with individual companies and unions as they responded to the introduction of equality legislation. I have deliberately concentrated on individual cases to show why, as Sylvia Meehan pointed out in her excellent article (Autumn 2006), legislation was required to confront certain attitudes and vindicate people's rights.

I will start in 1970 when as a young clerical officer in the Department of Social Welfare I noticed, along with Rosaleen Glackin now Deputy General Secretary of the Civil Public Service Union, that our union in a submission to the Commission on the Status of Women had opposed the lifting of the marriage bar under which women in the public service had to retire on marriage. We sought to change this policy through a motion to the union's Annual Conference in the Shelbourne Hotel. The motion, which was passed by a slim majority, was strongly opposed by the then General Secretary of the union, Bill Lynch, on the grounds that lifting the ban on married women working would seriously damage the promotion prospects of men.

I next encountered similar attitudes, but from a different source, when I went to work as Protective Legislation Officer for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 1973.

A tripartite meeting was held in Brussels in October 1973 on a European Directive on Equal Pay, which provided for implementation of the right to equal pay no later than 31st December 1975. The Irish government representative expressed concerns about the Directive and implied that the date set in the Directive might not be acceptable to the Irish government. Despite these reservations, Ireland's Treaty of Accession to the EU, thankfully, did not provide for an exemption from the Directive or for any transitional period for the implementation of equal pay.

The Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Bill 1974 was published by the then Minister for Labour, Michael O' Leary in February 1974 to transpose the European Directive into Irish law. It provided for full implementation of equal pay by 31st December 1975 in accordance with the European deadline. However, on 17th December 1975 following pressure from employers and strangely from the general secretary of the Irish Shoe and Leather Workers Union, Michael Bell, the Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave announced that employers would be allowed to claim inability to pay equal pay and that the Government would seek a derogation from the European Commission for those employers.

Following a formal complaint from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the European Commission, through the Irish Commissioner for Social Affairs, Dr Patrick Hillery, rejected the government's application for a derogation. The Minister for Labour had to inform the Dail that the Equal Pay Directive would be implemented in full. This public confrontation between the European Commission and the Irish Government, with the European Commission's legal authority winning out, ensured that throughout the 1970s and 80s important European Directives were transposed into Irish law, including the Employment Equality Act 1977 which outlawed discrimination in access to employment, training and promotions.

The early days of this equality legislation also threw up some extraordinary cases for the Employment Equality Agency (EEA). Aer Lingus advertised for air hostesses and were promptly told by the EEA that this was now illegal. Bizarrely the airline replied that it was exempted from the legislation. When it was pointed out to them that the legislation contained no exemptions, the company claimed that it had a commitment from the Minister for Labour that the legislation would not be applied to the national airline. When the EEA instituted an investigation, the company claimed that it did not have male toilets and therefore, would not be in a position for some time to recruit men. Eventually when the EEA issued a legal directive, the company withdrew the ad and advertised for the first time for cabin crew.

Shortly afterwards, another company and a different mode of transport fell foul of the legislation and the EEA. CIE refused to consider applications from women to become bus drivers in Dublin Bus. When challenged by the EEA, they stated that it was their policy to give priority to married men as they had families to rear. Eventually, following an investigation by the Agency under the 1977 Act, the company changed its policy and women were recruited for the first time to drive buses in Dublin.

As these stories show, the work of the Employment Equality Agency not only changed the workplace for Irish women but also gave a strong underpinning to the demands from women's organisations and unions for major changes in the role of women in Irish society – changes which still reverberate with us today.

# Work-Life Balance: Experience Across Europe

By Robert Anderson, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions



Families and households are the key means of support and sources of help for citizens across Europe. According to the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2003 42% of all Europeans report high levels of satisfaction with their family life. Women, however, are less satisfied than men.

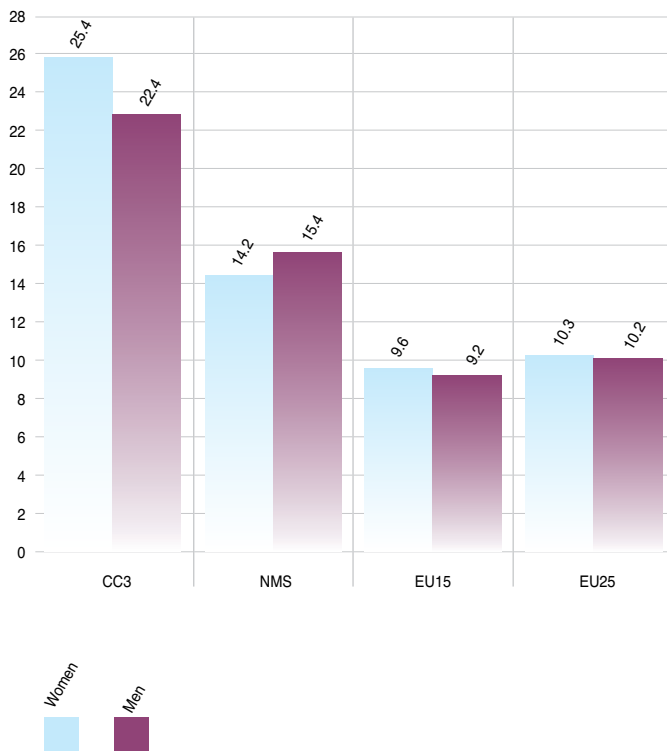
Women in general still bear the main responsibility for childcare, devoting on average more than twice as much time as men. This difference persists at a lower degree when mothers are in paid work. When it comes to housework mothers generally feel more overburdened than fathers; altogether, in the EU25, 36% of women and 13% of men felt they did 'more than their fair share' of the housework and the corresponding figures in Ireland were 57% and 15%.

Reconciling work and family life has become an increasingly important issue in European societies. The balance between these two areas of life is believed to have a major influence on labour participation, fertility, family formation and quality of life.

Two questions in the EQLS 2003 relate to the perceived difficulties working people have in fulfilling household and family responsibilities. In general, people living in the EU15 report fewer difficulties than people in the new Member States (NMS) in their responses to these questions. Only a minority of employed people in the EU15 say they have difficulties fulfilling their family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend working. In the United Kingdom, as well as in Greece, Portugal and Spain, problems in reconciling work-life balance are reported more frequently than in the other EU15 countries, but Spain is the only EU country where people perceive more difficulties than people in the NMS countries.

It is remarkable that women and men do not differ greatly in the level of reported difficulties they have in fulfilling their family responsibilities. This may reflect the different values and perceptions of men and women, but it corresponds with an earlier study in the EU15 as well as new research covering all Member States (Parent-Thirion et al, 2007) in which men report more often than women that their working hours fit poorly or not at all with family and social commitments; and this is especially the case for fathers with young children. When cross-country averages are examined in the EQLS, it can be seen that the gender differences for the EU15 and NMS are below 1%.

Difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities among women and men – Proportion reporting ‘several times a week’



Question 13b: How often has each of the following happened to you during the last year? It has been difficult for me to for-fill my family responsibility because of the amount of time I spend working. Categories: Several times a week, several times a month, several times a year, less often, never. Source: EQLS 2003

N.B. CC3 = Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey

In the NMS, men perceive even more difficulties fulfilling their family responsibilities than women. The similarities between men and women in the cross-country averages are also present at national level. Only in Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom is the difference between women and men above five percentage points. However, in the United Kingdom and Cyprus, men report more difficulties than women, whereas in the other four countries women perceive more problems than men. To get a better understanding of why the gender differences are quite small despite the employment and domestic conditions for women and men being very different, it is important to underline the most influential factors: the number of weekly working hours and the extent of family care responsibilities.



There is considerable scope for implementing more flexible working time arrangements in the workplace, especially in the New Member States. Similarly, working conditions are generally worse than in the EU15 which provides another potential field of intervention. To promote a better reconciliation of work and family life, women could be given a wider scope to develop both family and career plans. In the same way, men could be given better opportunities to reduce formal working time in order to take over more family responsibilities. There is evidence that care work with dependent parents or other adults is more evenly shared between men and women even if they tend to do different tasks. This illustrates the need to enlarge the debate on work-life balance beyond child care but also to consider 'life' beyond work and care responsibilities.

#### References

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Dave Ellis

### **Death of advocate for access legal services**

It is with profound sadness that we learned of the death of Dave Ellis. He died on 2nd of February 2007 after a brief illness. He worked all his life in making law and legal services accessible to all. He had a major influence on the development of legal services in Ireland through his work as community law officer with then Coolock Community Law Centre (now Northside Community Law Centre) and subsequently with the establishment of the Community Legal Resource (a cooperative of researchers with legal and social policy expertise with community and voluntary groups). He pioneered new ways of working with the law such as public legal education and campaign for law reform and demonstrated how law might be used strategically to protect disadvantaged communities. He also pioneered working in new areas of the law such as social welfare law.

Dave Ellis worked with the Equality Authority on its advocacy training programme. In 2002, he developed a training module for the Community Advocacy Programme for the Traveller community. This sought to facilitate Traveller organisations in encouraging and supporting Travellers to enforce their legal rights under the Equal Status Acts. Since 2004, he developed and delivered the Law module of the first accredited advocacy course (distance learning), organised through IT Sligo,

Comhairle and the Equality Authority. This course targeted people with disabilities or people who are marginalised in any way, to develop advocacy skills for use in a range of settings.

He worked on the preparation of a pregnancy pack (an information pack on the rights of pregnant workers). He advised the Equality Authority on how to make some of its information leaflets more accessible. His greatest gift lay in making complex legal issues accessible and relevant to individuals and groups who traditionally or usually do not have access to legal services.

Dave was an extraordinary kind and modest man with a warm personality, great integrity and a wicked sense of humour. He touched the lives of very many people who belong to the nine discriminatory grounds. He is survived by his soul-mate Sarah with whom he found great happiness and by his mother Doris and brothers John and Brian.

By Ellis Barry

The Equality Authority in partnership with the Institute of Technology, Sligo and the Citizens Information Board offers an accredited advocacy course through distance learning. The course is a Higher Certificate in Arts in Advocacy Studies consisting of 12 modules, delivered through distance education and supplemented by a number of seminars. The course targets people with disabilities or people who are marginalised in any way. It aims to develop advocacy skills for use in a range of settings and includes a module on equality studies. Application forms and course brochure are now available for the forthcoming 2007/2008 academic year. Please contact:

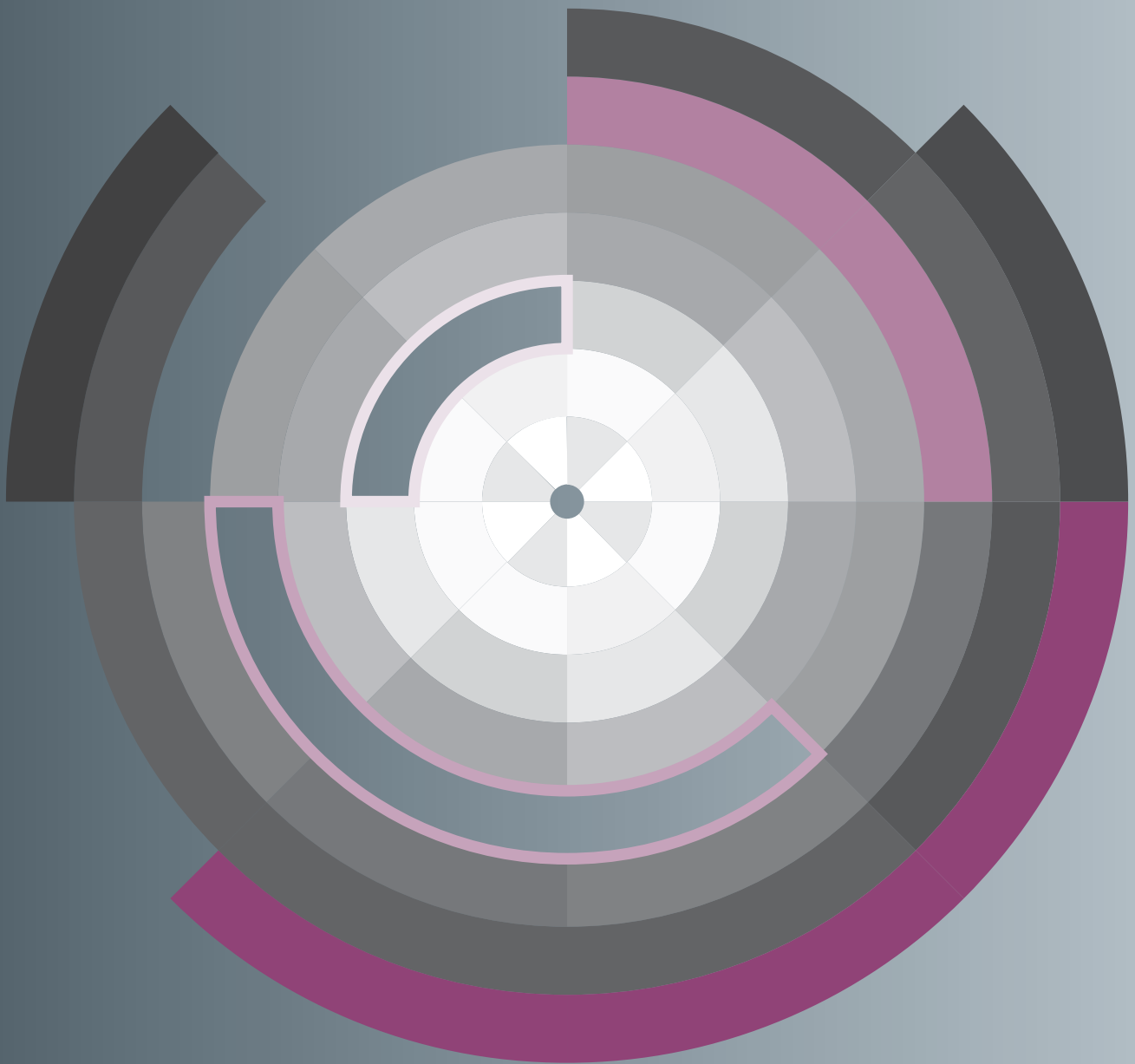
**Andrew Lang**  
Advocacy Course Administrator  
School of Business and Humanities  
Department of Humanities  
Institute of Technology Sligo

**Telephone:** 071 913 7234  
**Email:** [advocacy@itsligo.ie](mailto:advocacy@itsligo.ie)



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The **Equality Authority**, 2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2  
Ireland Public Information Centre  
**Lo Call: 1890 245 54**  
Tel: **+353 1 417 3333** Business queries: **+353 1 417 3336**  
Text Phone: **+353 1 417 3385**  
Fax: **+353 1 417 3331**  
email: [info@equality.ie](mailto:info@equality.ie) [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

Visit [www.equality.ie](http://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 and 2004 and the Equal Status Act 2000 to 2004. Information is also available on the Maternity Protection Acts 1994 and 2004, the Adoptive Leave Acts 1995 and 2005 and the Parental Leaves Acts 1998 and 2006.