Equality News

Summer 2005

- *Ageism Campaign 2005*
- *Equal Status Review*
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THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

Contents

Editorial

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

By Patrick O'Leary, Equality Authority

Welcome to the Summer 2005 edition of Equality News. As always Equality News aims to highlight a cross section of projects and practices in promoting equality, Equality Authority activities and equality issues in Ireland and abroad.

Our research series of articles includes new research commissioned by the Equality Authority and carried out by the ERSI. It shows that formal policies to promote equality of opportunity entail a wide range of benefits for both employers and employees. They are associated with lower levels of work stress, higher levels of job satisfaction and greater organisational commitment. The report entitled *'Equality At Work? - Workplace Equality, Flexible Working Arrangements and the Quality of Work'* is ground breaking in that it sets out quantitative data in support of the business case for equality strategies for the first time in the Irish context.

This edition's viewpoint comes from Frances Byrne Director of OPEN - One Parent Exchange and Network, who reports on a recent OPEN study examining indebtedness among one-parent families. According to the research

lone parents are more likely to be in debt to money lenders than mainstream financial institutions. Moreover, lone parents are more likely to be in arrears in utility payments and other household payments. To mark 'Say No to Ageism' week May 16th – 22nd Bob Carroll, Director of the National Council on Ageing and Older People gives us an insight into his perspective on an age friendly society. Our regular european briefing reports on the recent published Community Strategic Guidelines, which gives an indication of the themes that will be the focus of future structural funds.

Sally Anne Kinahan, Assistant General Secretary of ICTU and Equality Authority Board Member reports on initiatives undertaken within the trade union movement to promote women in senior officer or leadership roles. Trade unions are no different from any other organisation in terms of the lack of women in decision making positions. Congress have developed a set of action plans to achieve gender equality in all aspects of the work of the trade union movement. This should ultimately place the movement in a better position to tackle the persistent problem of gender equality in Irish workplaces.

The health sector is a priority arena in the current strategic plan of the Equality Authority. We hear from Caoimhe Gleeson Equality officer of the Health Services Executive - North Western Area (HSE - NWA) on an equal status review that was conducted to examine the extent to which the HSE - NWA is accommodating diversity and making provisions for equality in key areas of service provision.

Currently, the Small Firms Association is running a training programme on diversity management. Patrica Callan, Assistant Director, reflects on the importance of diversity management. Diversity Management plays an essential role in tackling skills shortages, helping organisations retain knowledge and experience, widening the recruitment base, attracting more customers and enhancing profits. This article concludes that diversity management is in effect about good management. The article opens up a debate on the focus on diversity rather than equal opportunities within a strategic approach to management. This is a debate that we will return to and further explore in future issues of Equality News

Equality in education and training is another important focus for the work of the Equality Authority. Lifelong learning enables learners to take learning opportunities at chosen stages throughout their lives and to receive recognition for learning achievements. This is a vision set out in the National Framework of Qualifications established by the National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI). In this issue, both Bob Toal of the Further Education and Training Awards Council and Edwin Mernagh of the NQAI indicate how arrangements with all providers of programmes of education and training, incorporate the principles of equality. These arrangements reflect a new and important stimulus for equality within this key sector.

European

Briefing

By Brian Harvey

A new approach in the structural funds: Community Strategic Guidelines

Equality, disability, ethnicity and discrimination feature among eleven themes set out in the Community Strategic Guidelines. These guidelines relate to the new way that the European Union plans to run the next round of the structural funds. For the new round, which runs from 2007-2013, there will be much less supervision and involvement by the Commission - but in return, Member States are expected to follow a number of common themes, set down in strategic guidelines.

The Commission published the Community Strategic Guidelines this summer and they go this autumn to the Council and

Parliament for approval. An early draft was the subject of discussions between the Commission and national governments in April 2005. In most countries, these bilateral meetings involved not only finance ministries but also social affairs ministries.

The Community Strategic Guidelines set out common themes that are expected to be reflected in each country's national development plan. Each country will present a 'national strategic reference framework' and this is expected to incorporate the themes of the Community Strategic Guidelines.

For the new round, which runs from 2007-2013, there will be much less supervision and involvement by the Commission.

So do these guidelines incorporate equality issues?
There are the eleven themes in the Community Strategic Guidelines (panel 1).

The theme of transport has a strong emphasis on public transport and rail services, rather than roads development. This theme speaks of the importance of 'providing for accessibility to common

public transport services for certain target groups (elderly people, disabled persons)' (#51). The theme 'increase and improve investment in research and development' proposes that support should be available for entrepreneurship by young people, women, older workers and those from minority ethnic communities (#89).

The theme that most addresses equality issues is theme IX: Attract and retain more people in employment and modernize social protection systems.

The theme that most addresses equality issues is theme IX: Attract and retain more people in employment and modernize social protection systems. This guideline encourages member states to set down:

'Actions to increase sustainable participation of women in employment, through female training and entrepreneurship. This requires action to reduce gender segregation in occupations and sectors and address the causes of gender pay gaps and gender stereotyping. It is necessary to mainstream gender considerations in policies and measures at all levels and to strengthen the enforcement of anti-discrimination rules, including through awareness-raising campaigns and greater dialogue among the stakeholders. Action should also focus on promoting more family-friendly business environment and the reconciliation of professional and private life, including by facilitating access to childcare and care services for dependant persons' (#112).

Article #113 goes on to state the importance of social inclusion for people at a disadvantage, such as 'minorities and people with disabilities and to combat discrimination'. This includes:

'Building pathways to integration in employment for people at risk of social exclusion. Interventions should aim to improve the employability of disadvantaged people by providing better access to

vocational education and training, accompanied by the necessary social support and care services, including the development of the social economy. Particular effort is needed to ensure the reintegration of long-term unemployed people and people excluded from the labour market, as well as to promote access to employment for disabled people, for instance through vocational rehabilitation, appropriate incentives and working arrangements.'
and;
'Combating discrimination and promoting the acceptance of diversity in the workplace. Actions in this field may also include diversity training and awareness-raising campaigns in which local communities and enterprises should also be involved.'

These sections build on the draft European Social Fund regulation for 2007-2013, in recognizing the role of the structural funds in supporting diversity and non-discrimination and assisting specific groups such as people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

Finally, the role of the EQUAL programme is recognized. EQUAL has been important in funding actions for equality over 2000-6 and its disappearance in the next round of the structural funds was the subject of strong adverse criticism by non-governmental organizations. Article #148 identifies that the EQUAL programme for an inclusive society is mainstreamed across all actions to further build on partnership, empowerment, innovation and transnational cooperation to allow member states to share good practices.

So what does all this add up to?
Assuming these guidelines are approved by the Council and Parliament, it means that any Irish National Development Plan or Strategic Reference Framework will reflect the guidelines and include explicit provisions for:

• Older and disabled persons in transport;

• Women, older workers and minority; ethnic communities in entrepreneurship;

• Women in employment;

• Mainstreaming gender issues in policies and measures;

• Childcare, care services and family friendly work environment;

• Pathways to integration for disadvantaged people;

• Diversity and anti-discrimination;

• Social inclusion, for minorities and persons with a disability; and

• The learning from EQUAL.

Update

By Niall Crowley, Chief Executive Officer, Equality Authority

Disability Bill

The Disability Bill is continuing its passage through the Dail. Amendments currently proposed remain inadequate to addressing deficiencies identified in the Bill. These deficiencies include issues in relation to the narrow definition of people with disabilities, the failure to ring fence resources for service provision to people and the complexity of complaint procedures.

The Equality Authority has expressed a concern that the Disability Bill could diminish some of the obligations in the equality legislation in relation to the disability ground. The Equality Authority proposed an amendment that sought to ensure that nothing in the new Bill would diminish protections and rights already accorded to people with disabilities under the equality legislation. There has been no positive response to this proposal.

Gender Equality Series

The Equality Authority is working with RTE on a series of programmes on gender equality. "Gender – A Series Examining Inequalities between the Sexes" will run for six weeks every Monday from Monday 30th May at 8.00pm. The series will explore gender equality issues in the workplace, in caring, in decision making and in the cultural domain. It will include a focus on current initiatives to promote gender equality and on the further steps that are necessary in this regard. The programmes are being produced in the context of the CSO report on Women and Men in Ireland 2004 which highlights persistent and significant inequalities experienced by women. The preparation by Government of a National Strategy for Women provides another important context for this series of programmes.

Business Case for Equality

"Equality at Work?" was recently launched by the Equality Authority. This research was commissioned from the ESRI and based on previous survey work they had carried out for the National Centre on Partnership and Performance. The research is ground breaking in providing quantitative data to support a business case for equality strategies.

Positive link between equality policies in the workplace and enhanced employee well-being and job satisfaction.

The research identifies a positive link between equality policies in the workplace and enhanced employee well being and job satisfaction. Enhanced employee well being and job satisfaction are known to contribute to organisational performance. Equality policies are the bedrock for planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality. The research establishes a business case for this planned and systematic approach to workplace equality. This is an approach which is being actively promoted and supported by the Equality Authority, IBEC and Congress through the Framework Committee for Equal Opportunities at the level of the Enterprise.

Health and Education

The Equality Authority is developing new initiatives in both the health sector and the education sector.

The Equality Authority is developing initiatives within the health sector to test out and evolve the systems required for equality competent health service provision. Projects are being developed with the Health Services Executive to explore stakeholder participation that includes people and organisations from across the nine grounds and to implement an equality impact assessment. Last year an equal status review was supported by the Equality Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the North Western Health Board across five different areas of service provision. A new project will involve an equal status review within a hospital setting.

The Equality Authority is working with the education sector to build new supports for the development of inclusive schools. Projects are being developed to test out an equality dimension in whole school evaluation, to apply an equal status review within a small number of schools and to develop a resource for the inclusion of an equality focus within school development planning.

A new project will involve an equal status review within a hospital setting.

Equality Proofing

The Equality Authority continues to prioritise support for the development of equality proofing of key policy developments. This reflects the commitment in the Sustaining Progress national agreement to develop a programme of voluntary equality proofing across Government Departments.

The current focus for the work on equality proofing is the national employment action plan. This year, for the first time, the EU require a plan the responds not only to the employment guidelines but also to the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines. This is to reflect a streamlined EU approach to the challenge of job creation and economic growth. It means that this year's action plan will have a broad focus and a particular importance.

The Equality Authority is working to develop resource materials to support an effective equality proofing of the action plan. Initiatives are also being developed to support Non Governmental Organisation participation within the equality proofing process.

Ageism

"Say No To Ageism" week took place from May 16th to May 22nd. This is a joint venture of the Equality Authority, the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Health Services Executive. This year the week had a particular focus on combating ageism in the provision of goods and services. Guidance on this was published entitled, "Towards Age Friendly Provision of Goods and Services".

The three organisations hosted a national conference in Tullamore as part of the week. This included a focus on the

Say No to Ageism Week took place from May 16th - May 22nd

Equality Authority report on 'Implementing Equality for Older People'. A review of key recommendations in the report identified a disturbing absence of progress on their implementation despite a broad social partner consensus behind the recommendations which was established by the National Economic and Social Forum.

Strategic Plan
The Equality Authority continues to work on the development of its Strategic plan for 2006 to 2008. A number of valuable submissions have been made. A review of work under the current strategic plan has been commissioned. This will involve particular emphasis on stakeholder feedback on progress made under the current strategic plan. Consultation meetings on the strategic plan are being held in Dundalk (May 25th), Wexford (May 31st) and Galway (June 15th). We are grateful to all those who have given their ideas. There is still time to contribute further ideas as submissions continue to be accepted.

Niall Crowley

Building Equality into Nursing / Midwifery Practice

This well attended conference was organised in Sligo on March 10th 2005, by the H.S.E North Western Area and the Equality Authority.


Participants at the conference included practising nurses and midwifes, nurse tutors and students, medical practice staff, health policy makers and patient groups. Presentations explored key issues and challenges in promoting equality within nursing/midwifery practice, equality competence in nursing/midwifery practice, the equal status review carried out in HSE-NWA and good practice in building equality into health service delivery.

Workshops discussed advancing equality for women in nursing/midwifery practice, person/patient centred practice, meeting the needs of diverse staff members, user involvement and the role of advocacy in planning and redesign of health services, meeting the diverse needs of clients and building equality into undergraduate and professional nursing/midwifery development education.

It is proposed to publish the conference papers.

Philip J. O'Connell & Helen Russell

Equality at Work?
Workplace Equality Policies, Flexible Working Arrangements and the Quality of Work. Equality Authority:2005
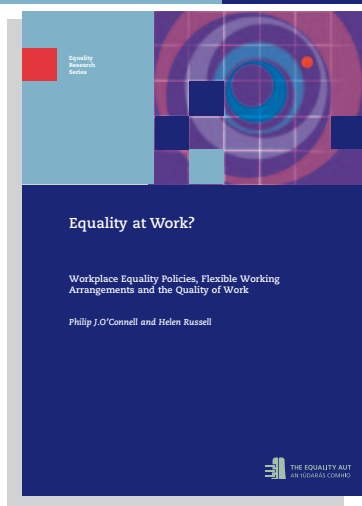
A new study carried out by the ESRI for the Equality Authority shows that formal policies to promote equality of opportunity entail a wide range of benefits for both employees and employers. They are associated with lower levels of work stress, higher levels of job satisfaction and greater organisational commitment.

The study comes at a time when the diversity of the workforce in Ireland is growing. Rapid economic growth in recent years was accompanied by a surge in the number of women in employment, as well as by an increase in inward migration. The working population has also begun to age and there has been a growing recognition of the employment aspirations of people with disabilities and other under-represented or marginalised groups. At the same time the surge in women's employment has been accompanied by changes in the relationship between work and family. Accommodating diversity, promoting equality in the work-place, and promoting greater balance between working and family life thus represent substantial challenges now and in the future.

The study draws on a national representative survey of over 5000 employees in Ireland to find out how workplaces in Ireland have responded to these challenges. It examines the extent of adoption of formal policies to promote equality in the workplace as well as working arrangements that support work-life balance. The report then looks at the impact of equality policies and flexible working arrangements on workers' well being, on their attitudes to their jobs and employers, and on job quality.

Key Findings
Equality policies:
- About three quarters of all employees work in organisations where there is a formal explicit policy on equal opportunities. Equality policies are much more common in the public sector and in large organisations.

- Employees who work in organisations with 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, even when other relevant factors are taken into account.

At the launch of
Equality at Work?

- The presence of a formal policy on equality in the workplace is strongly associated with lower levels of work stress, even when controling for other relevant factors.

- The presence of a formal policy on equality in the workplace is strongly associated with higher levels of both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Research elsewhere has established that high levels of employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment have positive impacts on organisational performance. To the extent that they have these effects, equality policies are also likely to have a positive impact on organisational performance and hence be of benefit to employers.

- The presence of a formal equality policy is also associated with flexible working arrangements, so workers who work in organisations that have implemented equality policies are also more likely to be able to avail of flexibility in the place or time of work.

Flexible Working Arrangements
The study looks at four different examples of flexible working arrangements: Part-time working, flexible hours, working from home and job-sharing. Almost one in four

employees is involved in flexible working and one in five work part-time. However just 8.4% of employees are involved in home working and only 6.5% job-share.

Research elsewhere has established that high levels of employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment have positive impacts on organisational performance.

Flexible working arrangements have mixed effects.

- Part-time working is associated with lower stress and work pressure. However, part-time working is also associated with lower earnings and autonomy, largely because of the nature of occupations and economic sectors in which part-time working is prevalent.

- Working flexible hours or flexi-time is also associated with lower levels of work pressure, but not stress, and those who work flexible hours are more likely to report higher levels of autonomy in their jobs.

Philip J. O'Connell, ESRI, speaking at the launch of *Equality at Work*

- Employees who work from home experience significantly higher levels of stress and greater work pressure compared to workers with similar jobs and working conditions who do not work at home. They also earn more, on average, and report higher levels of autonomy.

- Job-sharing entails some increase in work pressure for non-job-sharing co-workers and is associated with lower levels of autonomy at work. It is also associated with greater stress among male job-sharers, although it should be emphasised that this effect relates to a small number of men.

One of the implications of the study, then, is that not all flexible working arrangements promote work-life balance.

Conclusion

The study highlights a complex situation in relation to flexible working arrangements. Flexibility in working-time is reasonably common, working from home is less common, and job-sharing is unusual and mainly confined to the public sector. The impact of flexibility in working time is generally positive in terms of lower levels of work pressure and stress, but flexible working does entail trade-offs: part-time workers tend to earn less, and those who work from home tend to experience higher levels of pressure and stress.

The study concludes that equality policies are widespread in Irish workplaces and that they entail benefits for employees. To the extent that they have these effects, then, equality policies are also likely to have a positive impact on organisational perfomance and hence be of benefit to employers.

Philip J. O'Connell and Helen Russell, ESRI, authors of *Equality at Work?*

Quality Assurance for Providers of Further Education and Training programmes

By Bob Toal, Further Education and Training Awards Council

FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, was established in June 2001 by the Minister of Education and Science as part of the implementation of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. Its mission is to make quality assured awards in accordance with national standards within the National Framework of Qualifications, creating opportunities for all learners in further education and training to have their achievements recognised and providing access for learners to systematic progression pathways.

Context - Quality Assurance

FETAC, as part of its role, must agree quality assurance arrangements with all providers of programmes of education and training that lead to FETAC awards. Such providers cover a very wide spectrum in Ireland. They include public sector, community and voluntary sector and the private sector.

> *As part of its role FETAC must agree quality assurance arrangements with all providers of programmes of education and training that lead to FETAC awards.*

Within each sector there is also wide diversity in the scale of provider, the range of programmes offered and the learners whose needs these programmes are designed to meet.

In seeking to agree quality assurance arrangements with these providers, FETAC recognised that their policy should accommodate this diversity but should also build a level of consistency which will
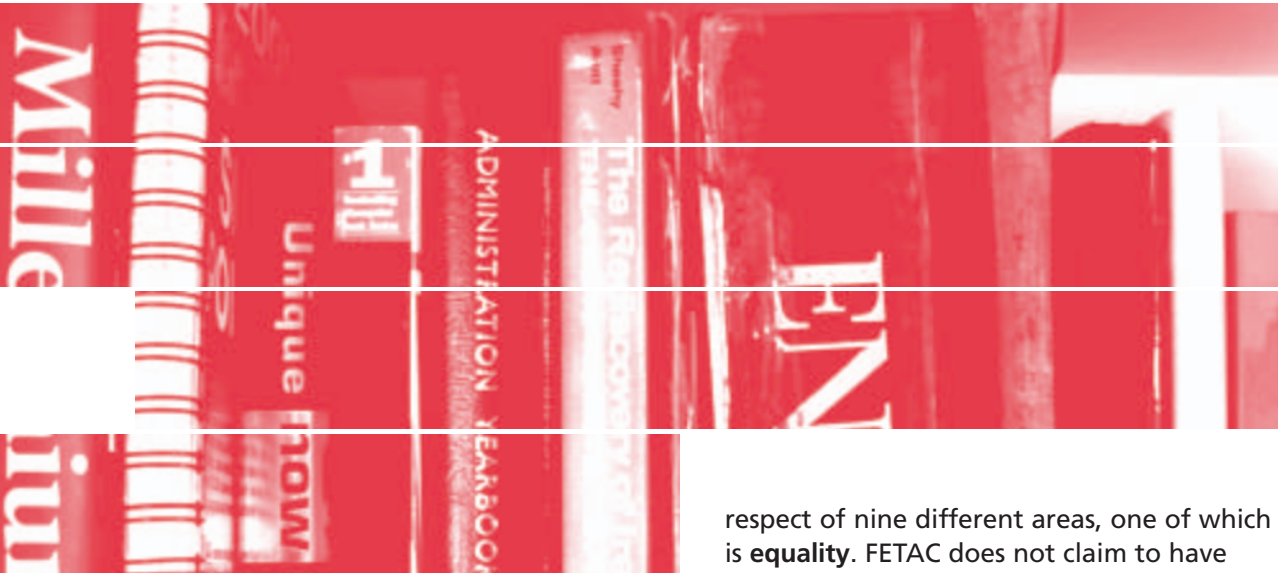
engender trust between the different providers and between providers and their learners.

In building this model, FETAC applied the principle of partnership adopted as one of its core values. FETAC conducted a consultation process over a period of two years involving provider representatives, learner representatives and other bodies with an interest in the quality of further education and training in Ireland. This consultation sought to take from existing national and international good practice in respect of the quality assurance of further education and training. In this regard, equality was identified early on, by providers themselves and others, as an element of provision which needed to be included in any future model. The process mirrors how equality issues have come to the fore in society in general over recent years.

Quality Assurance Guidelines
The product of the FETAC's consultation process is a set of guidelines for providers, designed to assist them to develop and implement quality assurance systems which will maintain and improve the quality of their programmes. Each provider is required to clarify their policies and procedures in

respect of nine different areas, one of which is **equality**. FETAC does not claim to have particular expertise or responsibility in this area and the Equality Authority provided very valuable assistance in developing the guidelines for this area. After quite an amount of drafting, consultation and revision the guidelines were agreed and published as part of FETAC's policy on Provider Quality Assurance in June 2004.

Each provider is required to clarify their policies and procedures in respect of nine different areas, one of which is Equality.

What providers are asked to do in the **equality** area is as follows:

• Develop and document an equality policy expressing its commitment to equality in employment and service provision and anti harassment; and

• Develop and document procedures to ensure that training on equality issues is available for staff and that a plan is produced to realise equality objectives based on an audit of current provision with respect to equality.

The implementation and monitoring of this policy, while challenging for providers, will assist in the achievement of the aims of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act in respect of learner access, transfer and progression within the National Framework of Qualifications. Those who are interested in this area should consult the publication of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland entitled *Policies, Actions and Procedures for the Promotion and Facilitation of Access, Transfer and Progression* which is available to download from www.nqai.ie/atppap.doc

Implementation
From January 2005, all providers who want to register with FETAC for the first time must agree their quality assurance procedures with FETAC. Those providers already offering FETAC awards must apply for agreement of their quality assurance procedures with FETAC by the end of December 2006. Hence by 2007 all providers offering FETAC awards in Ireland should have developed equality policies and procedures which have been evaluated and agreed by FETAC.

As in all quality systems, the effectiveness of these policies in achieving the end result is critical. The entire process will be monitored by the providers themselves through learner and staff feedback and by FETAC.

Conclusion
The broad further education and training sector is a series of communities of learning and reflects the change that has come to Irish society over the past number of years and all involved must meet the challenges that come with that change. Providers of programmes have to accommodate the needs of our increasingly diverse population and must do so in a planned and considered manner. It is with the intention of assisting this development that FETAC has included **equality** within its quality assurance model. It is hoped that it will assist the development of the sector and facilitate the arrival of lifelong learning for all.

Further Reading
National Framework of Qualifications
www.nqai.ie ; www.nfq.ie
FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council
www.fetac.ie
Quality Assurance in Further Education and Training: Guidelines for Providers
www.fetac.ie/qa

Equal access to Qualifications

By Edwin Mernagh, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Changes taking place will help to make qualifications accessible to all citizens.

A far-reaching process of change has been taking place in the systems of qualifications in Ireland since the passing of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act in 1999. Some aspects of the change process are already apparent to many citizens: for example, the two new awards Councils established in 2001 are familiar as FETAC and HETAC, and their new awards are in use in schools, colleges, institutes and training centres all over Ireland.

Why change the system?
The need for a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications arises in the main from an extremely 'equality-based' national objective, of moving towards a 'lifelong learning society' in which learners may avail of learning opportunities at various stages throughout their lives.

The requirement is to have a single, coherent, easily understood award system for all levels of education and training in Ireland. This will benefit everyone involved in the learning process - learners, parents, teachers, programme providers. It will also significantly benefit employers, as it will provide a way of measuring and relating learning achievements and comparing education and training awards.

A single structure for all awards helps to eliminate the artificial distinction that is often made between education and training. It also helps to bring Irish systems into alignment with international developments.

> *The central element in the reform is the development of a National Framework of Qualifications, a structure of levels allowing qualifications to be compared easily.*
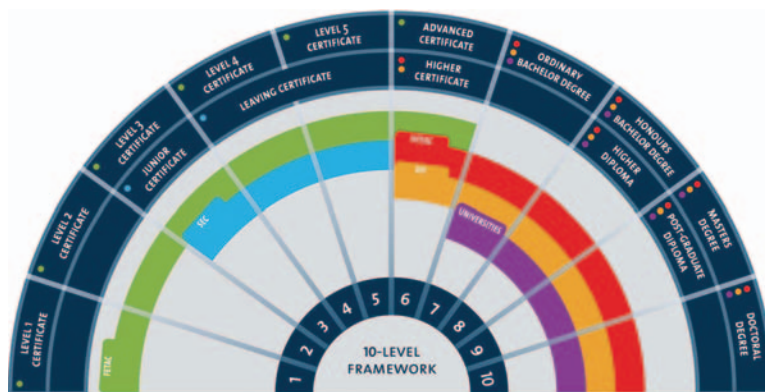
What is happening?
The central element in the reform is the development of a National Framework of Qualifications, a structure of levels allowing qualifications to be compared easily. This has been the main work of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland since its establishment. The launch of the Framework in October 2003 marked a key stage in a change process which will eventually lead to a new qualifications system, with many new awards. Since the 2003 launch, the process of implementing the Framework has proceeded quickly. New awards have been in use throughout higher education and training since the autumn of 2004 and the introduction of a new FETAC system of awards is imminent.

The Framework is a structure of ten levels. For each level, standards of knowledge, skill and competence have been set out, defining the outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking to gain awards. This introduces a new approach to the meaning of an award, that an award recognises learning outcomes - what a person with an award knows, can do and understands - rather than time spent on a programme.

The ten levels accommodate awards gained in schools, the workplace, the community, training centres, colleges and universities, from the most basic to the most advanced levels of learning. All learning can thus be recognised, including that achieved through experience in the workplace or other non-formal settings.

Many existing awards will no longer be made as the Framework is implemented. Also, many learners hold Irish awards that were part of former systems and have already ceased to be made. It is possible to map most of these existing and former awards onto the new Framework, so that learners holding such awards are not disadvantaged. The task of working out the placement of such awards is already well advanced. Further information on placement can be found at **www.nqai.ie**, at **www.fetac.ie** and at **www.hetac.ie** .

> *As well as establishing the Framework, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland is committed to maximising learner mobility.*

A new era of mobility for learners

As well as establishing the Framework, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland is committed to maximising learner mobility. A strategy is being put into action to improve opportunities for 'access, transfer and progression' for all learners. This strategy is set out in detail in *Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (see www.nqai.ie)*. It has been developed in the context of national policy in relation to equality, with particular regard to the relevant provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Employment Equality Act 1998. The principles underpinning the mobility strategy include a determination that *"the issues of access, transfer and progression should be addressed for all learners, but particularly for those learners who have in the past had limited access to education and training awards - those with limited levels of basic education, mature learners, older learners, learners who are unemployed or not in the labour force, workers in unskilled or low-skilled occupations, people with disabilities, those living in remote or isolated locations, members of the Traveller community or minority ethnic groups, and refugees"*.

Saying No to Ageism

By Bob Carroll, Director, National Council on Ageing and Older People

Extent of the Problem

The *Say No to Ageism* public awareness campaign, jointly organised by the Equality Authority, the Health Services Executive and the National Council on Ageing and Older People seeks to draw public attention to the existence of ageism in our society and to identify ways to address and overcome it. This is no mean task because ageism is an endemic, cultural problem incorporating

- negative attitudes to ageing leading to prejudice against older people;

- negative understanding of ageing leading to stereotyping of older people; and

- negative treatment of older people, including discrimination against them on the grounds of age.

Ageism promotes the idea that older people are a burden and this can lead to neglect and social exclusion. It can also diminish older peoples self-esteem, reduce their participation in society and restrict the types and quality of services available to them. Ageism negatively effects our thinking and feeling about older people, and our behaviour towards them. As we grow older it negatively effects our views about ourselves and how we adapt to advancing years. Ageism is therefore an endemic and pervasive problem which has profound effects on relationships between older people and society, and on the identity of older people themselves.

> *Research indicates that attitudes to older people in this country are overwhelmingly positive, despite some differences in the strength of the attitudes according to age group.*

L to R: Brian Merriman, Equality Authority, Carol Fawsitt, Equality Authority Board and Noel Ward, INTO

framework? Or is it that certain services, on which older people are particularly reliant, such as health and social care services, are perceived to be particularly problematic? Or is it simply that, despite positive attitudes towards older people, other priorities take precedence in the expression of political preferences at election time?

The Council has just published a study, Perceptions on Ageism in Health and Social Services in Ireland in which older people describe their perceptions of ageism in health and social services.

Ageism and Attitudes to Older People in Ireland: A Paradox

Research indicates that attitudes to older people in this country are overwhelmingly positive, despite some differences in the strength of the attitudes according to age group. Yet, despite these positive attitudes, the research found that there is an overwhelming perception that older people are treated less favourably because of their age and the State does not do enough for older people.

The explanation for this anomaly is not entirely clear, as admitted by the presenters of research findings at the conference *From Ageism to Age Equality: Addressing the Challenges,* organised jointly by the National Council on Ageing and Older People, the Equality Authority and the Health Boards Executive 4th October 2004. Why is it that services for older people have a low priority in the public policy

Perceptions of Ageism in Health and Social Services in Ireland

For its part, the National Council on Ageing and Older People (NCAOP) has long been concerned that negative attitudes towards old age may have a negative impact on the participation of older people in society, on security in old age and on health and social care services for those older people in need of them.

The NCAOP has just published a study, *Perceptions on Ageism in Health and Social Services in Ireland* in which older people describe their perceptions of ageism in health and social services. For the purposes of the study, health and social service providers were also consulted to determine whether they felt that ageist practices existed within health and social care services at organisational or individual levels.

Though it was beyond the scope of the study to ascertain the exact scale of ageism encountered by older people in Irish health and social services, the research provides evidence of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices experienced by older people or witnessed by health and social care providers. For example, participants (health and social service providers in particular) reported upper age limits for interventions, which directly

L to R: Cllr Éibhlin Byrne, Chairperson of the National Council on Ageing and Older People, Regina Buckley of the Health Service Executive and Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority

> *The research provides evidence of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices experienced by older people*

exclude older people. They also identifed examples of prejudicial attitudes among health and social service providers, for example, as manifested by the operation of implicit age limits for certain services and a lack of referrals of older people to specialist services, screenings and preventative health care programmes. The research also provided examples of policies and practices within the health services that also indirectly exclude older people, by offering care in such a way that older age groups are disproportionately affected in a negative manner.

Saying No to Ageism

No doubt there are as many ways of saying 'no' to ageism as there are manifestations of prejudice against older people, stereotyping of them and discrimination against them on the grounds of age.

However, taking a systematic approach, the NCAOP advocates that the first step in combating ageism is to acknowledge its existence in society and to identify where it exists in particular. All public authorities should be alert to the possible existence of ageism in their areas of responsibility and they should provide leadership in identifying and eliminating it. The NCAOP recommends, for example, that, following the lead of the UK Department of Health which established "Rooting out Age Discrimination" as its first priority in its National Service Framework for Older

People, our health authorities should do likewise. Future national policy statements and strategic plans relating to health and social care for older people should publicly acknowledge the importance of eradicating ageism in health and social services.

Saying 'no' to ageism means saying 'yes' to an age-friendly society

Eradicating ageism in Irish society means not equating age with dependence; it means rejecting inappropriate models of old age, whether the 'deficit' model or the 'heroic' model. However, eradicating ageism is also more than saying 'no' to ageism. It is also about creating a new more positive vision of ageing and older people in Ireland. The National Council on Ageing and Older People believes that unless we understand better and engage with the issues of ageing and those faced by older people we will not create – or eventually enjoy – what it terms 'an age friendly society'. Saying 'no' to ageism means saying 'yes' to an age friendly society, and working together at all levels and in all areas to create it.

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Equal Status Review 2004

HSE - North Western Area

By Caoimhe Gleeson, HSE - NWA

The HSE - North Western Area (formerly North Western Health Board) undertook an Equal Status Review of a number of services provided by the HSE - NWA in 2004 with the support of the Equality Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The purpose of the review was to examine the extent to which the HSE - NWA is accommodating diversity and making provisions for equality in its services. It did this by reviewing current service provision, policy, procedure and practice from the perspective of the provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000 and the nine grounds covered by the Act, and from the perspective of organisational objectives developed to promote equality and accommodate diversity. It also explored perceptions among service providers in relation to the nine grounds and in relation to equality issues. It included both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and involved dialogue with clients and their organizations from across the nine grounds.

It was a pilot project and was the first project of its nature to be implemented. The findings of the review will be used to develop a national template which can be used by other Health Service employers, public agencies and organizations wishing to undertake a review of their services. The review was undertaken by Dr. Jane Pillinger, an independent researcher and policy advisor. The HSE - NWA provides health and social services in Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and West Cavan. In view of the size of the geographical area and dispersed nature of services provided, five specific services were chosen for the review.

> *The H.S.E. NWA provides health and social services in Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal and West Cavan.*

These services had the highest number of General Medical Service clients and the most diverse client base which was a key factor for the review. The services selected were:

- **Mental Health Services**

- **Accident and Emergency Services**

- **Maternity Services**

- **Community Welfare Services**

- **General Practice Services**

The review highlighted developments that have taken place in recent years which support the development of an equality competent health service. In particular the review noted that the creation of the post of equality officer in 2001 has facilitated and advanced the development of an equality infrastructure within the HSE - NWA. This post has led to key

> *The review highlighted developments that have taken place in recent years which support the development of an equality competent health service.*

developments in the areas of equality policy, training, the provision of equality related tools and a heightened awareness of equality issues within the organisation. The review also noted that key developments in other areas such as consumer panels, advocacy networks for older people and mental health service users, the continued development and support of statutory and interagency consultative committees in areas such as Traveller Health, Disability

and Health Promotion have all significantly contributed to developing an equality competent health service in the North West.

The review identified key areas of potential risk which need to be addressed to ensure equality outcomes for all service users across all nine equality grounds. Areas of risk included:

• **Provision of translation services:**
  While the review gave examples of some provision of translation services to asylum seekers and refugees, it highlighted that the absence of a co-ordinated corporate and national strategy on the provision of translation services for all non-English speaking service users remained an area of risk for both clients and service providers. This is particularly true for migrant workers, who are the largest non-English speaking cohort.

• **Provision of appropriate cultural competence training:** The review highlighted the immediate need for the provision of appropriate cultural competence training throughout the services which addresses issues relating to cultural norms- particularly birth and death customs, diet, religion, language and other associated customs of relevance in a health setting. The
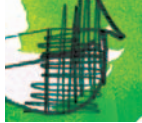
absence of such training may lead to inappropriate service provision for certain client groups. Furthermore it may result in poor uptake of that service and thus greater health risk for the client group.

- **Awareness of specific health needs of certain groups:** The review highlighted the need to consider particular health needs of certain groups such as Travellers, lesbian and gay people, refugees and asylum seekers, mental health service users and older people with disabilities. Failure to take cognisance of particular health needs of certain groups may result in lower uptake of a service, potential misdiagnosis and poorer health outcomes.

- **Accessibility:** Lack of accessible information and facilities was a central issue in the review. This issue applied across all nine grounds. Information was often inaccessible in both the language and format used. While some buildings had degrees of physical accessibility, all facilities stopped short of being fully accessible, thus militating against equality outcomes for people with disabilities.

A number of recommendations have been identified in order to develop the equality competence of the organisation and to reduce any potential discriminatory risks. These recommendations are as follows:

- Make equality a corporate and strategic objective.

- Develop a 5 year strategic plan for equality.

- Mainstream equality into service planning.

- Improve reasonable accommodation (particularly in relation to access and information).

- Enhance/develop participation/ user consultation methods to ensure services are appropriate or can be adapted to different client groups across the nine equality grounds.

- Develop methods to record data on the nine grounds- particularly in relation to ethnicity.

- Develop cultural competency training programmes for staff which focus on culture, religion, diet and relevant health related traditions and practices.

- Link equality with Customer Service Training for front line staff.

- Enhance the provision of accessible information (translation/interpretation/ other forms of literature). In particular enhance the provision of sign language; health related videos, written nformation for deaf service users, develop literacy friendly health materials.

> *The review emphasises that it is essential that such developments are supported so that the risks identified through the review can be systematically overcome.*

The Equal Status Review has identified key challenges which need to be addressed in the HSE - NWA in order to become an equality competent health service provider. However, the review also acknowledged that the organisation has the potential to overcome the many challenges it faces in addressing equality and diversity issues. There are strong foundations in place from which to further develop its capacity to address these issues. The review emphasises that it is essential that such developments are supported so that the risks identified through the review can be systematically overcome. Changing times bring both opportunities and challenges. Overcoming the challenges of achieving equality competent health services would allow the many ortunities presented by change to be availed of equally by all.

Planned Systematic Approaches to Delivering Equality in the Workplace

A symposium entitled '*Planned and Systematic Approaches to Delivering Equality in the Workplace*' will take place on 30th June 2005.

It is hosted by the National Framework Committee for Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise. This Committee includes IBEC, Congreee and the Equality Authority and operates under the Sustaining Progress national agreement. The symposium will take place at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

This symposium aims to:
• Stimulate new thinking on good practice in promoting full equality in practice in the workplace;

• Provide guidance on implementing planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality; and

• Provide information on resources that are available to support good practice in promoting workplace equality.

Participation in the conference will include employers, trade unionists, human resources personnel, managers and equality officers.

If you would like to attend this conference or require a copy of the conference brochure please contact Amanda Mc Crudden at 01 4173362 or email amcrudden@equality.ie.

VIEWPOINT:
Lone Parents and Debt

**By Frances Byrne, Director of OPEN –
One Parent Exchange & Network**

If you were absolutely broke and someone offered you a loan of €15,000 over the phone would you be tempted? This is a situation described by one of the participants in OPEN's latest research on lone parents in Ireland.

In order to more fully examine indebtedness among one-parent families, OPEN, with support from the Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS) and the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, commissioned a study. The research was carried out between September 2004 and February 2005 in the east of the country. It comprised surveys of MABS files as well as focus groups with lone parents.

"Do the Poor Pay More?" reveals an interesting picture. Its findings reinforce the life experiences of lone parents in OPEN's member groups across Ireland.

- The myth of poor money management is banished, not only by focus groups of lone parents but by the survey of MABS files.

- More than half of the lone parents in debt had weekly incomes of €100 to €200 at a time when the average industrial wage stood at €562.21 per week.

- Lone parents are more likely to be in debt to money lenders and other home collection credit providers than mainstream financial institutions; and more likely to be in arrears in utility payments and in other household payments.

- Lone parents pay more for their debt as users of high interest credit options.

- The most regular route to lone parenthood, i.e. when a household broke up, or the arrival of a baby, were common triggers for going into debt.

The E.U. Survey of Living Conditions also found earlier this year that 31% of one-parent families experience debt in order to pay for every day living expenses, such as household bills.

To address the serious issues highlighted in "Do the Poor Pay More?", OPEN is making a series of recommendations. These are aimed at various Government Departments & agencies, and financial institutions that together hold the power to change the situation of those at risk of falling into debt in Ireland.

It's not all bad news, there is evidence that the local authorities in Dublin have developed a reasonable and graduated debt settlement system which is to be commended and could

be similarly developed by others. Also the free and confidential services provided by the 65 local MABS offices means that badly needed professional assistance and advice is available for those experiencing debt.

The "Do the Poor Pay More?" study demonstrates that there is a two-tiered credit system in Ireland. There are 150,000 people in Ireland using home collection credit and they should be a priority customer base for a basic banking system. Financial institutions could introduce such a system as an act of corporate social responsibility.

On the one hand, people in poverty are unbanked, often because they have been refused access to financial services, yet they may still be victims of predatory lending practices by the same institutions who have refused them services to begin with: for example, the mother mentioned as the start of this piece, whose only income was child benefit and yet she was offered a loan of €15,000 over the telephone. Personal responsibility is of course an issue and all consumers, including those in poverty must exercise restraint. However, financial institutions have a duty to be ethical in their practices. The upcoming Consumer Code from the Financial Regulator (IFSRA) should ban any such predatory practices.

Illegal money lending continues in disadvantaged communities.

The Financial Regulator (IFSRA) needs to further examine the practices of money lenders. Illegal money lending continues in disadvantaged communities. It is often difficult for consumers to distinguish between legal and illegal lenders as their

practices are similar. There is a need for balance between the genuine needs of those living on low incomes who will need access to small loans and the necessity to offer such consumers similar protection to the protections that are available to those who have access to mainstream banking and lending. The research being undertaken on access to financial services by the Financial Regulator and the Combat Poverty Agency will, we hope, tackle this important area.

A number of Government Departments can respond to findings in the study. The Department of Social & Family Affairs provides lone parents and others living in poverty with income supports which are found to be inadequate. The Department should also examine the relationship between its clients and large public utility bodies in light of the way arrears are managed by those bodies. As arrears to utility companies are a common feature of indebtedness identified in the study, ESB, Bord Gáis and others need to develop new arrangements for dealing with arrears and there may be a role for the Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs in this regard.

The Department of Educations & Science should again formally advise schools that they should not exercise pressure on parents to make so-called voluntary contributions to free schools, that they should not refer to these as re-registration fees or subsidies to school insurance and that they should not issue requests for voluntary contributions that resemble a compulsory invoice.

Business Benefits to Diversity Management

**By Patricia Callan,
Assistant Director,
Small Firms Association (SFA)**

Why "diversity"?

The composition of the Irish workforce has changed rapidly in recent years. An increasingly diverse range of people are now in employment, including many female returners, older people, people with disabilities, and non-Irish nationals (some 224,300 people or 6% of the population in 2002). Appropriate management of a diverse workforce is critical to organisations seeking to improve and maintain their competitive advantage, and extends much further than traditional concepts of 'equal opportunities' and compliance with equality legislation and the nine grounds it covers. The business case for successful diversity management is extensive; ranging from improved recruitment and retention of staff, staff morale and commitment; to reduced risk of litigation and enhanced business opportunities through reflecting the diversity of the customer base.

What is it?

The IPD Position Paper on Diversity Management (1998) states that Diversity Management is based on the concept that people should be valued as individuals for reasons related to business interests, as well as for moral or social reasons. Diversity Management recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that can make the way work is done more efficient and make better products and services. Successful Diversity Management will help organisations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby tap hidden capacity for growth and improved competitiveness.

> *Successful Diversity Management will help organisations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby tap hidden capacity for growth and improved competitiveness.*

A strategic approach

The concept of diversity includes not just the employees, but also the customer base. This means that the elements driving the organisation (marketing, production, etc.) must take account of diversity and actively support Diversity Management. In turn, this forces diversity to become a strategic approach to management rather than equal opportunities. Moreover, if diversity can demonstrate its contribution to the profits

and the goals of the organisation, it will be actively supported by the top managers in the organisation. This is in contrast to equal opportunities, which is not linked to the goals of the organisation, making it difficult to get other managers to accept the idea as having any real benefit for the organisation. In short, they might support the idea of equal opportunity in principle, but there is little real incentive to actively support it.

Diversity allows the manager to utilise different qualities

There are certain core values that an organisation will expect its employees to observe. Beyond that, however, being a diverse organisation means being able to respect the fact that not everyone works in exactly the same way and that there needs to be some tolerance of different working styles and patterns. Placing restrictions on the ways staff achieve objectives shows that diversity is not tolerated in the organisation.

In many cases of alleged discrimination referred under equality legislation, it is my view that the problem has been one of management carelessness, rather than one of bias against any individual because of gender, race, family circumstances, age, disability and so on. That is, there is a failure on the part of many managers to manage diverse groups of people. A good manager will know how to harness the potential of the different employees regardless of the gender, ethnic group, age, etc. of those employees. The manager recognises that employees are not clones and should not be treated as such.

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Reflecting diversity of customer base

An inevitable outcome of globalisation has been an increasingly varied customer base. In making the most of staff diversity, organisations could expect to gain a greater appreciation of the needs of their customers; for example, a diverse workforce could produce ideas for potential new markets that would otherwise have been overlooked. Owing to the continued growth in product markets, both domestic and international, companies are under pressure to recruit and retain staff that reflects the

diversity of the marketplace, particularly in the area of marketing. People involved in marketing with a similar background to the customers are more likely to identify with the client base.

Good managers of diversity are essentially just that: good managers whose aim is to deal with employees as individuals, rather than expecting everyone to be equally motivated and to work in the same way.

Good diversity management equals good management

Diversity acknowledges that no one style of working is invariably the right one. It focuses on ensuring that the organisation is recruiting staff with the potential to help the company to meet its objectives and is maximising the potential of all employees in order to meet those objectives. It is, in effect, about good management.

Good managers of diversity are essentially just that: good managers whose aim is to deal with employees as individuals, rather than expecting everyone to be motivated to the same level and to work in the same way. Research has indicated that effective leaders

of a homogenous group exhibit the same characteristics as leaders of heterogeneous groups. A good manager is someone who clarifies objectives for staff and ensures that people with different qualities are in a position to meet those objectives effectively.

SFA Training Programme

It is important to note that as the concept of Diversity Management has at its core a focus on individuals and individuals' needs, it relies substantially on effective management skills for implementation. The SFA, with the assistance of the EU In-Company Training Fund, is currently running a series of regional half-day training programmes on diversity management for owner-managers and those with responsibility for human resource management in the workplace. The programmes aim to allow participants to understand their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes to diversity; to appreciate the business case for effectively managing diversity in the workplace; to increase their knowledge and awareness of the diversity of the Irish workforce and customer base; and to acquire the key tools for planning, developing and conducting a diversity audit as well as the development of a plan to address any issues that arise in the future.

Full details and booking on:
www.sfa.ie/events or Tel: 01-6051602 or e-mail: patricia.callan@ibec.ie

LIFT

(Leadership Initiative for

Females in Trade Unions)

By Sally Anne Kinahan, ICTU

The end of 2004 saw the completion of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Fourth Gender Equality Programme. These Programmes, run over a four year cycle, set out action plans for the achievement of gender equality for all aspects of the movement's work including our internal structures.
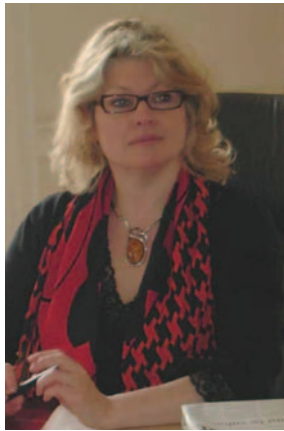
One of the major objectives of Congress' Gender Equality Programmes is that women's representation at senior levels of trade unions should be in proportion to their membership (proportional representation). In other words, the top of the pyramid should reflect the composition of the base. The Gender Equality Programmes have consistently included the aim of removing the barriers that hinder women's participation at all levels of the trade union movement.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions represents the interests of 750,000 working people. When the first plan was developed in the early 80s, women comprised 34% of total union membership (216,000 members) but hardly featured within the power structures of the movement. Only one union, NUPE (now UNISON) in Northern Ireland, had nominated a woman to the Executive Council of Congress,

> *The Gender Equality Programmes have consistently included the aim of removing the barriers that hinder women's participation at all levels of the trade union movement*

A positive action measure fought for and won was the introduction of reserved seats for woman to bring initially two, and by the early 1990s, four women, onto the Executive Council. This should have been a temporary measure until women rose through the ranks to become general officers/ general secretaries and automatically receive the nomination of their unions for election to decision-making structures.
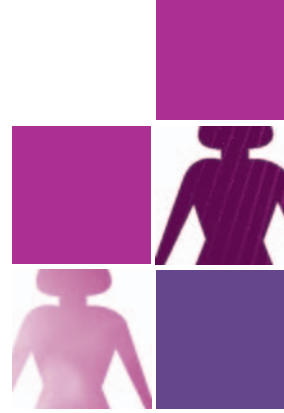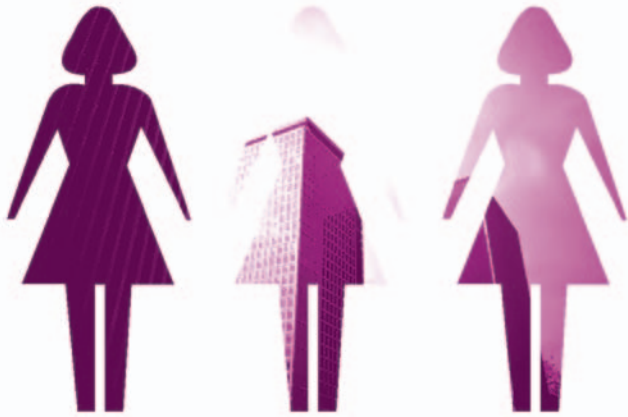
However, twenty years' of the reserved seat measure led to no significant improvement. Unions had not developed strategies or policies to ensure that women are nominated for election to the Congress' Executive Council other than by using the opportunity presented by the reserved seats.

Although each Gender Equality Programmes strongly recommended the achievement of proportional representation in decision making structures, the reality was that the target was dis-improving with each new programme due to the significant growth in the number of women members. Women now account for 44% of union members, reflecting the rapid growth of women at work in recent years (337,000 members female members), with no improvement in their representation in the structures of Congress or its affiliates. The trade union movement has been to the fore in achieving real improvements for women. However, like many organisations unions have a deficit of women in leadership roles. To achieve ongoing and lasting change it is recognised this situation has to change.

One issue that needed to be tackled was the lack of women in senior officer or leadership roles and the failure therefore, of unions to nominate women for election. An underlying problem had become clear: unions face a major challenge involving and maintaining women in their structures which has a knock-on effect on the numbers of women who make their way up through union organisations. Consequently, women are under-represented in senior decision-making roles and this is a major gender equality concern.

The trade union movement has been to the fore in achieving real improvements for women. However, like many organisations unions have a deficit of women in leadership roles.

This has been dealt with in an immediate way through the adoption of an important rule change which will lead to more women on the Executive Council and General Purposes Committee of Congress. A proposal was worked out which fundamentally changes the way unions nominate candidates for election. This will lead to a doubling of the number of women represented on Congress' Executive Council and is a significant milestone towards the achievement of appropriate representation.

The other major initiative undertaken to deal with the issue of women's participation in union organisations is an innovative project, funded under the Equal Initiative, LIFT (Leadership Initiative for Females in Trade Unions). The project involves a partnership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, The National Centre for Partnership

The other major initiative undertaken to deal with the issue of women's participation in union organisations is an innovative project, funded under the Equal Initiative, LIFT (Leadership Initiative for Females in Trade Unions).

and Performance (NCPP) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).

The Project has been established around the shared understanding that the trade union movement needs to identify and implement innovative and more flexible approaches to embrace and include women, and ensure their participation at every level of organisation and that this will require significant changes in the culture of unions. The overarching objective of LIFT is to increase the participation and involvement of women at every level of union organisations with particular emphasis on the identification, development and support of future women leaders.

Through the project it is intended to:

• Conduct detailed research to better understand the motivation for and barriers against joining, participating in and progressing through unions;

• Develop innovative creative concepts to communicate with and inform women workers about the value of unions, and test a range of recruitment methods;

• Evaluate impact and devise guidelines to inform future recruitment activities;

• Use the learning from a new equality clause and audit system adopted by Congress, to inform the work of LIFT and more clearly identify progression barriers for women; and

• Devise and introduce support structures and personal development programmes to improve participation by women at every level of the trade union movement and, importantly, to provide innovative leadership development training and mentoring for future women leaders.

We are very hopeful that the work of LIFT will inspire and motivate women, both within and outside union organisations and lead to a more gender balanced movement which will tackle the persistent problem of gender equality in Irish workplaces.

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The Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin offers a one-year part-time evening postgraduate diploma which is for those who seek to enhance their knowledge and skills in conflict analysis, management and resolution. Those who complete the programme will have a deep understanding of the nature of conflict, the various conflict resolution processes available and how to apply them. Teaching takes place in our Milltown Park, Dublin campus two evenings a week. There are also two Saturday workshops.

For a programme prospectus and an application form, please email cdrssec@tcd.ie or telephone +353-1-218 0532. Please visit us at http://www.tcd.ie/ise

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For further information and application forms please contact:
The Administrator, Equality Studies Centre, Library Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4.
Telephone: 353 1 716 7104 Fax: 353 1 716 1107
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Application for the MA and Higher Diploma in Women's Studies should be made by Friday 6th May 2005. Late applications are accepted subject to availability of places.Application for the PhD and MLitt should be made by the end of May 2005.

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The Equality Authority would like to advise all callers that they can visit www.equality.ie or contact our Public Information Centre directly at 01 417 3333 or Lo Call number 1890 245545, for information on the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. Information is also available on the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 and the Parental Leave Act, 1998.