

Report of Activities in Ireland under the  
**European Year of Equal  
Opportunities for All 2007**  
and A Proposed Legacy from this European Year



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN TÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAS

By Finbar McDonnell

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2 Clonmel Street  
Dublin 2

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PLAY  
YOUR  
PART



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## Foreword

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 provided a valuable opportunity for the Equality Authority to stimulate and support a renewed commitment to and enhanced ambition for a more equal Ireland across all sectors of society. This report details the wide ranging activities that took place during the European Year and that provided the means to seek this renewed commitment and enhanced ambition.

One key measure of success for the European Year in Ireland was identified by the Equality Authority as being the achievement of a long term and lasting legacy of practical action for equality from the activities carried out during the European Year. This report makes an important contribution in this regard, in setting out a detailed proposal for such a legacy. The Equality Authority looks forward to taking on this challenge and securing this legacy from the European Year.

The European Year in Ireland witnessed a broad involvement of organisations from a diversity of sectors. New champions for equality emerged. Organisations with a long track record in promoting equality redoubled their efforts for and renewed their commitment to equality. This broad mobilisation of organisations in the public sector, the private sector, the trade union sector, the local authority sector, the community and voluntary sector and the university sector has created an infrastructure of networks which should continue beyond the European Year and which will provide the foundation for a longer term legacy from the European Year. We are grateful to those individuals and organisations who gave their time and resources to achieving these outcomes from the European Year.

The European Year in Ireland facilitated a wide ranging debate on equality issues that has broadened the parameters of our understanding of these issues and that will underpin a new and enhanced ambition for equality in Irish society. Conferences, seminars, roundtables, publications and media coverage all served to facilitate this equality debate. We are grateful to the many academics, politicians, activists, journalists and others who contributed their expertise to this debate.

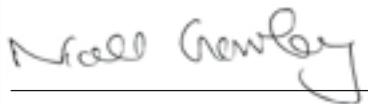
The Equality Authority convened an advisory committee to support the implementation of the strategy for the European Year. The committee provided a valuable arena for dialogue across a wide range of sectors in support of the strategy: government departments, state agencies, community and voluntary sector organisations, employers, trade unions and media organisations. We are grateful to all members who gave so generously of their time and creativity.

The European Year enabled a new and wider engagement by the Equality Authority at the level of the European Union. The Equality Authority played a role in the establishment of EQUINET, the new European network of specialised equality bodies. The Equality Authority formed part of the advisory committee

established by the European Commission for the European Year and participated in many of the European Union events that formed part of the European Year. We are grateful to the anti-discrimination unit of the European Commission not only for their support of the Irish strategy for the European Year but also for the space and standing they afforded to the Equality Authority during the European Year. Particular thanks in this regard are due to Stefan Ollsson, Brigitte Degen and Catherine Magnant.

Equality Authority staff across all sections of the organisation made a significant contribution to implementing the strategy for the European Year – above and beyond the normal call of duty. Particular acknowledgement is due to Carole Sullivan who led the work and to Carol Baxter and Rachel Mullen who also played central roles in ensuring the success of the European Year in Ireland.

We are grateful to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the European Commission for their funding of the strategy for the European Year. Particular thanks are also due to Finbar McDonnell of Hibernian Consulting who accompanied the implementation of the strategy and who has prepared this report so expertly and efficiently.



Niall Crowley,  
CEO,  
The Equality Authority.



## Section 1

### Introduction

#### What was the EU Year of Equal Opportunities for All?

2007 was designated as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All by the European Council and the European Parliament. The European Year was designated as part of a concerted effort to promote equality and non-discrimination in the European Union. Four objectives were established for the Year:

- To further raise awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination and of the problem of multiple discrimination.
- To stimulate debate on ways to increase the participation in society of groups that are victims of discrimination and to ensure balanced participation among men and women.
- To facilitate and celebrate diversity, emphasising the positive contribution that people, irrespective of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, can make to society as a whole, in particular by accentuating the benefits of diversity.
- To promote a more cohesive society.

At EU level, the European Year was inaugurated in January with the first ever European Equality summit, a joint initiative by the European Commission and the German EU Presidency. At this summit, in which Irish delegates played a full role, Vladimír Spidla, European Commissioner with responsibility for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities stated:

"It is no coincidence that 2007 became the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All'. It marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties. Today, through the European Year, we are affirming that equality for all in the eyes of the law and the right to a life without discrimination are fundamental European values."

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All formed part of the European Commission framework strategy on 'Non Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All'. It also arose in the context of the implementation by the European Commission of 'A Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010'.

Initiatives of the European Year at EU level included the diversity truck tour, which has received half a million visitors at 99 stops over its 72,000 km route in the past five years; the European Year's partnership with the Eurovision Song Contest, which brought the message of the Year to 100 million European TV viewers.

Among the activities at local, regional and national levels that took place as part of the European Year, around half were co-funded by the European Commission. They included anti-discrimination training programmes, studies and surveys, competitions for schools, businesses and the general public, national awareness campaigns and actions to ensure major music and youth festivals highlighted the message of diversity.

One important outcome from the European Year at EU level was the formal launch of EQUINET, the European network of specialised equality bodies. EQUINET received funding to provide peer support to specialised equality bodies and to engage in a policy dialogue with the institutions of the European Union. EQUINET prepared a paper setting out an opinion on what the legacy of the European Year at European level should be. The Equality Authority is an active member of EQUINET.

At the Lisbon closing conference of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, a statement from the European Commission highlighted:

"With over 1,000 activities across 30 countries, the European Year helped to raise people's awareness of their rights to a life free of discrimination, helped build a new dialogue between different actors on promoting equality, and highlighted the benefits of diversity for society as a whole."

According to the European Commissioner for Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla:

"From creative spots on MTV, activities for visitors to the Eurovision song contest in Helsinki to diversity awards for companies, the European Year has helped bring the message of equality and diversity to millions of people around Europe. The success of the Year gives us all an impetus to push forward our efforts to make equality a reality for everyone in Europe."

An important development across all Member States during the Year was the setting up of new partnerships and dialogues to promote equality. For the first time, many Member States developed national strategies covering the six grounds of discrimination identified in Article 13 of the EC Treaty. This involved dialogue on equality issues between government departments, civil society and other actors.



Martin Territt, Director of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, in front of the 'Diversity Truck' when it visited Ireland during the European Year

## Strategy for the Year in Ireland

In an Irish context, the Taoiseach launched the national strategy for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, entitled *Play Your Part*, on 5th February 2007. A large gathering, drawn from state agencies, private companies, government departments, trade unions, politics, the judiciary, and the non-governmental sector, were present at the event to celebrate the launch of the European Year.



An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, Karen Erwin (former Chairperson Equality Authority) and Niall Crowley (CEO Equality Authority) with the dance troupe produced and choreographed by Thomas Creighton at the launch of the European Year in Dublin Castle

The Strategy was drawn up by the Equality Authority following an extensive process of consultation in the second half of 2006 with Government Departments, state agencies, trade unions, business networks and non governmental organisations.

The Strategy set out six priorities and 33 specific actions for the European Year for Ireland. The actions were grouped under the six 'priorities':

Priority 1	Information and Advocacy	5 actions
Priority 2	Equality Mainstreaming	4 actions
Priority 3	Equality Competence	7 actions
Priority 4	Equality Debate	11 actions
Priority 5	Burning Issues	1 overall action*
Priority 6	Multiple Discrimination	5 actions

*\*(which subsequently provided funding for 15 specific pieces of work)*

The Strategy identified three key challenges for the European Year in Ireland:

- To secure a legacy that will further enhance the strategic framework for action on equality that has been established.

- To secure a legacy which ensures that inequalities across the nine grounds are addressed and eliminated.
- To secure a legacy where an ambition to achieve full equality in practice for groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds is widely shared and pursued.

### Implementing the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 in Ireland

The Equality Authority was the National Implementing Body responsible for coordinating the actions of the Year and a budget of €1,106,919 was provided to implement the strategy. This budget was provided by the European Commission, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority.

The Equality Authority sought to sustain the broad participation developed during the consultation for the Strategy to support the work of the Year. An Advisory Committee was convened to support the implementation of the strategy. This Committee drew on the expertise, energy and commitment of organisations from the public, private, trade union and community sectors. It also enabled new relationships between different groups and organisations in the promotion of equality.

The Advisory Committee met on five occasions during the European Year. Its Terms of Reference were as follows:

- Support the implementation of the strategy
- Guide the further development of the strategy
- Monitor the impact of the strategy
- Promote a longer term legacy for the Year.

Another approach to develop a participative process in implementing the Strategy for the Year was the NGO Forum. This met twice during the European Year (once in Dublin and once in Galway) and provided a focus for NGOs to come together to discuss the relevance of the European Union to equality-related issues and to learn about, and give feedback on, the European Year. The Forum's meeting in Dublin, in May, had a particular focus on gender and care responsibilities.

The Equality Authority was also represented on the advisory committee for the Year established by the European Commission. This met four times and provided a forum to exchange ideas on effective strategies for the European Year and to engage in a dialogue with the anti-discrimination unit of the European Commission on the legacy that should be established at European level from the Year.

### Report of the Year

This report sets out the work that took place during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in Ireland. Sections 2 to 7 of the report detail the work

undertaken under the six ‘priorities’ in the national strategy for the European Year. Section 8 reports on the closing events for the Year. A longer-term legacy arising from the European Year is proposed in a special section in the central part of the report.

The Equality Authority is aware that many organisations also organised other actions outside and beyond the national strategy to mark the European Year. These wide ranging actions were important in making the European Year a success. However, the number and variety do not allow for these actions to be detailed in this report.

## Section 2: Information and Advocacy

### Research on Innovation in the Provision of Information on Rights

This action had a dual focus:

- To bring together Irish statutory organisations providing information on rights to share approaches on the provision of information to citizens in relation to their rights;
- To research effective and innovative strategies for providing information on rights, both in Ireland and internationally.

This action was stimulated by information collected in a special Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in the European Union, published in January 2007 at the start of the European Year. This survey showed that 39% of Irish people said that they knew their rights if they were the victim of discrimination or harassment. This placed Ireland above the EU average of 32% but behind a number of countries, including the UK (43%), Cyprus (53%) and Finland (65%).

The action was coordinated by a Steering Group with representatives of the Citizens Information Board, the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Employment Rights Authority, the Reception and Integration Agency, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Health Services Executive, and the Equality Authority. The coming together of these organisations to discuss the provision of information in relation to rights for the first time was in itself an important development.

A research report on “Effective and Innovative Strategies for Providing Information on Rights to the Public” was prepared for the group by Goodbody Economic Consulting. Its three main sections were entitled: Systems of Redress and Good Practice in Information Provision; Irish Examples; and International Examples. The research report was completed in November and contained suggestions on how to enhance elements of information provision on rights and proposed initiatives that could be implemented in Ireland.



Banners marking the European Year fly along the river Liffey in Dublin

Following receipt of the research report, there was agreement among the partners on the Steering Group that there was a basis for further cooperation and action. A meeting of the Steering Group considered recommendations arising from the research report and practical proposals are now being explored by the Steering Group for pilot actions in relation to information provision on rights in 2008.

#### **Training Threshold Staff on Information Provision**

Threshold is a national non governmental organisation whose aim is to secure a right to housing, particularly for households experiencing problems of poverty and social exclusion.

In January 2007, the Equality Authority met the personnel in Threshold responsible for policy formulation to brief them about the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, about Irish equality legislation and about the relationship between this legislation and housing policies and needs. Following that meeting, it was agreed that a full day of training would be provided in April for Threshold staff, including volunteers.

The training was held at the Equality Authority and provided detailed information on the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, focusing in particular on the provisions in the legislation in relation to accommodation. The training was intended to enhance the capacity of Threshold staff to answer equality-related housing queries from members of the public.

Later in the year, Threshold information sheets on the housing implications of the Equal Status Acts were updated with the support of the Equality Authority.

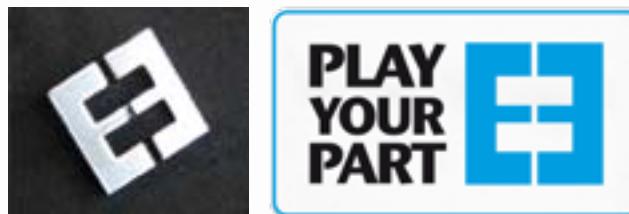
#### **Building a Profile for the European Year**

The European Year was launched in Ireland by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD at an event in Dublin Castle in February. This event was well attended and served to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders in support of the Strategy for the Year. The Strategy was launched at the event.

The European Year was launched with a public awareness campaign to promote the Year and to encourage active participation in the Year. This included billboard, media box, and press advertising. One hundred flags, each four metres long, celebrating the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, flew on the quayside in Dublin for three weeks. These flags were then distributed and used in towns and cities throughout Ireland during the year including Athlone, Carlow, Castlebar, Clare, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Letterkenny, Limerick, Navan, North Tipperary, Roscommon, Sligo, Waterford, Westmeath.

The Equality Authority developed a slogan which it repeated in its different public awareness campaigns during the Year. 'Play Your Part' was the theme and a silver pin made up by reversing 2 letter E's (Europe and Equality) into each other thus forming an equal sign was produced for the European Year. Over 100,000 of these pins were distributed nationwide with postcards highlighting the European Year.

The European Year was closed in Ireland by President Mary McAleese at an event in Dublin Castle in December. This event was well attended and served to propose and promote a practical legacy from the Year.



The emblem and logo used for the European Year in Ireland

The *National Forum for Europe* promotes debate on the European Union, on its future and on Ireland's role in it. The Forum's members are drawn from all political parties in the Oireachtas and also include Ireland's MEPs. The social partners, churches and a wide range of NGOs are also members of what is called the 'Observer Pillar' of the Forum. On 8th November, a special session of the National Forum on Europe was held at Dublin Castle to focus on the European Year and its potential legacy. Three roundtables were held on the following topics: Addressing Significant and Persistent Inequalities – Gender Equality Strategies as the Gateway for Change; Developing Equality Strategies and Goals to Achieve Full Equality in Practice; Achieving Institutional Change. These sessions allowed members of the Forum, and invited guests, to discuss in detail the three designated topics.

The roundtables were followed by a full plenary session of the National Forum on Europe on the topic of equality and of the legacy that should be left by the European Year. There was a lively debate with contributions from all the main political parties and social partners. The debate identified progress that had been made in promoting equality but emphasised the need for further legislative, policy and programme initiatives to achieve further progress on equality.

On 18th July, a *consultation exercise was organised by the European Commission Office in Dublin* together with the Equality Authority in relation to the Commission's 2006 Communication 'An Agenda for European Citizens'. Following publication of this Communication, the European Council had invited the European Commission to take stock of the social situation in the European Union, with a particular emphasis on questions of 'access and opportunity'.

The European Year provided a valuable context for this 'social reality stocktake' in Ireland. The consultation exercise focused on equality and the social situation. It involved organisations representing groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds of Irish equality legislation, as well as the European Commission and the Equality Authority. The process led to a paper being published in December, with the discussion summarised in five sections: Equality and Well-Being; Equality and Education; Equality and Employment; Equality and Health; and Equality, Society and Social Relations. This was launched in the office of the European Commission in Dublin by Marie Donnelly, Head of Unit, European Social Fund Coordination, in the DG for Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission. It was subsequently submitted formally to the relevant section of the European Commission.

The European Commission's Dublin office *prepared an exhibition on themes relating to equality and discrimination*. The exhibition was shown at the European Commission's Dublin Office and at a major conference on 'Thirty Years of Gender Equality Legislation', organised by the Equality Authority as part of the European Year (see later in this report). The exhibition will continue to be used at events around Ireland during 2008.



European Commission exhibition on themes relating to equality and discrimination

### Section 3

#### Equality Mainstreaming

##### Special Statistical Release on Equality in Ireland

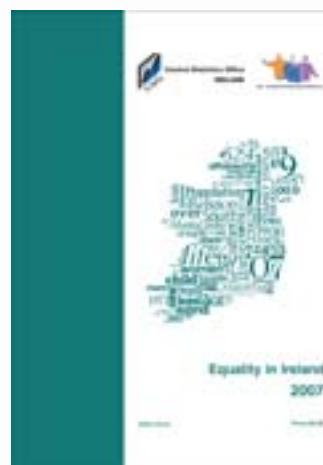
To mark the EU Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published a 32 page report entitled 'Equality in Ireland 2007'. This is the first time that such a statistical publication, across the nine grounds covered by Irish equality legislation, was prepared.

The report, published in November, provides a broad analysis of the economic and social situation of people in Ireland using the nine equality grounds as a means of analysing their situation and their quality of life. Section 1 provides an overview of the information across all nine grounds in terms of population, employment, education, accommodation and discrimination. Sections 2-10 provide detailed data on each of the grounds in turn.

The report did not involve the collection of new data but rather brought together CSO data from different sources, especially from the Census 2006, in relation to the nine grounds.

Table 1.10 in the report draws on CSO data from 2004 to show that:

- 12.5% of the population aged 18 and over say they have experienced discrimination in the previous two years on the nine specified grounds and on other grounds
- 17.6% of those aged 18-24 say they have experienced discrimination
- 19.6% of those with a disability say they have experienced discrimination
- 21.6% of those not of the Roman Catholic religion say they have experienced discrimination
- 24.4% of non-Irish people say they have experienced discrimination
- 31.5% of those from an ethnic background other than 'white' say that they have experienced discrimination



Equality in Ireland 2007, Central Statistics Office Ireland

In his Preface to the publication, the Director General of the CSO noted: "This report draws heavily on the results from Census 2006. Hence it is anticipated that this new report will become a regular release from the CSO following each Census".

The report provides a benchmark against which to monitor progress on promoting equality and will serve as a resource to support equality mainstreaming.

### **Equality Proofing in Government Departments**

A strategically important action during the European Year was the move by two government departments to prepare equality mainstreaming initiatives.

The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science prepared for a review of current policy making and programme design systems in specific parts of their departments. The purpose of this exercise was to identify how an equality mainstreaming process could be developed in these systems and what steps were required to develop such a process.

The Department of Health and Children identified the area of nutrition policy and the Department of Education and Science identified the work of its Inspectorate as a focus for the work. The two departments plan to implement the review in 2008, and will be assisted by the Equality Authority and the Equality Proofing Working Group convened by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. A plan of action to develop equality mainstreaming further in each department will then be prepared.

### **Developing an Equality Tool in Vocational Education**

The Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and their parent body, the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) play an important role in supporting equality in Ireland.

During 2007, the IVEA worked with the Equality Authority in producing guidelines for conducting equality impact assessments on IVEA and VEC plans, policies and programmes. An introduction to the guidelines explains the purpose of an equality impact assessment.

"An equality impact assessment is a process that seeks to test whether a proposed plan, programme or policy:

- promotes equality for;
- accommodates diversity of; and
- does not discriminate (including making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities) against;

individuals and groups across the nine grounds of the equality legislation that experience inequality. It requires the participation of these groups and their individual members in order to ensure that plans, programmes and policies adequately take account of the practical implications of diversity, effectively promote equality, and do not put groups experiencing inequality at a particular disadvantage."

The guidelines, including templates for ease of use by the IVEA and VECs, were launched at the 103rd IVEA Congress, held in Killarney in September.

At the end of 2007, discussions were taking place as to which VECs would pilot the implementation of the guidelines in 2008.

### **Building Equality into the 2007 – 2013 European Social Fund Programme in Ireland**

Considerable work was undertaken during the life of the 2000 – 2006 National Development Plan as regards the incorporation of equality into mainstream policies and programmes. This included the work of the Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Gender Unit in the Department of Education and Science and of the Equality Studies Unit of the Equality Authority which provided equality related inputs for the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

Detailed programmes for the 2007–13 National Development Plan were prepared during 2007 and the Equality Authority took an active role in this work, in cooperation with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This included implementing the following action in the strategy for the EU Year: ‘To develop an equality mainstreaming infrastructure through the European Social Fund Operational Programme to support providers of vocational education and training to incorporate an equality focus in their work’.

Following discussions during the European Year, it was agreed to establish an Equality Mainstreaming Unit, to be located in the Equality Authority, to support the achievement of equality outcomes in the 2007-13 ESF Operational Programme.

The three principal areas of activity of this Unit will be:

1. Developing ‘support packages’ with providers of vocational education and training and employment services to enhance their equality mainstreaming approaches, including meeting FETAC equality requirements.
2. Stimulating, supporting and resourcing enterprises to be planned and systematic in their approach to equality, including convening of an employer and trade union forum.
3. Enhancing the knowledge-base in relation to groups across the nine grounds, including the preparation of research reports and resource materials.

The Equality Mainstreaming Unit was established before the end of the EU Year of Equal Opportunities for All and will have five dedicated staff members. It will have a budget of €7m over the seven year period of the Operational Programme.

## Section 4

### Equality Competence

#### Establishment of a Networking Process in the Private Sector for Equality and Diversity

A networking process was established during the European Year for private sector companies interested in accessing the business opportunities offered by implementing equality and diversity strategies. IBEC led this capacity-building initiative, titled *Promoting the Business Case for Diversity*, which aimed to underline the positive aspects of workforce diversity and to make the topic relevant to a business audience.

The first networking meeting took place at the IBEC headquarters in Dublin in May. Seminars for HR Managers in IBEC member companies were held by IBEC in five regional centres: Kildare, Cork, Donegal, Galway and Waterford. These half-day sessions were used to offer advice on the development of diversity and equality management strategies, to highlight available supports and resources, and seek members' involvement in a newly established diversity learning network. The different events saw an emphasis on networking as companies shared good practice and ideas on how to realise the opportunities offered by equality and diversity strategies in the context of the growing diversity of the Irish labour force and the Irish customer base.

Feedback from these events was collated and will inform a plan for the development of IBEC's Human Resources Services in 2008. The feedback is also being used to inform the work of the IBEC diversity working group, which consists of 20 large companies with extensive experience in the diversity management field. A webpage dedicated to diversity management and related issues is being set up on the IBEC member website and other possible activities are being considered.

#### Establishment of a Learning Network in the Public Sector

The development of an institutional capacity in public sector institutions to accommodate diversity, promote equality and eliminate discrimination was the focus for a network established in the public sector. Special focus was given to supporting institutions to develop a planned and systematic approach to equality for customers.

A Public Sector Learning Network was established early in the European Year and was active throughout the European Year. The network was chaired by FÁS. It undertook a short survey of public sector organisations and identified a number of organisations where pilot actions would be undertaken.

The survey of public sector organisations active in the network provided an insight into approaches to, and attitudes towards, equality in customer service. It found that organisations generally had a positive attitude towards this issue,

with difficulties and limitations arising due to insufficient resources, lack of trained staff and uncertainty regarding obligations under the Equal Status Act. Suggestions as to how organisations could be supported in developing their equality capacity in this area included the provision of practical tools and training, pilot schemes and the sharing of good practice and information on how to consult with specific target groups.

The Public Sector Learning Network devised three pilot schemes in response to the survey. Under these schemes, MET Éireann received support in developing equal status policies, while Laois County Council and Dublin City Council were assisted in creating an equality dimension to their induction training.

A learning seminar entitled 'Cultural Diversity and Customer Service' was held in Dublin in November to mark Anti-Racist Workplace Week. This gave participants from the Public Sector Learning Network an opportunity to share ideas, exchange information and discuss experiences in taking action to accommodate cultural diversity in service provision.

The work of this network resulted in its members deciding at the end of 2007 to keep the network alive into 2008. This will allow for the completion of the pilot actions mentioned above and the potential development of similar equality related actions in further public sector organisations.

#### **Pobal Discussion Papers - '*Contemplating social inclusion, equality and human rights*'**

Pobal manages a wide range of social inclusion and equality programmes on behalf of the state. During the European Year, Pobal developed a set of discussion papers with the dual purpose of:

1. 'rediscovering' the rationale that originally drove the social inclusion agenda and relocating it within the set of experiences and possibilities identified over more than 15 years of practice and implementation; and
2. aligning social inclusion objectives in a framework that includes equality goals and human rights approaches.

The papers were produced to stimulate debate and raise energies within Pobal at the start of a new National Development Plan period. The papers provided a focal point for discussion among development staff and managers, and may be given wider circulation in the future.

For Pobal, the European Year provided both a stimulus and an opportunity to revisit conceptual and operational landscapes, to interrogate visions of equality and social inclusion and to reinvigorate implementation and practice. Making the link between social inclusion, equality and human rights and widening the understanding and interpretation of each concept was seen by Pobal as useful to

its staff and its beneficiary organisations. Pobal believes the European Year helped to influence the shaping and delivery of its programmes and its commitment to equality in implementing these programmes.

### **Establishment of an Equality and Diversity Network among the Universities**

This action grew from joint work undertaken by the universities during the Anti-Racist Workplace Week of 2006. Following this work, it was decided to bring together a network of equality officers from the universities to promote equality within the university sector.

The work undertaken during the European Year was important in establishing this network. An inter-varsity photography competition was organised for staff and students of the seven universities in Ireland to celebrate the European Year. Its theme was 'Changing Perspectives: Equality and Diversity in my University' and its aim was to raise awareness, stimulate debate and emphasise the positive contribution that the diversity of people across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation can make to university life and wider society. The competition led to the production of a 2008 calendar which has been disseminated across all the universities.

The network is planning to continue its work in 2008 and to develop a project to further embed equality in the various organisational structures within the universities. Links were also established with the Public Sector Equality Learning Network.

### **Promoting Workplace Equality in Athlone**

This project aimed to develop awareness and understanding of equality and to promote good practice on foot of this in businesses in Athlone. The project was led by Athlone Chamber of Commerce and was part-funded by the National Framework Committee for Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise. Project group members included representatives of businesses, trade unions, public bodies and community organisations in Athlone.

Actions during the European Year included the following:

- Launch of the project at a business lunch in June. A leaflet on the project was launched at the event;
- Development of a project website;
- Athlone Communities Together event in September was attended by members of the public and by public representatives. The event was organised on a partnership basis with community organisations in Athlone and facilitated new links between the business and community development sectors.

Supports were provided by the National Framework Committee under its SME Scheme to develop employment equality policies in twelve companies. A network

of equality officers from the companies was established and is meeting on a regular basis.

A number of actions are planned to continue this work in 2008, including the preparation of guidelines to support the companies already involved in moving to the next stage of equality practices, and extending the work undertaken to further enterprises in the Athlone area.

### Equality Focus in Local Government

The Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) received funding from the National Framework Committee for Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise, a social partnership committee chaired by the Equality Authority, to undertake a survey to establish the prevalence of equality policies and strategies in local authorities, encompassing both employment and service delivery functions. The LGMSB undertook the survey from September to November 2007. The results were published and considered by local authorities at a national equality seminar held in March 2008.

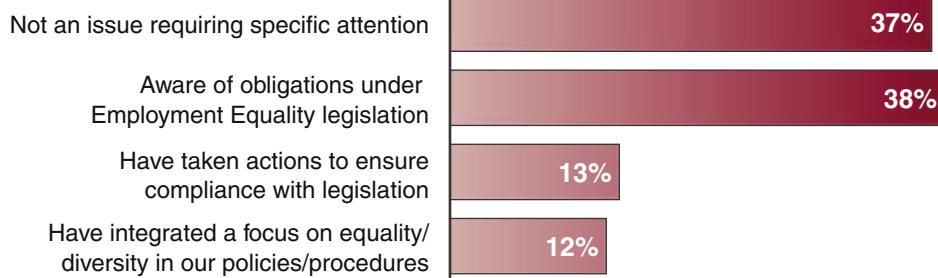
The LGMSB introduced a prominent equality dimension into the first all-island local authority HR conference, *Shaping the Future of HR*. This was held in Newcastle, Co. Down in November 2007 and was organised jointly by the LGMSB and the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland.

### Equality Survey by Chambers Ireland

To mark the EU Year of Equal Opportunities for All, Chambers Ireland included a section on equality in its 2007 Labour Force Survey. This survey of 608 companies was undertaken by Amárach Consulting on behalf of Chambers Ireland.

The survey contains a range of findings on equality and diversity perceptions and practices in Irish companies. These are broken down by company size and by economic sector. Overall attitudes towards employment, equality and diversity issues are shown below (base: 608, all respondents).

Equality and Diversity Perceptions and Practices in Irish Companies



The figure shows some progress as regards the development of planned and systematic approaches to workplace equality, with 12% of organisations having

integrated a focus on equality/diversity into their policies and procedures for employees and a further 13% having taken action to ensure compliance with Irish equality legislation. The respective figures in relation to policies towards customers were 22% and 9%.

However, the figures also show the significant challenge that remains to ensure that all workplaces are characterised by planned and systematic approaches to equality, with 37% of those surveyed reporting that equality for, and diversity of, employees was not an issue requiring attention. The same proportion (37%) said the same in relation to customers.

The baseline data generated by Chambers Ireland shows that, while some Irish companies now embrace the opportunity of having explicit equality policies and practices, a sizeable proportion of those companies have yet to identify and grasp this opportunity.

The survey is available from the website of Chambers Ireland, at [www.chambers.ie](http://www.chambers.ie)

### **Corporate Social Responsibility Award**

There was a special award linked to the European Year as part of the Chambers Ireland President's Awards for Corporate Social Responsibility, in partnership with Business in the Community Ireland. This event, held in association with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and sponsored by Resource, saw the special European Year award going to Dell Ireland, for a sustained commitment to diversity since it began operating in Ireland.

## **Section 5**

### **Equality Debate**

#### **Articulating the Interests of Groups that Experience Inequality**

The role and aspirations of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in relation to representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality were explored through two actions.

Firstly, a research report was commissioned as part of the European Year on this topic. The report, prepared by WRC Social and Economic Consultants, was based on a literature review; interviews with 18 community and voluntary organisations; focus groups held in Dublin, Mullingar and Limerick; and interviews with funding agencies. The report presents findings in relation to the roles and aspirations of non-governmental organisations in articulating the interests of groups experiencing inequality through:

- engaging with groups experiencing inequality;
- engaging with the policy and decision making process;
- and engaging with wider society and democracy.

The report ends with a section containing conclusions and recommendations.

Secondly, a conference was organised in November at which the results of the research study were presented and a number of other speakers spoke on the role of the NGO sector in representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality. Speakers included the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Eamon O'Civiv T.D. who opened the conference.



Dr Angela Kerins, Chairperson Equality Authority speaking at the conference on 'The Role of the NGO Sector in Representing the Interests of Groups Experiencing Inequality'

The conference enabled a debate on the role of the NGO sector in representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality. The tension between advocacy and service delivery was noted and some NGOs spoke of a hostile environment for their advocacy work. The role of the community sector in the National Social Partnership Process was also discussed.

The proceedings of this conference, and the research paper, will be published in 2008 by the Equality Authority. The following recommendations were suggested as ways forward, drawing both from the findings of the consultation process undertaken by the WRC and from the issues raised by NGOs who participated in the conference.

*Level one area of influence: Direct engagement with groups experiencing inequality*

1. Funding bodies in the state and private sectors should adequately resource NGOs to develop:
  - good systems of governance;
  - systems to enhance their accountability to groups experiencing inequality; and
  - systems to enhance their ability to negotiate on behalf of groups experiencing inequality.
2. Funding bodies in the state and private sectors should properly resource NGOs to develop a diversity of approaches to engage with people experiencing inequality, particularly more marginalised and 'harder to reach' groups e.g.

people from across the nine grounds covered in the equality legislation who are rurally isolated; people whose first language is not English; people in the asylum process; and people living in institutions.

3. NGOs working at national level should develop collaborative work at local and national level to agree good practice on the following aspects of their work in representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality:
  - strategies for negotiating the interests of groups experiencing inequality;
  - approaches to agenda setting; and
  - communication with people whose interests are being represented.

*Level two area of influence: Influencing policy and decision making*

4. There is a need for independent funding for the NGO sector to commission research to:
  - assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation in relation to engagement between the state and the NGO sector with regard to all policy areas impacting on groups experiencing inequality;
  - examine the different sub-sectors within the overall equality agenda and the factors determining or inhibiting the capacity to progress an equality agenda on the part of groups experiencing inequality; and
  - establish what kind of working relationship between community and voluntary organisations and the state sector is required to ensure that the capacity of the sector to bring forward equality issues is fully utilised within the policy context.
5. Statutory agencies working with groups experiencing inequality should put in place protocols for engaging with NGOs that would:
  - acknowledge the value of the role of NGOs in articulating and representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality;
  - establish systematic and mainstream processes for engaging with NGOs and facilitating NGO representation on policy fora across all relevant grounds covered by the equality legislation; and
  - commit to specific standards in terms of consultation.
6. Funding bodies should make specific funding available to resource NGOs to articulate and represent the interests of groups experiencing inequality. This funding line should be additional to funding lines for service provision.

*Level three area of influence: Influencing wider civil society*

7. The NGOs working at national level should develop collaborative links to share expertise and develop strategies to engage with wider civil society - trade unions, the business sector, media - in seeking to progress the interests of groups experiencing inequality.

8. The trade union and business sectors should develop and enhance existing links with the NGO sector to progress the interests of groups experiencing inequality.



Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, speaking at the conference 'Thirty Years of Gender Equality Legislation – Progress Made and Future Perspectives'

### **Thirty Years of Gender Equality Legislation in Ireland**

An international legal conference was organised by the Equality Authority in December 2007 on the topic of gender equality legislation. The conference took as its theme: 'Thirty Years of Gender Equality Legislation – Progress Made and Future Perspectives'. The conference marked the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of gender equality legislation in Ireland – the Employment Equality Act 1977.

Held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, the two-day conference included an address from the former President of Ireland Mary Robinson. The first day of the conference had as its theme 'The Story So Far' and covered topics such as 'An Overview of Irish Legislation', 'The Current Situation and Experience of Women in Ireland', and 'Scale and Pattern of Cases Taken under Gender Equality Legislation'. The second day of the conference looked at the theme of 'Future Perspectives' and addressed topics including 'The Many Faces of Equality in the EU', 'International Perspective on Gender Equality Laws' and 'A New Generation of Gender Equality Legislation'.

### **Building Public Awareness of Equality Issues**

A public awareness campaign to mark Work-Life Balance Day on 1 March 2007 included outdoor advertising (billboards, media boxes, advertising on buses etc.) throughout Ireland, radio and newspaper advertisements and internet advertising. Workplace posters were distributed and a leaflet was produced outlining what employers, trade unions and employees could do to mark Work-Life Balance Day. This leaflet was also distributed to workplaces and through social partner networks. Work-Life Balance Day was organised by the National Framework



Public Awareness Campaign to mark Work-Life Balance Day

Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, a social partner committee convened by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and including the Equality Authority.

The Framework Committee published a document entitled *Work-Life Balance: a Planned and Systematic Approach to Work-Life Balance*, which was aimed at informing companies how to develop and implement work-life balance policies. This booklet is being reprinted for use in 2008 by a new panel of consultants established by the committee to support organisations in developing work-life balance policies.

The National Framework Committee for Work-Life Balance Policies held a national symposium at the Mansion House in Dublin on 1 March 2007 to mark Work-Life Balance Day, which was attended by employers, trade unionists, academics, social partners and representatives of Government Departments and public bodies.

*Say No to Ageism Week* was organised by the Health Services Executive, the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Equality Authority in May. This involved a public awareness campaign on attitudes held in relation to older people and ageing which used outdoor advertising, beer mats in public houses, postcards and radio advertisements. Events were organised to discuss action plans for age friendly service provision in the Health Service Executive and in the transport sector.

*Anti-Racist Workplace Week* was organised in November with funding from the European Commission's restricted call for proposals under the Progress Community Initiative. The week was overseen by a committee of business networks, trade unions, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority. A public awareness campaign was run to promote racism-free workplaces. Local development organisations implemented action plans to promote the objective of the week in nine locations around the country. A national launch was held, attended by the Minister with responsibility for Integration, Conor Lenihan T.D.

A public awareness campaign on making reasonable accommodation to enable people with disabilities access services was organised in December. Shown in cinemas around the country, this was organised by the Equality Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

### **Conference on Equality, Legislation and the Constitution**

An international conference was organised in Galway, in October, on equality, legislation and the Irish Constitution by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; the Faculty of Law at NUI Galway; and the Equality Authority. This conference marked the 75th anniversary of the Irish Constitution. It was opened by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law reform, Brian Lenihan T.D.

The full-day conference had a range of expert speakers, including legal academics and practitioners. The conference explored a range of topics including the constitutional dimensions of the right to equality and the inter-relationship between the equality guarantee, equality legislation and other constitutional rights. The subsequent discussions took account of litigation in the Irish context, European Law and international human rights. Speakers also explored the conference theme from a comparative constitutional perspective. Proceedings of the conference will be published by NUI Galway and the Equality Authority in 2008.



Donncha O'Connell (Dean of the Faculty of Law at NUI Galway), Professor Kathleen Mahoney (Professor of Law at the University of Calgary and Member of the Alberta Bar Canada) and Niall Crowley (CEO Equality Authority) at the conference 'Equality Legislation and the Constitution'

### **Including Equality in the Towards 2016 Life-cycle Framework**

The life-cycle approach to policy making, developed by the National Economic and Social Council, was incorporated in the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement. The agreement included a commitment to have due regard to equality

in implementing the life cycle approach. The approach aims to address key social challenges by assessing risks and hazards which an individual faces, and the supports available to them, at each stage of the life-cycle. The key stages of the life-cycle approach, as developed within Towards 2016, relate to children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities.

During the European Year, the Equality Authority held a series of discussions with the NESC and the Department of the Taoiseach on the incorporation of equality issues into the life-cycle framework. This helped to develop shared understandings about the intersections between equality strategies and the life-cycle approach and the complementarity between both. These shared understandings will be further developed and applied in an action programme to be developed by the Equality Authority, the Department of the Taoiseach and the NESC in 2008.

### **Trade Union Work to Support the Equality Agenda**

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions developed two key initiatives during the European Year.

The theme for the Congress Biennial Delegate Conference (held in Bundoran in July) was that of 'Equality for All'. The first session of the conference focused on equality and included presentations by senior union officials, followed by a series of conference motions on the theme.

Congress commissioned a series of five policy papers to shape its position on issues relating to equality in the workplace. The papers were on the following themes:

- Access to the workplace and promotions;
- Flexible working and work-life balance issues;
- Equal pay;
- Workplace culture – anti-harassment, pro-diversity; and
- Promoting equality – positive action, accommodating diversity.

These papers are to be developed and published as a composite document by Congress in 2008.

Equality themes were also incorporated into the annual conferences of the Teachers Union of Ireland, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland and the Irish National Teachers Organisation. The annual SIPTU conference in Tralee also opened with an equality theme to mark the European Year.

## Section 6

### Multiple Discrimination

Multiple discrimination was a significant focus for the European Year at European Union level. An EU study undertaken during the Year sought to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of multiple discrimination, to raise awareness of the particular difficulties facing those who experience multiple discrimination and to make practical recommendations for further initiatives on this issue. The Equality Authority was identified as an example of good practice in the report. An EU conference on the issue was held in December in Denmark.

#### Women and Multiple Discrimination

The Centre for Gender and Women's Studies in Trinity College Dublin prepared a working paper for the Equality Authority on the diversity of women and multiple discrimination. The paper used a theoretical framework developed from the National Economic and Social Forum's report, *A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues*, to analyse multiple discrimination in relation to ten groups of women. The framework involved a focus on equality in terms of access to resources; access to decision making; access to status and standing; and access to relationships of respect, care and solidarity.

The ten groups of women were older women; younger women; transsexual women; women carers; women Travellers; women parenting alone; Black and minority ethnic women; women from different religious backgrounds; lesbian and bisexual women; and women with disabilities.

The background paper was used by the Equality Authority to support gender mainstreaming in all actions of the Strategy for the European Year to ensure they reflected the particular situation and needs of women and men and promoted equality for both women and men.

#### 'Realising Equality and Inclusion: Building Better Policy and Practice' Conference

Pobal organised a conference in Croke Park on 22nd November titled 'Realising Equality and Inclusion: Building Better Policy and Practice', attended by 270 participants representing Area Partnerships, statutory agencies, NGOs and policy makers. The aim of the conference was to provide an informative and challenging platform for discussion and reflection on issues of inclusion, participation and integration for migrant workers, people with disabilities and Travellers in the context of the European Year.

A particular objective of the conference was to ensure a policy legacy from programmes funded by Pobal and a significant development of strategies and actions in relation to provision for the three groups on which the conference

focused. The conference aimed to ‘break out’ of traditional target group ‘compartmentalising’ to encapsulate the multiple identities through which people experience exclusion and inequality.

The conference outcome refocused energies within Pobal and within the programmes it manages on the achievement of equality and social inclusion and moving beyond statements of principle and intent towards meaningful implementation and measurable impact.

### Multiple Discrimination and People with Disabilities

The National Council on Ageing and Older Persons (NCAOP) and the National Disability Authority (NDA) worked together to develop a policy position paper during the European Year on older people and people with disabilities. The paper focuses on policy issues relating to disability in old age and the ageing of people with disabilities. The paper identifies key areas where the two bodies agree on priority actions needed to progress the welfare of older people with disabilities. It is planned to develop a follow-up plan of actions for 2008 to progress the joint draft policy position paper on ageing and disability.

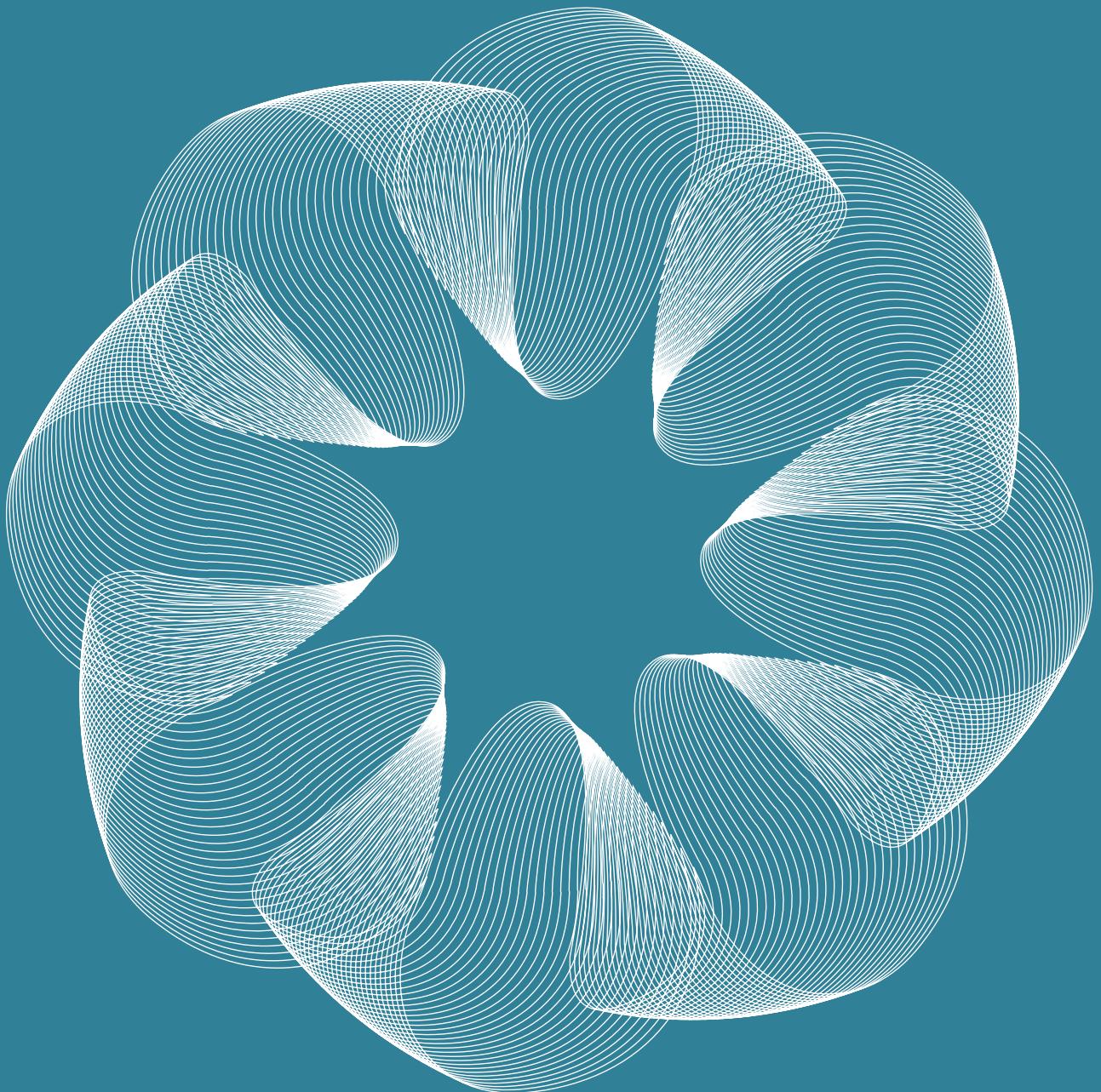
The National Disability Authority (NDA) and the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI) worked collaboratively during the Year on issues for women with disabilities. The NDA had previously commissioned a review of literature on women and disability to explore where gender issues and disability issues intersect; the purpose of the research was to synthesise and summarise the state of knowledge in this area both in Ireland and internationally. The resulting report *Exploring the Research and Policy Gaps: A Review of Literature on Women and Disability* was launched in 2007 in collaboration between the NDA and NWCI.

Following the launch of this report, consultation was undertaken to identify priority areas for further exploration. Both organisations plan to work together to commission a number of pieces of further research as recommended in the report. One such piece was commissioned in 2007, on pregnancy, childbirth and early motherhood. The work when completed will inform policy considerations in these areas.



Review of Activities in Ireland under the  
European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

# A Proposed Legacy



## Thinking about a Legacy

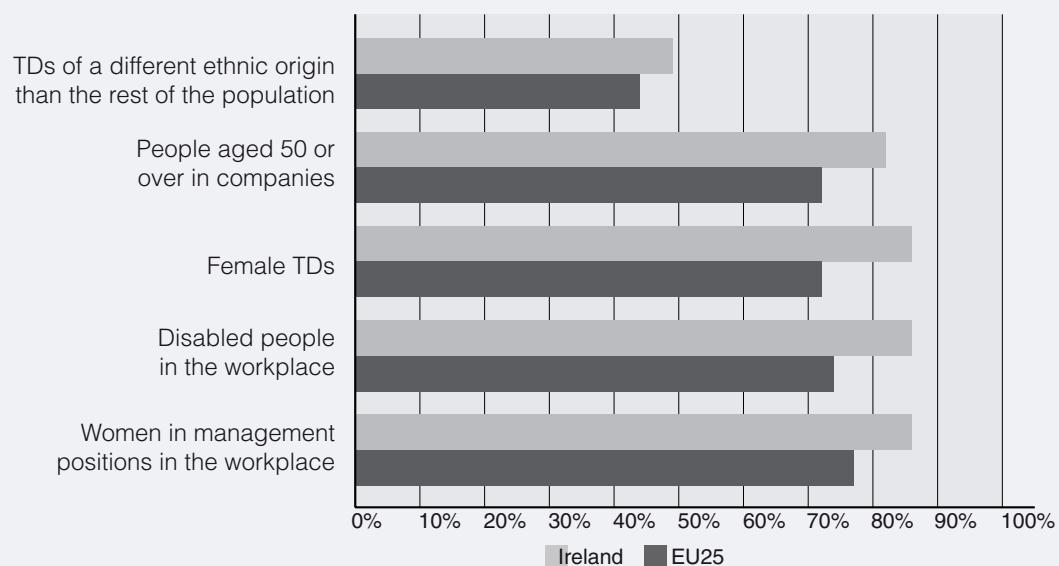
This report provides information on the activities that occurred in Ireland as part of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007. The review shows the extent of the activities undertaken and the range of organisations involved, and tries to convey some of the considerable energy associated with these activities.

The success of the European Year must be measured in terms of a longer-term legacy of change established on foot of this work during the European Year.

During the European Year, a Eurobarometer survey of the attitudes of Irish people to equality issues was published. In response to the question 'In general, would you say that enough effort is made in Ireland to fight all forms of discrimination?', some 39% of people said that not enough effort was being made, while 49% said enough effort was being made (the remainder did not know).

Attitudes in relation to specific items on the equality agenda are shown below.

**Q. Would you say that we need more...? A. Yes**



**Source:** *Discrimination in the European Union: Ireland*, European Commission for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

The data in the diagram show a considerable appetite and ambition among Irish people for further progress in combating inequality and discrimination.

For the purposes of this review, the proposed legacy of the Year is grouped into three mutually reinforcing areas:

- A.** Strengthening the EU role and dimension in promoting equality
- B.** Using the increased awareness and new initiatives at national level as a springboard to further progress on the equality agenda
- C.** Addressing persistent inequalities – implementing positive actions identified under the 'Burning Issues' actions

# A.

## Strengthening the EU Role and Dimension in Promoting Equality

This part of the legacy derives from both the experience of the European Year in Ireland and from the reflections of Equinet, the European network of specialised equality bodies. The Equality Authority is a member of Equinet and played a role in developing the Equinet opinion on the legacy of the European Year.

This part of the legacy draws encouragement from the conclusions of the European Council in December 2007, which noted: 'The European Council welcomes the results of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and invites Member States to strengthen efforts to prevent and combat discrimination inside and outside the labour market'.

There are seven elements to the EU dimension of the legacy.

**(A1) The European Year provides an opportunity to review existing strategies at EU level.**

The European Year has facilitated considerable dialogue on issues of equality in the EU. This experience and the European Year's achievements provide an opportunity to review and further develop the European Commission strategy 'Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All'. This review should reflect the conclusions of the European Council in December 2007 and should identify how these can be implemented to best effect in achieving a more equal EU.

**(A2) Instruments of dialogue at EU level should be maintained and strengthened.**

The annual high level equality summit should provide an instrument for dialogue to enhance the ambition for equality across the European Union. It should provide an arena within which to shape and advance implementation of the conclusions of the European Council in December 2007. Equinet should emerge as a key contributor to this dialogue and should be enabled to bring forward the perspectives and experience of the specialised equality bodies in policy dialogue at EU level.

**(A3) The EU Equal Treatment Directives should be further strengthened.**

This important body of legislation can be developed

- through the introduction of a directive on equal treatment in access to and supply of goods and services on the grounds of age, disability, religion and sexual orientation;
- through a 'levelling up' of provisions on all six grounds covered by the current directives;
- through the further development of positive duties on the public sector to have due regard to equality in carrying out its functions and on the private sector to be planned and systematic in its approach to equality; and
- through provisions to require employers and service providers to make reasonable accommodation for diversity across the six grounds.

**(A4) Identify ways that existing regulations and guidelines for Member States could support the promotion of equality in and by Member States.**

The regulations governing the Structural Funds, the guidelines for the Open Method of Coordination on social inclusion and social protection and the guidelines for National Reform Programmes should require member states to implement equality mainstreaming in preparing operational programmes, action plans and

reform programmes. There should also be requirements in these regulations and guidelines on Member States to invest in positive action to enhance the situation of groups experiencing inequality.

**(A5) Strategic investments should be provided to support the legacy of the European Year.**

The restricted call for proposals made under the Progress Community Initiative should be used to support the continuation of the infrastructure put in place for the European Year and to underpin the legacy of the European Year. Action plans should be prepared and resourced in each Member State to achieve this legacy.

**(A6) The relationships between the offices of EU institutions in Ireland and the Equality Authority should be maintained and further developed.**

Implementation of the European Year in an Irish context was supported by a sustained involvement by the office of the European Commission in Dublin. This involved valuable joint work with the Equality Authority that should be further built upon

**(A7) The relationship between the National Forum on Europe and the Equality Authority should be maintained and further developed.**

The National Forum on Europe played a valuable role during the European Year in hosting an event to support debate on the legacy from the European Year. This involved a close working relationship between the Equality Authority and the National Forum on Europe and this relationship should be sustained and built upon.

# B.

## Using the Increased Awareness and New Initiatives at National Level as a Springboard to Further Progress on the Equality Agenda

Most of the actions in the Irish strategy for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All were undertaken at a national level. The work of many of these actions and the debate involved in many of these actions has generated a potential legacy. This section identifies eight potential elements of the legacy of the European Year at a national level.

### **(B1) Sustain Awareness of the Equality Agenda.**

One legacy of the European Year has been the increased visibility of equality issues. A number of publicity campaigns were undertaken as part of the Year with considerable local and national media coverage obtained for specific actions. A national omnibus survey in mid-2007 showed a 56% level of awareness among the general population of the European Year.

As well as increasing public awareness of equality issues, the activities during the European Year involved hundreds of organisations directly in the implementation of the 33 actions, plus the burning issues projects, in the national strategy. The energy thus created involved many organisations in the active pursuit of equality objectives for the first time, and also served to re-energise existing 'champions' of equality.

The Equality Authority should identify and implement steps to keep equality issues central to national debate. The Equality Authority should support a broad coalition of organisations in achieving coordinated approaches to promoting equality and in sustaining an ambition for equality. This could include continuing to convene the Advisory Committee established for the European Year, continuing to support the networking for equality developed during the European Year and exploring ways to support non-governmental organisations coordinating on equality issues.

### **(B2) Ensure Irish Equality Legislation Remains Consistent with Best Practice.**

The two main pieces of legislation governing equality are the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2007, and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004. This legislation represented a valuable step forward for Ireland in relation to promoting equality and combating discrimination and placed Ireland to the forefront of EU Member States in relation to equality legislation. However in recent years Ireland has lost this leadership position as other Member States have advanced their equality legislation. For example, equality legislation in Britain and Northern Ireland has placed positive duties on the public sector to have due regard to equality in carrying out their functions. Equality legislation in these jurisdictions explicitly covers the functions of the state such as policing and immigration control.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should implement a review in 2009 of Irish equality legislation to mark the tenth anniversary of its introduction. This review should have as one of its aims to ensure Irish equality legislation matches best practice in other Member States. The review should take account of and respond to the debate on equality legislation at various events during the European Year.

**B3 Enable Further Improvements in Implementing Irish Equality Legislation.**

A number of possibilities have emerged from the European Year in relation to improving implementation of Irish equality legislation. Two developments should form part of the legacy from the European Year.

- Improved information strategies for communicating rights to citizens in relation to equality.

Research was undertaken during the European Year by Goodbody Economic Consultants on 'Effective and Innovative Strategies for Providing Information on Rights to the Public'. The Research was overseen by the Citizen Information Board, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Reception and Integration Agency, the National Employment Rights Authority, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Health Services Executive and the Equality Authority. This research has created the potential for new strategies as regards the provision of information on rights. New and innovative approaches to information provision on rights should be piloted in 2008 by these organisations, either individually or collectively.

- Increased investment to make Irish equality legislation work to best effect.

The infrastructure established under the equality legislation should be adequately resourced to effectively meet the demands presented by high levels of discrimination. The scale of this demand is evident from the 2005 CSO survey on equality which found that 12.5% (one in eight) of the population aged 18 and over had experienced discrimination in the previous two years on one or more of the nine grounds covered by equality legislation and on other grounds. The national agreement Towards 2016 committed to an expenditure review of the equality infrastructure – i.e. the Equality Tribunal and the Equality Authority. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should implement this review with a view to identifying the scale of increased resources necessary to ensure the effective operation of this equality infrastructure.

**B4 Ensure Good Data Exists to Support Equality Policies.**

Effective equality policies and equality mainstreaming of policies requires good equality data. The increased emphasis on evidence-based policy making in Ireland also means an increased requirement for data. The publication by the CSO of a special statistical report in relation to all nine grounds covered by Irish equality legislation was therefore a welcome part of the European Year. The CSO plans to repeat this exercise following each future census. The Equality Authority should continue to work with the CSO in this regard, and in relation to broadening the statistical base on equality in Ireland.

**B5 Achieve Sustainable Change in Organisations to Support Equality.**

The European Year saw a number of networks being established with a view to disseminating and sharing expertise on equality and diversity strategies and to support the introduction of policies and practices to promote equality, accommodate diversity and combat discrimination within organisations. The continuation of these networks, and their work, should form a key pillar of the legacy of the European Year.

- The public sector network should continue to be convened by FÁS and supported by the Equality Authority. The pilot actions developed in two local authorities and in Met Éireann should be brought to a conclusion. A further programme of work should then be developed and implemented to support a focus on equality in service provision.
- The private sector networking for equality and diversity developed by IBEC

should continue. IBEC will implement a diversity support programme in 2008 based on this networking and its implementation should be supported by the Equality Authority

- The network established during the European Year in the university sector should be continued. The Equality Authority should support this network to embed a focus on equality in all university structures and decision making arenas.
- The Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) launched its survey of the equality infrastructure in local authorities at a seminar in March 2008. This seminar allowed a consideration of next steps for local authorities in developing their equality infrastructure for employees and customers. The LGMSB and the Equality Authority should support the further development of this infrastructure.
- The initiative developed by Chambers Ireland in relation to benchmarking employer perspectives on equality and diversity provides a valuable focus and stimulus for further work with this sector. This initiative should be sustained and built upon to provide a foundation for further initiatives in this sector.
- The work led by the Athlone Chamber of Commerce during the European Year will be further developed and extended to include a wide range of companies. The Equality Authority should continue to support this process.
- The Irish Congress of Trade Unions developed an important focus on equality within the trade union movement during the European Year. Congress also developed five policy position papers to inform future negotiation within the social partnership process. Congress should devote some of its negotiation capital within the social partnership process to ensure further progress on work-place equality. The Equality Authority should support Congress in disseminating these policy position papers among its membership and in ensuring they inform the practice of trade unions and individual trade unionists.

#### **(B6) Support Equality Mainstreaming as a Tool to Promote Equality.**

The achievement of greater equality will be considerably enhanced when equality issues are taken into account in the plans, policies and programmes of all government departments and state agencies. The integration of equality issues into mainstream programmes (equality mainstreaming) requires action and reflection on the part of policy makers and implementing organisations. A number of advances were made in relation to equality mainstreaming during the European Year and these should be deepened after the European Year. Four developments should form part of the legacy from the European Year.

- A new unit to support the mainstreaming of equality under the European Social Fund Operational Programme (ESF OP) for 2007–13 was established during the European Year. The Equality Mainstreaming Unit will support bodies that implement vocational education and training programmes and that provide employment services to address equality concerns in their work in a systematic way, will prepare research to support this work, and will support partnership approaches at enterprise level towards the achievement of workplace equality. The Equality Mainstreaming Unit will be an important part of the legacy from the European Year.
- During the European Year, initiatives were taken by sections of two Government Departments (Health and Children, and Education and Science) to develop

equality mainstreaming. These Departments should complete the policy-making reviews initiated in 2007, and should develop and implement action plans to enhance their capacity for equality mainstreaming. The Equality Authority should continue to support these departments and to use their example to demonstrate to other parts of those departments, and to other government departments, how equality mainstreaming can be used in practical ways to improve policy making and programme design.

- The Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) worked with the Equality Authority in producing guidelines for conducting equality impact assessments on IVEA and VEC plans, policies and programmes. The IVEA and the Vocational Education Committees should now be supported by the Equality Authority to pilot the implementation of the guidelines in 2008.
- The innovative life-cycle framework, as developed by the National Economic Social Council (NESC) and as incorporated in the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement, will increasingly be used as a framework for policy making. Discussions took place during the European Year as to how equality concerns fit within this framework and within the work of the NESC in setting out a project to establish the developmental welfare state. These discussions should continue in 2008. The NESC, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Equality Authority should develop and implement an action plan to realise the potential synergies between equality strategies, the life-cycle framework and the developmental welfare state.

**(B7) Tackle Issues of Multiple Discrimination.**

The European Year saw perspectives based on an understanding of multiple discrimination being explored more widely in the EU and in Ireland. Based on an EU-level conference in December 2007, it is planned to use the notion of multiple discrimination in a more widespread way at EU level. In Ireland, an understanding of issues relating to multiple discrimination and to the situation and experience of groups at the intersections between the nine grounds should be further developed. The Equality Authority should play a role in this by promoting:

- Improved information on the situation, experience and identity of people experiencing inequality under multiple grounds to increase understanding of the issues involved and
- Improved efforts in programmes focused on promoting equality for a particular ground to address the diversity of people that fall within that ground.

**(B8) Enhance the role of NGOs in representing and articulating the interests of groups experiencing inequality and support a strong advocacy voice to provide feedback on legislation and policies.**

The community sector has a particular and important role to play in articulating the interests of groups experiencing inequality. The European Year allowed for an exploration of the value of this role and how it is currently being played. Funding should be provided to NGOs by the state sector and other funding initiatives to support campaigning or advocacy work, their involvement in social partnership and other consultative fora, and their role in articulating and representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality. This role of NGOs in articulating and representing the interests of groups experiencing inequality should be formally recognised, acknowledged and supported by the state sector at national and local levels

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# C.

## Addressing Persistent Inequalities – Positive Actions Identified under the ‘Burning Issues’ Actions

The actions in this section reflect next steps and recommendations that emerged from and were identified by the fifteen specific actions funded under the ‘Burning Issues’ part of the European Year.

### C1 Gender

- Gendered Nature of Caring – Irish statutory leave entitlements should be developed in a manner to stimulate and support a more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men.
- Gendered Nature of Caring – An initiative should be developed to address older women whose pension entitlements have been affected due to their caring role in the past.
- Transgender Issues – A dedicated health care treatment path for transsexual people should be developed by the HSE.
- Transgender Issues – An information initiative, similar to the action undertaken during the European Year for GPs, should be undertaken targeting psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists in relation to transsexual and transgender issues.
- Transgender Issues – Funding for young transgender people should be provided, including through the BeLonG To Youth Project.
- Men in Gender Equality – The debate begun during the European Year on men and gender equality should be further developed.

### C2 Age

- Upper Age Limits for Health and Social Services – Action should be taken to ensure compliance with the Equal Status Acts. A national seminar is being planned on the issue.

### C3 Family Status and Marital Status

- Accommodation Issues for Lone Parents – Pilot schemes will be continued in Counties Kerry and Cavan. A policy paper on accommodation issues for lone parents will be published by the One Parent Exchange Network and used within the social partnership process.
- Accommodation Issues for Lone Parents – Improved communication between social housing providers and lone parents in housing need should be developed.
- Family Diversity Day – An Advisory Committee is in place to celebrate May 15th 2008 (the UN Day of Families) as the first annual Family Diversity Day in Ireland.
- National Carer Strategy – The Carers’ Association will feed input from its members into the development of the strategy. The Department of Social and Family Affairs should ensure the strategy is designed to achieve equality for carers.

**C4 Disability**

- Long Stay Charges - Further supports for people with intellectual disabilities should be provided in relation to their right to an income and to their right to question any charges for residential care services. The Department of Health and Children should reform the current system regarding Long Stay Charges by providing clear rules and regulations for the assessment of eligible charges. Clear information is needed on exactly what the charges relate to. The charges should not be for costs related to healthcare.
- Sexual and Reproductive Services – Two reports will be published in 2008: an audit of the Irish Family Planning Association's services; and a report on the major issues surrounding disability and sexuality. The law criminalising sexual activity between two consenting intellectually disabled adults should be reviewed.
- Dementia Supports – There is a requirement for early stage dementia support groups. The Personal Advocacy Service should be mainstreamed nationally with promotion of self-advocacy and empowerment for people with dementia. Nursing homes should be supported to deliver a personal representative advocacy service to residents in accordance with HIQA standards for residential care provision.
- Dementia Supports – The debate and discussion enabled by the European Year indicates a need for age-appropriate services for people who develop dementia before the age of 65, and for a greater emphasis on self-advocacy by, and empowerment of, people with dementia.

**C5 Membership of the Traveller Community**

- Embracing Diversity in Schools – An expanded pilot of the ‘Yellow Flag: Diversity in Schools’ programme will be piloted by the Irish Traveller Movement in 2008. Learning from this pilot scheme should then be mainstreamed.

**C6 Religion**

- Attitudes to Muslim people – The research undertaken during the European Year will be a focus for debate in 2008, providing baseline data to support such a debate. This discussion should identify the need for any further work on this issue and how to progress any further initiatives.

**C7 Sexual Orientation**

- Building Partnership Rights – MarriageEquality has been formed and has begun campaigning. This will facilitate debate around the proposed government Heads of Bill on this topic. Policy development on partnership rights should reflect the principle of equality and should include access to civil marriage for gay and lesbian couples.

**C8 Race**

- Participation in Public Policy Development and in the Delivery of Public Services – The seminar report arising from European Year will be published in 2008. This should facilitate and stimulate practical action to achieve the goal of having Black and minority ethnic voices, including the voices of Travellers, influence public policy making in Ireland.

## Implementing the Legacy

The European Year benefited from a significant engagement by, commitment from and energy of a broad range of organisations, across many sectors. The long-term legacy of the Year could valuably be planned and pursued through a similar engagement from such a broad range of organisations.

The Equality Authority should maintain in existence the Advisory Committee that worked with the Equality Authority during the European Year with the cooperation of the members. A first meeting of this Committee to consider the legacy of the Year has been arranged for April 2008. This Committee should support the development and implementation of a legacy action plan based on this proposal.



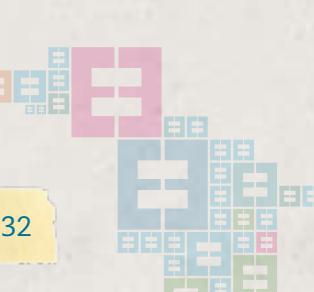


## Burning Issues

### Introduction:

#### The Burning Issues

As part of the consultation process the Equality Authority worked to identify fourteen priority equality issues for groups experiencing inequality on which progress was to be sought as part of the European Year. These priority equality issues encompassed all nine grounds of the equality legislation and were identified as the 'Burning Issues' for the European Year. Fifteen national non-governmental organisations were selected to implement projects to highlight these burning issues and support an effective response to them.



## **Ground 1 DISABILITY**



Two burning issues were identified on the disability ground. The first related to current policy and practice in relation to people with disabilities in institutions, the experience of people with disabilities in institutions, standards and entitlements for people with disabilities in institutions and effective channels of communication. The second related to the development of supports for service providers to ensure accessibility of their services for people with disabilities.

### **Burning Issues Project 1:**

**Inclusion Ireland – Informing Users of Long-term Residential Care of Long-Stay Charges and their own Rights**

Inclusion Ireland is a national voluntary organisation working to promote the rights of people with an intellectual disability in Ireland. It is the coordinating body for over 160 organizations providing services and supports to over 28,000 people.

#### **Aim**

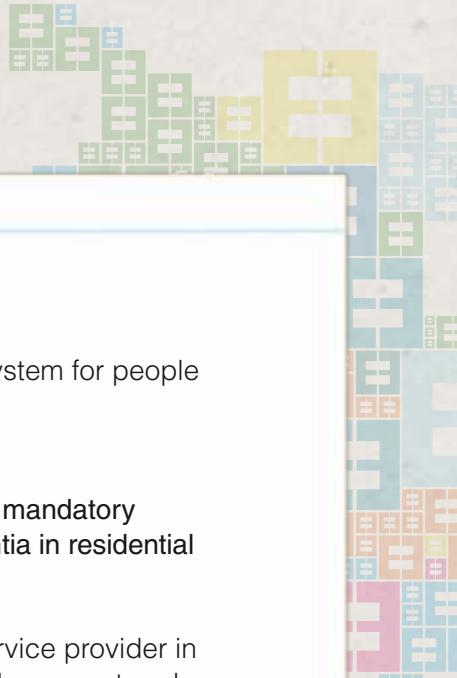
Since the beginning of 2007, all persons with an intellectual disability in residential services have been entitled to a Disability Allowance. Inclusion Ireland was funded to provide information on the right of people with intellectual disabilities to an income, and on health charges they have had to pay since receiving this allowance. Its work in the European Year was intended to raise awareness of these issues with individuals with intellectual disabilities as well as their family members and staff in residential services.

#### **Achievements during the Year**

- An information leaflet was developed on health charges, outlining the right to appeal and guidelines on how the charges are applied. An easy to read leaflet was published in December.
- A parents' seminar was run to hear the views of stakeholders and to debate the charges. This seminar resulted in the issue being raised in the media.
- A position paper with recommendations on reforming the Charges regulations was presented to the Minister for Health & Children in November.
- A range of training workshops were held around Ireland for people with an intellectual disability on the issue of decision making around their money and the charges in late 2007, with further workshops planned for early 2008.

#### **Future Plans**

Inclusion Ireland intends to continue to raise the awareness of people with an intellectual disability as to their right to make decisions about, and to have access to, their personal income. It will continue to lobby the Minister for Health



and Children to reform the Charges Statute to introduce a fairer system for people with an intellectual disability to contribute to their daily expenses.

### Burning Issues Project 2:

Alzheimer Society of Ireland – Provision of information on the new mandatory standards for residential care provision vis-à-vis people with dementia in residential care settings.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is the main dementia-specific service provider in Ireland. It is a national voluntary organisation which aims to provide support and information to people with all forms of dementia, their families and carers.

#### Aim

The Alzheimer Society was funded to organise a conference to coincide with public consultation around the draft standards for residential care. It now plans to produce a resource pack for distribution to staff in its centres, and to others, in relation to issues around advocacy and self-advocacy for people with dementia.

#### Achievements during the Year

A national conference was held in Dublin in September entitled '*Towards a Voice: 25 Years of Dementia Care and Advocacy*'. Over 200 delegates attended from a variety of different agencies including members of the Irish Nursing Homes Organisation/ Federation, Older People's Service Managers, HSE personnel, advocacy and older people's organisations. As well as a range of speakers from Ireland the conference had input from the Scottish Rights Group for Dementia on the subject of self advocacy.

Resource packs were distributed containing all of the conference presentations, information on the Alzheimer Society and its advocacy services and information about professional training and development opportunities. The Alzheimer Society made a CD version of the pack which was subsequently circulated to all delegates, and to others.

#### Future Plans

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland will continue to make residential care providers aware of advocacy by providing information and talks to nursing homes and working with homes to deliver a personal representative advocacy service to residents, in accordance with HIQA standards for residential care provision.

The Alzheimer Society plans to continue developing its advocacy work. It will continue promoting the importance of self-advocacy and empowerment for people with dementia. It will also continue campaigning for the provision of age appropriate services for people who develop dementia before the age of 65.

### Burning Issues Project 3:

#### IFPA/RESPECT – Making Sexual and Reproductive Services More Accessible for People with Disabilities

RESPECT is an advisory group comprising representatives of disability rights and sexual health organisations. It was formed to address issues surrounding disability and sexuality. It includes representatives from a range of groups including: the Irish Family Planning Association; the Forum for People with Disabilities; Inclusion Ireland; the Irish Sex Education Network; the National Institute for Intellectual Disability; Trinity College Dublin; and Enable Ireland.

#### Aim

RESPECT aimed to make mainstream sexual and reproductive services more accessible to people with disabilities. It adopted the following vision statement to inform its work:

“an Irish society where people with disabilities have access and opportunity to enjoy a fulfilling sex life and to make informed choices in their sexual and reproductive lives; where there is full access to high quality information, education and health services”.

#### Achievements during the Year

- Establishment of the advisory group;
- Analysis of the legal context of sexuality and disability;
- Preparation of an information sheet on disability and sexuality for healthcare service providers;
- Submission to the Irish Cervical Screening Programme on the needs of disabled women; and
- Commissioning of an audit of Irish Family Planning Association services.

Consensual sexual activity between intellectually disabled adults is currently criminalised. This situation is combined with a lack of clarity on the capacity to consent to sexual activity proved to be obstacles in the work of this action. This legal issue prevented service providers from actively engaging on the topic of sexuality and disability and therefore impacted on the work of RESPECT.

#### Future Plans

RESPECT intends to complete a final report outlining the major issues surrounding disability and sexuality. The report on the audit of the Irish Family Planning Association's services will also be available in 2008.

RESPECT plans to advocate for changes in the law criminalising sex between consenting intellectually disabled adults, using a rights-based approach. It will continue to raise public and professional awareness on the sexual health needs of those with physical and intellectual disabilities.

## Ground 2 GENDER



Three burning issues were identified on the gender ground. The first issue focused on sharing the caring responsibilities between women and men, the status and standing of caring roles and those who play such roles as well as the role of the state in supporting caring. The second issue focused on exploring and developing effective strategies to build an understanding of male gender conditioning in men and of the role of men in pursuit of a gender-equal society. The third issue focused on the need to secure a visibility for and a recognition of transsexual people.

### Burning Issues Project 4:

#### National Women's Council of Ireland – Symposium on the Gendered Nature of Caring

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) was set up in 1973, and is the national representative organisation for women. In 2007, its affiliated members represented over 300,000 women in Ireland. Its work includes commissioning of research; developing policy submissions; building lobbying capacity; undertaking outreach and development projects; information dissemination; and ensuring visibility of issues facing women through engagement with the media.

#### Aim

The NWCI project highlighted the imbalance in the sharing of care and household responsibilities between men and women. Its central action was a symposium to discuss this issue, with invitees including representatives of government departments, members of the National Economic and Social Council, trade unions, employer organisations, community and voluntary groups, and academics. The intention was to promote awareness about the personal, social and economic impact of women having primary responsibility for providing care and managing housework in Irish society.

#### Achievements during the Year

A conference entitled 'The Distribution of Care Work between Women and Men' was held in Dublin in November.

#### Future Plans

The NWCI is making a submission to the Equality Authority based on the proceedings of the symposium.

The NWCI plans to continue lobbying for the development of Irish statutory leave entitlements in a manner that will stimulate a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women.



## Burning Issues Project 5:

### The Men's Development Network: Men in Gender Equality – Roundtable Discussions

The Men's Development Network is a national organisation, based in Waterford, whose work is informed by its mission statement "Better Lives for Men, Better Lives for All". Its work is focused around five key areas: men's development; domestic violence; health; education; and dissemination. The network supports men disadvantaged by poverty, ill-health, unemployment and male gender conditioning.

#### Aim

The Men's Development Network facilitated a series of round-table discussions, at which perspectives on men in gender equality could be explored. A particular focus was to be on the development of strategies to build an understanding of male gender conditioning. It was anticipated that the following issues would be addressed:

- The impact of male gender conditioning on men at all stages of their development;
- The manifestation of this in various scenarios, including in the home, in the workplace and in the schoolyard;
- The specific implications of male gender conditioning on men living with disability, poverty, unemployment and disadvantage;
- How men can engage in gender equality; and
- The patriarchal hegemonic dividend.

The Men's Development Network believes that individual men suffer as a result of gender conditioning, which places an obligation on them to be fit and able providers, successful in their careers, competitive and striving. They wanted to use the European Year to create fora at which both men and women could address the issue of gender conditioning, and analyse its impacts.

#### Achievements during the Year

Four round-table discussions were held during the European Year: in the North East; the South East; Athlone; and Dublin. These discussions brought together over 50 women and men to discuss issues relating to men and gender equality, with most discussing the issue for the first time.

The discussions led to ways being negotiated to cover ground that has generally not been covered by women and men together.

Partnerships were created with other organisations, including with women's groups.

Notes were kept of the discussions and these are being collated.

#### Future Plans

The Men's Development Network intends to continue to promote the issue of

men in gender equality and to expand the equality discourse. It is reflecting on the process undertaken during 2007 and plans to maintain contacts made and to revisit the conversations and topics raised. The work in 2007 was seen as foundational.

The Network hopes to build on its work during the Year to begin to advocate for gender equality as men and as the Men's Development Network.

#### **Burning Issues Project 6:**

##### **Transgender Equality Network Ireland: Awareness Raising for GPs on Transgender Issues**

Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) is a voluntary organisation which supports people with the condition Gender Identify Disorder, also known as transsexualism. It represents the needs and interests of all those with gender identity issues and seeks to promote positive awareness and equality.

##### **Aim**

The main objective was to provide General Practitioners (GPs) in Ireland with information on transsexualism, on the contacts needed within psychiatric and endocrinology services when treating transsexual patients, on specialist counselling services and on the peer support groups available.

##### **Achievements during the Year**

- In November, a list of contact details was sent to every GP member of the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), along with a one page letter describing the implications of living with Gender Identity Disorder.
- A two-page article explaining the medical background to Gender Identity Disorder and the latest treatments available was published in the November edition of Forum, the monthly magazine for members of the ICGP.
- A weekend seminar for the support groups on relevant health issues was organised in Waterford. Information was provided on the physical impact of transitioning (changing from the gender one was identified with at birth to the appropriate gender) and on how to achieve a successful outcome. This was both an informative and a social event.

##### **Future Plans**

Service providers, particularly health service providers, who frequently come into professional contact with transsexual people, will be invited to a half day seminar in early 2008. This will provide an opportunity for the dissemination of information to enhance the quality of care and information provided to transsexual people.

TENI has identified the need for a dedicated health care professional dealing with transexual issues to be appointed by the HSE. A similar piece of work to provide information to psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists would be very beneficial.

### Burning Issues Project 7:

#### BeLonG To Youth Project: Peer Support Group for Young People who Identify as Transgender

The BeLonG To Youth Project works with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people between the ages of 14 and 23. Through a varied programme of activities, young people are facilitated in personal exploration, development and growth, with a strong emphasis on confidence building, peer support and making friends. BeLonG To works to provide services and a voice for LGBT youth, to enable them to access their rights as equal citizens and empowering them to participate as agents in positive social change.

#### Aims

The aim of this action was to allow the opportunity for young transgender people to meet together as a support group in a safe space. The BeLonG To group had not previously advertised its work and it also hoped to use the funding to this end, with advertisements in the relevant gay press. With the emphasis of the group on personal growth, it was also hoped to use some of the funding to assist in developing and implementing resources and educational inputs relevant to the target group.

#### Achievements during the Year

During the European Year, BeLonG To Youth Project established a group for young people who identify as transsexual. This group (IndividualiT) was formed in March and provides a space where young transsexual people can meet for peer support and fun activities. The group met on an ongoing basis until the end of the Year and were planning to continue their work in 2008. The group aimed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for young transgender people to meet their peers, learn and exchange views and information, and become empowered to attain their full and equal rights in Irish society. A number of events and activities were undertaken by the group socially and advertisements were placed in the September edition of Gay Community News and the Autumn/Winter edition of Youth Work Now (Y NOW) magazine.

#### Future Plans

The group is the first of its kind in Ireland and has highlighted the existence of trans youth in the wider LGBT community. During the Year, links were created with other organisations including TENI and OutHouse. The group also received a number of contacts from the parents of young people who may be transgender. In this context the European Year has demonstrated the need for such a group and it hopes to continue its work. It also hopes to develop an online resource for trans youth and to extend its work outside of Dublin. It also hopes to gain more resources to support its personnel in undertaking this further agenda of work.

## Ground 3 RELIGION



One burning issue was identified on the religion ground. This issue focused on the need to explore majority community attitudes to Islam and the Muslim community.

### Burning Issues Project 8:

NUI Maynooth, Dept of Anthropology – Three research pieces on Irish attitudes towards Islam and the Muslim community

This project involved research into Irish attitudes towards Muslim people and Islam. It was carried out by three postgraduate students in the Anthropology Department of **The National University of Ireland, Maynooth**. This work was overseen by a principal investigator, Dr. Chandana Mathur, in consultation with Prof. Lawrence Taylor.

#### Aim

In the context of a desire for “exploration of majority community attitudes to Islam and the Muslim community” in Ireland, this research project was aimed to provide a focused and detailed ethnographic study of the encounters between the majority Irish and the Muslim communities in several different contexts: kin and community relationships; the realm of work; and the exercise of state authority. Three particular pieces of research were undertaken, on:

- Comparing the experiences of majority Irish converts to Islam with those of Muslim immigrants to Ireland and exploring the differentials in their sense of being Muslim in Ireland;
- Exploring the situation of former workers with the GAMA company from Turkey and of their extended social networks; and
- Reviewing majority community attitudes towards Islam and Muslim communities through the lens of the conscious initiatives of representatives of state authority, in particular the model of community policing.

#### Achievements during the Year

The fieldwork phase of this research was largely completed by early November, and the three researchers presented their findings at NUI Maynooth. A public seminar was held to share the research findings more broadly. The research reports are due to be finalised.

#### Future Plans

The researchers hope that the research findings will lead to public debate, as well as establishing baselines as regards further research on the Muslim community and attitudes to the Muslim Community in Ireland.



## Ground 4 RACE



One burning issue was identified on the race ground. This issue focused on the policy and practice of integration of minority ethnic groups with a particular focus on access to public services for Black and minority ethnic groups.

### Burning Issues Project 9:

European Network against Racism Ireland – Seminar on the Participation of Black and Ethnic Minority Groups in Public Policy Development and the Delivery of Public Services

The European Network against Racism (ENAR) is a network of over 600 European groups working to promote the rights and equal treatment of minority ethnic groups living in the EU and to combat racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. ENAR Ireland has almost 20 member organisations including the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Traveller organisations, The National Women's Council of Ireland and local organizations working with immigrants and refugees coming to Ireland.

#### Aim

ENAR Ireland aimed to look at the obstacles and opportunities for minority ethnic groups in participating in and engaging with the shaping of policy in Ireland.

#### Achievements during the Year

A day long seminar, 'Minority Ethnic Voices Influencing Policy in Ireland: Obstacles and Opportunities', was held in Dublin in November, to coincide with Anti-Racist Workplace Week. Speakers included representatives from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Traveller groups, agricultural and domestic workers support groups, the Irish Refugee Council and the Equality Authority. The three sessions that took place during the day were entitled:

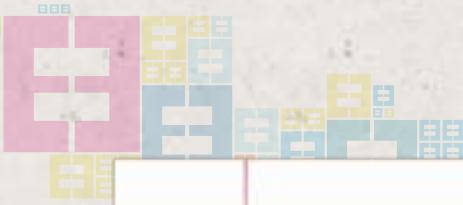
- Social Partnership, Social Inclusion and the Importance of Minority Ethnic Participation;
- 'Obstacles and Opportunities': Minority Ethnic Led Groups Speak About their Experience of Engaging with Policy in Ireland; and
- 'Bringing things to the Next Level': The Importance of Minority Ethnic Engagement with Policy and the Benefits for Society as a Whole.

There was also an opportunity for small group discussions.

A draft report on the seminar and its findings was subsequently prepared.

#### Future Plans

It is planned to publish the final version of the seminar report in early 2008. The findings will also be used to inform ENAR reports at European level. In Ireland,



the work will support particular groups to engage in policy – contacts have already been made with Traveller women and with Comhlámh.



Lot Gernan (Domestic Workers Support Group, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland), Samar Bennis (New Communities Partnership), Julie Mongan (Longford Traveller Movement), Juliet Amamure (AkiDwA) and Kensika Monshengwo (National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism) at the ENAR seminar on 'The Participation of Black and Ethnic Minority Groups in Public Policy Development and the Delivery of Services'

## Ground 5

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY



One burning issue was identified on the Traveller ground. This issue focused on practice at school level in creating inclusive schools that achieve educational outcomes for Travellers.

#### Burning Issues Project 10:

##### Irish Traveller Movement – Yellow Flag Traveller Project for Schools

The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) was established in 1990 and has over 70 Traveller organisations in its national membership network. With the aim of achieving full equality between Travellers and settled people in Irish society, it identifies issues faced by Travellers, promotes culturally appropriate initiatives and challenges individual, structural and institutional racism facing members of the Traveller community.

#### Aim

The ITM was funded to undertake a "Yellow Flag: Diversity in Schools" programme, to promote cultural diversity and an effective response to cultural diversity in the education system. The pilot programme was to involve practical measures to bring issues of inter-culturalism into the day to day running of schools. All members of the school and wider community including management, staff, parents and pupils would be engaged in this scheme and schools successfully completing the programme would be awarded a "yellow flag".

#### Achievements during the Year

- The action was developed by the ITM's Education Working Group. The ITM met a range of stakeholders to discuss the idea further. The "yellow flag" proposal was also sent to several schools for comment, and principals and teachers were consulted about their potential involvement; and
- It was decided following these consultations that, given the level of ambition in getting such a pilot programme up and running, a project worker would be required. The ITM subsequently worked to secure funding to this end. The One Foundation committed €20,000 to the programme and the Irish Traveller Movement was talking to a number of other agencies in late-2007 in relation to the final shortfall.

#### Future Plans

The ITM plans to pilot the idea of the Yellow Flag to promote diversity in schools, through a programme beginning in early 2008. The aim is to build on existing links with schools and organisations to implement the pilot fully in 2008 and to carry out an evaluation of its impact.

## Ground 6 FAMILY STATUS



Two burning issues were identified on the family status ground. The first issues focused on the provision of accommodation that meets the needs of lone parents. The second issue focused on the commitment to prepare a national strategy for carers.

### Burning Issues Project 11:

**One Parent Exchange and Network – Develop a broader understanding and a greater profile for accommodation issues for one-parent families**

**One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)** is a national network of lone parent groups. It was set up 1994 to represent the varied needs of lone parents, and has a particular focus on inequality that leads to poverty.

#### Aim

The principal objective of this action was to deepen understanding of accommodation issues facing one-parent families, and to highlight difficulties experienced by lone parents in accessing appropriate accommodation. It aimed to promote policy and practical responses to these issues with relevant stakeholders, and provide resources to support OPEN member groups in undertaking local advocacy and policy work.

#### Achievements during the Year

- A fact sheet on accommodation issues for lone parents was published in October. This also aimed to challenge myths and stereotypes. It was published in conjunction with UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and was widely disseminated, including to media organisations;
- A policy briefing paper on accommodation issues for lone parents was drafted at the end of 2007. This draws in part from information gathered at two seminars; a consultation seminar with OPEN members and a seminar targeted at local authority housing staff and Community Welfare Officers;
- An information resource for lone parents on the Rental Accommodation Scheme was developed in partnership with Threshold, and with the support of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government;
- A resource on housing policy and structures was developed for use by OPEN members to support local level work; and
- Models of good practice were developed in two local authority areas, Cavan and Kerry. Meetings were held with stakeholders in these areas, including local authority staff, and programmes of action were developed to address issues identified by lone parent groups.



## Future Plans

Actions arising from the local pilot schemes in Cavan and Kerry will continue beyond the European Year, building on the working relationships established.

The policy paper will be published in 2008 and will underpin OPEN's policy work in this area in the future, including in social partnership.

OPEN will continue to work for better information for lone parents in need of accommodation, for better communication between social housing providers and those lone parents in housing need, and for improved housing policies to achieve social inclusion outcomes for lone parents in a lifecycle context.

## Burning Issues Project 12:

### Carers' Association – Consultation Process for a National Carers' Strategy

Established in 1987, the **Carers' Association** is a national voluntary organisation for and of family carers in the home. Family carers provide high levels of care to a range of people including frail older people, people with severe disabilities, the terminally ill and children with special needs. The Association undertakes lobbying and advocacy work on behalf of carers. It also delivers services and had 16 Resource Centres and two Service Projects in 2007.

#### Aim

The *Towards 2016* national social partnership agreement included a commitment to prepare a national carers strategy that focuses in particular on supporting informal and family carers in the community. It was intended that the strategy would be prepared in 2007 (although this timeframe has now been changed to 2008), led by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

To feed into the preparation of this strategy, the Carers' Association undertook to host a series of consultation meetings around Ireland, in order to develop a position paper on the proposed strategy.

#### Achievements during the Year

The Carers' Association held eight facilitated regional fora around the country. These events were well attended and included a significant contribution from family carers. The events served to build awareness of the promised strategy and to secure an input from family carers as to what should be in the strategy. The Carers' Association prepared a policy document on foot of this consultation exercise and plan to use this in 2008 to influence preparation of the national caring strategy.

#### Future Plans

In December 2007 the Government agreed to the establishment of a working group to develop the strategy. The group is chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach with the secretariat provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It includes officials from the Departments of Finance, Enterprise, Trade &

Employment; Health & Children, as well as the HSE and FÁS. Other Departments and Agencies will be called on as required. The strategy will focus on all informal and family carers in the community – not just those in receipt of a social welfare payment. The Carers' Association has begun to liaise with this group and is using the policy document to seek to influence the strategy.

The strategy will cover the period 2008 to 2016. There will be a consultation process involving meetings with the social partners and a request for written submissions from the public. The aim is to complete the strategy by mid-2008.

## Ground 7 SEXUAL ORIENTATION



One burning issue was identified on the sexual orientation ground. This issue was focused on new policy and practice on partnership rights for same sex couples.

### Burning Issues Project 13:

National Lesbian and Gay Federation – Symposium on Building Partnership and Marriage Rights

The National Lesbian and Gay Federation (NLGF) was founded in 1979 and works for the rights of, and the elimination of discrimination against, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. Among its activities is the publication of Gay Community News (GCN), a monthly community based newspaper founded in 1988.

#### Aim

This action was funded to raise awareness of the issues relating to lesbian and gay partnership and marriage rights in Ireland.

#### Achievements during the Year

In the months prior to the June 2007 general election, GCN published several opinion pieces, columns and editorials on lesbian and gay marriage and partnership rights. The newspaper also highlighted the issue and its place on political parties' manifestos and agendas, and sought to obtain information and views from the main political parties. After the general election, the incoming government included a commitment to partnership rights in its Programme for Government.

A symposium on the issue was held in November in Dublin. 85 people registered to attend, including politicians, trade unionists, lawyers, senior personnel from state and semi-state agencies, academics & researchers, as well as personnel from LGBT organisations and other NGOs nationally. The symposium addressed legal, social, religious and cultural issues, with an international keynote speaker. Other speakers included politicians, a government minister, lawyers, academics and LGBT policy-makers and activists. The event received considerable media coverage.

The timing of the symposium, a month after the government had announced its intention of introducing the heads of a bill on partnership rights, enabled the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to give specific indications of its intentions. The symposium was opened by the Minister of State for Equality Sean Power TD.

#### Future Plans

Arising from the symposium, it has been agreed by LGBT organisations and by

other interested organisations and groups that a 'Platform for Marriage Equality Action' will be formed, to campaign for full and equal rights for lesbians and gay men with respect to marriage and partnership. This is in light of government proposals to introduce the Heads of Bill on the matter in March 2008. A first meeting of the Platform was held in February 2008.

GCN continues to publish on the issue and will do so up to and after the publication of the March 2008 bill on partnership rights.



Invitation to the National Lesbian and Gay Federation symposium on partnership rights

## Ground 8 MARITAL STATUS

One burning issue was identified on the marital status ground. This issue focused on building a profile for family diversity in Irish society.

### Burning Issues Project 14:

Immigrant Council of Ireland (with the support of OPEN) – Promotion of Designated Family Diversity Day

The Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) is a national, independent, non-governmental organisation established in 2001. It promotes the rights of migrants through the provision of information and legal advice, advocacy, lobbying, research and publications.

#### Aim

This action aimed to celebrate family diversity in Ireland, to raise the profile of different kinds of family units and create debate about the implications of this diversity for policy.

#### Achievements during the Year

- A range of NGOs established a coalition to designate May 15th (the UN Day of Families) as Family Diversity Day in Ireland. These included NGOs working with people experiencing discrimination on grounds of age, race and sexual orientation (and further NGOs may join the coalition). The Board of the Family Support Agency agreed in principle to support the development of Family Diversity Day.
- An agency was selected regarding branding of the Family Diversity Day in Ireland and initial work commenced on preparations for the day, e.g. the website [www.may15th.ie](http://www.may15th.ie) was secured by the partners.
- The Community Foundation has been briefed extensively about the project with a view to establishing a fund to support local work. Further work will take place in 2008 to roll out a support programme at local level.

#### Future Plans

This action has a practical next step as plans will focus on activities for May 15th 2008. A national advisory committee was appointed in December 2007, the branding work was underway in early 2008 and support was being sought from further organisations.

The action showed a need for research with partner organisations to build the shared (or not shared) understanding of 'family diversity'.

## Ground 9

### AGE

Two burning issues were identified on the age ground. The first issue focused on barriers to access to health services for older people, the development of health services to meet the particular needs of older people and the development of standards and entitlements in this area of provision. The second issue focused on the negative stereotyping of young people. There was no project implemented on the second issue.

#### Burning Issues Project 15:

##### Age Action: Reviewing the Upper Limits for Certain Health and Social Services

**Age Action Ireland** is a national non-governmental organisation on ageing and older people. It is a network organisation for individuals and organisations, including older people and carers of older people. It is also a development agency promoting better policies and services for older people in a society where the number of older people is increasing.

#### Aims

This action sought to document the use of upper age limits in the provision of health and social services and to explore these limits and their impact with service providers and service users.

#### Achievements during the Year

- A brief report has been prepared which summarises the findings of this action.
- A dissemination plan has been prepared for this report alongside a strategy to support debate on the issues and on age discrimination in service provision.

#### Future Plans

A national seminar is being planned to explore the issues on the report and to discuss the issue of age discrimination with health and social service providers and older people. Links are being made with similar projects in Britain and at EU level. It is planned to continue this type of work with other sectors.

## Section 8

### Closing the Year

A Closing Ceremony for the European Year was held at Dublin Castle in December. This served to celebrate the wide range of activities undertaken in Ireland during the European Year and to explore a potential legacy from the Year.

The keynote address was given by President Mary McAleese. In her address she stated:

“What the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is about is trying to get us focused in a way in which we can create a wrap around equality system. This is not just an equality system that you get in stereo from nicely articulated ambitions and important legislation. It is rather a wrap around system, a system where everything is integrated, where attitudes are integrated with systems”.

And: -

“Under the slogan Play Your Part the Equality Authority has engaged the Irish public in an open debate over the past year on the benefits of diversity, the benefits of equality, the meaning of diversity the meaning of equality and on the ways of valuing the differences that are part and parcel of our every day contemporary society”.

She emphasised that the closing event was “the start of a journey and a new phase in the journey” and, using Seamus Heaney’s analogy of a ‘crow bar’ from the ‘Canton of Expectation’ she stated:

“I think that really what this European Year has done is point out all the places along the road to equality where the crow bars need to be used. Anyone of you who have ever used a crow bar will know that at the end of the crow bar the more hands there are, and the more push there is at the top of it, the quicker you will get the obstacle out of the way. That is what you’re about- pulling together the energy and the commitment and the passion that will make sure we get these obstacles out of the way at the quickest speed we can and at the earliest possible opportunity”.

The event provided an opportunity for organisations associated with the Burning Issues to provide information on their work. A burning issues ‘marketplace’ was organised as part of the event.



President Mary McAleese at the Closing Ceremony for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

The “CELEBRATING 2007!” closing event in Lisbon on 19-20 November brought together 1,000 participants from around Europe, including NGOs, social partners, equality bodies and local, regional and national authorities. Speakers included the Portuguese Prime Minister José Socrates. The EU-wide Closing Conference celebrated the effective implementation of the Year and looked back on the numerous diverse activities that took place across Europe. It also provided an opportunity to discuss and explore the legacy of the Year.

The results of the work undertaken across the EU under the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All were welcomed by the Council of the European Union in November 2007. A resolution of the Council noted “the exceptionally high level of mobilisation and participation of stakeholders in the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All” and welcomed the establishment of EQUINET, the European network of specialised equality bodies. The resolution went on to make 24 suggestions to Member States and to the European Commission, including invitations to the Member States and the Commission:

- To ensure full and effective implementation and evaluation of existing anti-discrimination laws and gender equality legislation;
- To promote further information about and awareness of these laws among the wider public, stakeholders and policy makers and to promote the benefits of equal opportunities for all by developing and disseminating information and awareness-raising tools and methods;
- To strengthen efforts to prevent and combat discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, inside or outside the labour market;
- To secure and strengthen the effectiveness of specialised equality bodies in carrying out their independent functions by providing them, having regard to national budgetary constraints, with the necessary human and financial resources;

- To ensure the mainstreaming on non-discrimination and equality issues in the implementation of the Structural Funds, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, the Guideline for Growth and Jobs and the Objectives for Social Inclusion and Social Protection;
- To fully associate civil society, including organisations representing people at risk of discrimination, the social partners and stakeholders in the design of policies and programmes aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting equality and equal opportunities, both at European and national levels;
- To make full use of the possibilities for pursuing positive action in order to overcome existing inequalities and achieve full equality in practice, in particular with regard to education and employment.

In December 2007, personnel from Ramboll Consulting Ltd., the company evaluating the European Year at an EU level visited Dublin for two days and met with a range of organisations that had taken part in activities relating to the Year. They also attended the final meeting of the National Advisory Committee. Ireland was selected as a case study for this evaluation.

## Members of the European Year Advisory Committee

Niall Crowley, Carol Baxter, Carole Sullivan, Rachel Mullen (*Equality Authority*)  
Niall McCutcheon (*Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*)  
Fintan O'Brien, Seamus McLoughlin (*Department of Education and Science*)  
Brendan Pocock (*Department of Environment and Local Government*)  
David Maloney (*Department of Health and Children*)  
Anne McManus (*Department of Social & Family Affairs*)  
Niamh Carmody, Ruth Deasy (*European Commission*)  
Brendan O'Neill (*Office of the Ombudsman*)  
Shira Mehlman (*FÁS*)  
Siobhain Barron (*National Disability Authority*)  
Helen Johnson (*Combat Poverty*)  
Aidan Lloyd (*Pobal*)  
Philip Watt (*National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism*)  
Bride Rosney (*RTE*)  
Joanna McMinn (*National Women's Council of Ireland*)  
Damien Walsh (*Irish Traveller Movement*)  
Catherine Rose, Gail Williams (*Age and Opportunity*)  
Mairéad Hayes (*Senior Citizens Parliament*)  
Geraldine Fennell (*Carers Groups*)  
Se Franklin (*Men's Development Network*)  
Ciaran McKinney (*Gay and Lesbian Equality Network*)  
Alice Mary Higgins (*European Network Against Racism*)  
Frances Byrne (*One Parent Exchange Network*)  
Jean Marie Cullen, James Doorley (*National Youth Council of Ireland*)  
Donal Toolan (*Forum of People with Disabilities*)  
Michael Ringrose (*People with Disabilities Ireland*)  
Clíona Ní Chualáin (*Inclusion Ireland*)  
Rosheen Callender (*Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union*)  
David Joyce (*Irish Congress of Trade Unions*)  
Finola McDonnell (*Irish Business and Employers Confederation*)  
Linda O'Sullivan (*Business in the Community*)  
Caoimhe Gavin, Sean Murphy (*Chambers Ireland*)





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9 781905 628766 >

**The Equality Authority**  
2 Clonmel Street  
Dublin 2.

**Public Information Centre:**  
Lo call 1890 245 545

Telephone 01 417 3333  
Business Enquires 01 417 3336  
Text Phone 01 417 3385  
Fax 01 417 3331  
Email info@equality.ie  
Web www.equality.ie