



**Equinet**  
**European network**  
**of equality bodies**

**Equality Bodies**  
**Supporting Good Practice**  
**by Service Providers**

**An Equinet Good Practice Guide**

# Equality Bodies Supporting Good Practice by Service Providers

An Equinet Good Practice Guide

December 2012

*Equality Bodies Supporting Good Practice by Service Providers* is published by Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies.

**Equinet** brings together 38 organizations from 31 European countries which are empowered to counteract discrimination as national equality bodies across the range of grounds including age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Equinet works to enable national equality bodies to achieve and exercise their full potential by sustaining and developing a network and a platform at European level.

**Equinet members:** Ombud for Equal Treatment, **Austria** | Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, **Belgium** | Institute for the equality of women and men, **Belgium** | Commission for Protection against Discrimination, **Bulgaria** | Office of the Ombudsman, **Croatia** | Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman, **Czech Republic** | Office of the Ombudsman, **Cyprus** | Board of Equal Treatment, **Denmark** | Danish Institute for Human Rights, **Denmark** | Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, **Estonia** | Ombudsman for Equality, **Finland** | Ombudsman for Minorities, **Finland** | Commission for Protection against Discrimination, **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)** | Defender of Rights, **France** | Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, **Germany** | Office of the Ombudsman, **Greece** | Equal Treatment Authority, **Hungary** | Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, **Hungary** | Equality Authority, **Ireland** | National Office Against Racial Discrimination, **Italy** | Office of the Ombudsman, **Latvia** | Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, **Lithuania** | Centre for Equal Treatment, **Luxembourg** | National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, **Malta** | Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, **The Netherlands** | Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, **Norway** | Human Rights Defender, **Poland** | Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment, **Portugal** | High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, **Portugal** | Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, **Portugal** | National Council for Combating Discrimination, **Romania** | Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, **Serbia** | National Centre for Human Rights, **Slovakia** | Advocate for the Principle of Equality, **Slovenia** | Council for the Promotion of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination on the Grounds of Racial or Ethnic Origin, **Spain** | Discrimination Ombudsman, **Sweden** | Equality and Human Rights Commission, **UK – Great Britain** | Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, **UK – Northern Ireland**

Equinet Secretariat | Rue Royale 138 | 1000 Brussels | Belgium  
info@equineteurope.org | www.equineteurope.org  
ISBN 978-92-95067-68-4  
© Equinet 2012  
Reproduction is permitted provided the source is acknowledged.

*This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).*

*This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.*

*The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.*

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

The views expressed in this publication reflect the authors' views and neither Equinet nor the European Commission are liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission. Moreover, this publication does not necessarily represent the position or opinion of the equality bodies either that have been involved in preparing this report or the other equality bodies that are members of Equinet.

## Contents

### 1. Introduction

p 7

### 2. Strategic Approach

p 8

### 3. Equality Competence

Equality competence | Barriers to Equality Competence | The Case for Equality Body Initiatives to Support Equality Competence | Initiatives that can be taken by an Equality Body | Factors for Success when Supporting Equality Competence within Organisations

p 9

### 4. Equality Bodies Providing Guidance

*Featured case studies:*

Embedding Equality in Public Services: What Works in Practice (*Ireland*) | Recommendation on Gender Neutral Pricing of Hairdresser Services (*Austria*) | Diversity Mainstreaming for Public Authorities (*Germany*)

p 13

### 5. Equality Bodies Delivering Training

*Featured case studies:*

Implementing Equality and Sexual Harassment Policies, Setting up Equality Committees and Providing Training (*Malta*)

p 16

### 6. Equality Bodies Offering Direct Support

*Featured case studies:*

Support Scheme for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) (*Ireland*) | Developing a Municipal Approach to Equality in Service Provision: Equality Lab in the City of Copenhagen (*Denmark*)

p 18

### 7. Equality Bodies Building Indirect Support

*Featured case studies:*

Sectoral Approach with the Hospitality Sector (*Ireland*) | Public Sector Equality Learning Network (*Ireland*)

p 22

### 8. Equality Bodies Establishing Standards

*Featured case studies:*

Inserting Equality in Standards for the Further Education Sector (*Ireland*) | An Equality Mark (*Malta*)

p 26

## 9. Equality Bodies Conducting Equality Impact Assessments

*Featured case studies:*

Equality Impact Assessment Tool for Public Service Education Provision (*Ireland*)

p 28

## 10. Equality Bodies Initiating an Equality Plan

*Featured case studies:*

Equality Action Planning in the County Waterford Vocational Education Committee (*Ireland*)

p 30

## 11. Equality Bodies Enabling Participation by Service Users

p 32

## 12. Equality Bodies Monitoring Progress

p 33

## 13. Conclusion

p 33

## 14. Resources

p 34

# 1. Introduction

Equality bodies have a statutory mandate to combat discrimination and promote equality in the provision of goods and services on the gender and race grounds under EU equal treatment directives. Some equality bodies have a mandate to combat discrimination and promote equality in the provision of goods and services across a broader range of equality grounds under national equal treatment legislation.

Equality bodies use a variety of approaches in implementing this mandate:

- Supporting, taking, hearing or mediating on legal cases.
- Communications strategies to build an awareness of rights among service users and a culture of compliance among service providers.
- Research and survey initiatives to build knowledge of discrimination issues in service provision and good practice responses to these issues.
- Activities to support good practice by service providers in advancing equality, adjusting for diversity and preventing discrimination.

The problem of under-reporting of discrimination poses significant challenges to the effective implementation of this mandate. People who have experienced discrimination may be afraid to take a case against a large or powerful service provider on which they depend. People can lack confidence in the system and its ability to achieve change in their situation.

Equality bodies, therefore, have to devise a strategic approach to their mandate in this field. They must deploy a range of approaches to enable the impact of the legislation.

In a context of under-reporting, prevention of discrimination becomes important for equality bodies. Equality bodies have to give some priority to supporting service providers to develop and implement good equality policies and practices. Equality bodies can impact on a wider range of service users by working proactively with service providers to develop their equality competence.

This publication outlines the key concepts and elements that shape a strategic approach by equality bodies to supporting service providers to promote equality, adjust for diversity, and combat discrimination. It first establishes the need for a strategic approach by equality bodies to this work. It next examines the concept of the equality competence of organisations that is the core goal of this work. It then sets out the range of initiatives that can be taken by equality bodies to support good practice by service providers.

This publication has been developed around the work of the Equality Authority in Ireland and includes case studies from the Equality Authority. It also includes case studies from equality bodies in other jurisdictions. The case studies illustrate the implementation of specific approaches to the work of supporting service providers to develop new practices. Some of the case studies also illustrate combinations of these different approaches to the work in particular initiatives.

## 2. Strategic Approach

A strategic approach by equality bodies to support good practice by service providers involves internal organisation within the equality body. Equality bodies need to identify a staff member who will take responsibility for ensuring this work progresses in a context of many other priorities. A work plan should be developed to identify the activities with most potential to advance the goals of the equality body in this field. Funding could be sought from national or EU sources to implement specific initiatives in this field.

A strategic approach by equality bodies to support good practice by service providers involves a range of initiatives: providing guidance materials, delivering training modules, offering direct support in the form of finance and/or expertise, building indirect support through sectoral groups or networks, establishing and monitoring standards, conducting equality impact assessments, initiating equality plans, enabling participation by service users and monitoring progress. The equality body will select the initiatives most appropriate to its circumstances and most effective for its goals.

An equality body implementing a strategic response to supporting equality competence in service provision can usefully put in place a special unit with staff trained to support organisations in equality competence if it has sufficient resources.

**In Ireland** the Equality Authority established a 'Development Section' within the organisation. This section is responsible for working with public and private sector organisations to develop their equality competence. It has a staff of six people, four of whom are equality experts. Their expertise includes equality mainstreaming, equality training, resource development and project management. It had access to a budget of €463,000 in 2011. Most of this budget is made up of grants from the EU which amounted to €400,000 in 2011.

## 3. Equality Competence

### **Equality competence**

Equality competence is the capacity of an organisation to embed equality, diversity and non-discrimination in its policies, procedures and practices. An equality competent organisation is able to achieve equality outcomes for the diversity of its service users from across the grounds covered in equal treatment legislation.

Equality competence involves the organisation:

- Establishing a vision for equality with objectives that are relevant to the remit of the organisation;
- Understanding the needs of their service users from an equality and diversity perspective;
- Implementing a proactive approach to equality where positive action is deployed in support of achieving full equality in practice for service users;
- Building a culture and practice that values difference and the diversity of service users and makes adjustments where required to take account of the practical implications of this diversity;
- Developing procedures to address issues of discrimination if they arise and to implement steps to prevent discrimination happening against service users.

An equality competent organisation has an internal equality infrastructure to drive the focus on equality, diversity and non-discrimination. This includes:

- Equality policies setting out the organisation's commitment to equality, diversity and non-discrimination and the standards it seeks to achieve;
- An equality training strategy that enables all staff to secure the knowledge and skills that they need to implement the equality policy;
- An equality plan that establishes practical objectives that the organisation wishes to achieve in advancing equality, diversity and non-discrimination for service users. This is based on a review of the current policies, procedures and practices within the organisation and their impact on equality, diversity and non-discrimination;
- Equality champions at a senior staff level to ensure that the organisation achieves its commitments on equality, diversity and non-discrimination;
- Data collection on the diversity of service users such that all planning and decision making is evidence-based and progress towards the objectives set by the organisation can be monitored;
- Development of relationships with individuals and organisations from the grounds covered by the equal treatment legislation and of participative forms of decision making that include these individuals and organisations;
- Equality impact assessments on new plans, policies, programmes and budgets at design stage to ensure these contribute to the equality, diversity and non-discrimination objectives and standards set by the organisation.



## **Barriers to Equality Competence**

A range of barriers to equality competence within organisations can be identified. It is useful to set these out as they can be barriers encountered by equality bodies that seek to engage with service providers to support good practice. The barriers perceived by service providers include:

- Fear that they will create problems for themselves that they cannot easily solve by taking on these issues;
- Fear that taking action on equality is an extra burden or that it will take up resources or staff time;
- Desire not to change the system or the current way of doing business which is already serving them well;
- A perspective that equality is a luxury which does not have to be taken seriously;
- Belief, without evidence, that the service is not discriminatory, or that because “we treat all of our customers the same” there could be no problem;
- Fears among management about challenging staff who might be involved in discriminatory practice;
- Lack of knowledge about equality, diversity and non-discrimination among staff;
- Lack of commitment to equality, diversity and non-discrimination among senior management;
- Lack of management expertise in linking equality to the precise responsibilities and approach of the service provider.

## **The Case for Equality Body Initiatives to Support Equality Competence**

Equality bodies take initiatives to support equality competence among service providers in the public and private sector. The gains for service providers include:

- Ensuring that there is an organisational practice that eliminates discrimination or deals effectively with it when such an incident happens. This is good for the work environment, for service user loyalty and for the external image of the organisation;
- Developing equality based approaches to service provision that enhance organisational performance;
- Responding to the needs of all service users in a more effective manner and achieving better outcomes from their services as a result;
- Maximising for the organisation’s work from investment in equality through the support of an equality body and through the effective development of equality competence.

The gains for equality bodies include:

- Advancing their mandate to combat discrimination by equipping service providers with the systems and skills to prevent discrimination. Ultimately this is one effective response to the issue of under-reporting of discrimination faced by most equality bodies;
- Advancing their mandate to promote equality by equipping service providers to promote equality, adjust for diversity and combat discrimination. This is particularly important in initiatives supporting service providers in fields that have an impact on

the well being and quality of life of groups that experience inequality such as health, education, housing and labour market services;

- Achieving a multiplier effect by stimulating a culture of equality and non-discrimination across organisations and sectors of organisations such that a broad range of champions and models for equality competence emerge;
- Ensuring that organisations that are open to taking action on equality do so in an effective way and thus avoiding the risk that the equality action taken by the organisation is superficial or lacking longer-term impact.

### **Initiatives that can be taken by an Equality Body**

An equality body can promote equality competence in service provision in the following ways:

Supporting individual organisations by assisting in:

- Developing an equality infrastructure of equality policies and equality training;
- Identifying, training, and supporting equality champions within the organisation;
- Undertaking equality planning based on a review of the impact of existing policies, procedures and practices.

Developing sectoral approaches by:

- Producing guidance tailored to the particular needs or ethos of a specific sector;
- Networking a range of stakeholders in a specific sector to develop collaborative equality projects and mutual support;
- Creating a body of resources for equality competence including devising equality and diversity training modules and producing guidance on equality competence.

Creating the conditions to stimulate commitment to equality competence, including:

- Developing equality standards;
- Supporting the participation of target groups in assessing or monitoring service provision;
- Monitoring organisations or sectors to ensure that they fulfil their equality commitments;
- Developing equality networks to share good practice on equality.

Promoting compliance with legal requirements including:

- Issuing recommendations to particular sectors;
- Developing partnerships to disseminate the recommendations within sectors;
- Persuading sectoral organisations to promote equality competence among their members.

### **Factors for Success when Supporting Equality Competence within Organisations**

Support from the leadership and senior management:

- The commitment of the leadership and senior management of the service provider organisation has to be made explicit. While the activities to promote equality do not

always require additional resources, they may require organisational commitment and an openness to explore new ways of working.

Partnership working:

- Partnership working may involve cross-departmental partnership, partnership between management and front-line staff, or partnership with external agencies/organisations or partnership with service users.

Communication with the community from which service users are drawn:

- Communication with organisations and agencies working within the community from which service users are drawn secures information about service users, potential service users and the community from which they are drawn. This enables better design of services and delivery mechanisms;
- Ongoing exchange with these community organisations and agencies enables service providers to identify unmet needs among service users / potential service users and barriers preventing people from accessing services;
- Communication with community organisations representing service users is a basis for partnership working.
- Communication through organisations representing the diversity of service users is most effective. A variety of informal and formal media and tools are useful in this.

Equality Project Team

- An equality project team to steer the work of developing equality competence within the service provider organisation provides a supportive peer group for those involved in implementing the equality competence project. It offers opportunities to share experiences and to learn from each other. It also serves as a framework for reviewing progress.

## 4. Equality Bodies Providing Guidance

Equality bodies produce targeted guidance materials for service providers on developing and implementing equality competence. Guidance materials can address the overall goal of equality competence or they can focus on particular elements of the organisational infrastructure for equality competence.

Guidance materials are most effective when developed in collaboration with the organisations or sector for which they are intended. The language and concepts used in the guidance materials must draw from the culture of the target organisation or sector. The procedures and practices promoted in the guidance materials must reflect the operations of the organisation or sector for which they are intended.

Guidance can take the form of short leaflets or long detailed publications. It can be produced in printed format, as an interactive online tool or in other web-based format. The type and format of the guidance produced should be chosen to meet the needs and reflect the traditions of the target organisations.

### CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Guidance on Equality Tools - *Embedding Equality in Public Services: What Works in Practice*

##### Project Outline

The Equality Authority drafted and published *Embedding Equality in Public Services: What Works in Practice* in December 2011. This publication gives advice to public sector organisations on implementing equality in service delivery.

##### Project Process

The guidance was the culmination of a project to develop a body of practice on implementing equality in service delivery in a public sector context. The project began with two pilot equality initiatives in public sector organisations. These were:

- An audit of Wicklow County Council (a local authority) to establish whether equality was adequately integrated into its housing allocation systems;
- The development by County Donegal Vocational Education Committee (a rural public education service) of an equality policy in its service provision and the implementation of an equality plan for its education services.

A seminar was held for public sector officials to report on the pilot initiatives and to get feedback from them on their experience of implementing equality projects.

Reports on the pilot initiatives and seminar feedback were key elements in the guidance developed as they served to highlight relevant and practical examples of successful equality projects undertaken in a public sector context.

##### Key Elements

*Embedding Equality in Public Services* outlines implementation models developed for Irish local authorities that can be used by public bodies when undertaking equality projects:

- **Local Authority Equal Status Policy Guidelines and Template:** model suitable for public bodies seeking to develop and implement equality policies in the services area.
- **Dara / Craic Model:** this model is suitable for public bodies seeking to develop a

ground specific approach to the accessibility of their services.

- **Investing in Equality / Improving Services:** this model is suitable for public bodies seeking to encourage participation by service users in the development and review of services.

The guidance outlines an implementation model for the successful implementation of equality in service delivery in the public service. This is based on seven elements - **Engagement, Quality, Understanding, Assessment, Leadership, Innovation, Training and Yield Results**. These elements are explained in detail in the guidance publication.

#### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

All nine grounds covered by the Irish equality legislation (gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, disability, Traveller community membership).

#### **Resources**

1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 staff member's time + €26,500 (for all project costs including fees for equality consultants for both projects, the seminar's organisation and the publication of the guidance).

#### **Stakeholders**

Local authorities (politicians and staff), vocational education organisation, service users, public sector organisations.

#### **Success factors**

The commitment to the project demonstrated by the project partners. Both organisations had undertaken equality projects and had some equality competence.

The experience of the Equality Authority in working with the public sector on equality projects. This enabled the guidance to reflect the needs of the public sector.

#### **Challenge**

The impact of the recession on public services. Public sector organisations have reduced resources and their capacity to undertake equality projects is reduced.

**Contact person for further information:** Carol Baxter, [cbaxter@equality.ie](mailto:cbaxter@equality.ie)

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE OMBUD FOR EQUAL TREATMENT IN AUSTRIA** **Recommendation on Gender Neutral Pricing of Hairdresser Services**

#### **Project Outline**

The Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment received several complaints that hairdressers were pricing their services differently for women than for men. In addition to taking on the individual cases, the Ombud also wanted to address the hairdressers through a broader, more strategic approach and to raise awareness in society of this issue.

**Grounds of discrimination covered:** Gender

**Resources:** One person

**Stakeholder:** Austrian Economic Chambers

#### **Project Achievements**

The recommendation contains the relevant law and suggestions for hairdressers on how to do transparent and non-discriminatory pricing. The recommendation is published on the Ombud's website and promoted through its newsletter. The Ombud sends the recommendation to hairdressers whenever it becomes aware of a new discrimination case in this area (as an

additional tool to taking on the individual case).

**Contact person for further information:** Ulrike Salinger [ulrike.salinger@bka.gv.at](mailto:ulrike.salinger@bka.gv.at)

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE FEDERAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AGENCY IN GERMANY**

### **Verifying (Equal) Opportunities Right Away – Diversity Mainstreaming for Public Authorities**

#### **Project Outline**

The project supported public authorities of the federal Lander and municipalities in implementing good practice in preventing discrimination and achieving equal opportunities for diverse target groups.

#### **Project Process**

Field research was undertaken on the public authorities who were strategic partners. This assessed the experience gained from existing equal opportunities programmes and prospects for further development with a view to diversity mainstreaming.

Two workshops were held involving intensive discussion about needs, advantages and solutions that could be applied for equal opportunities for different target groups. Administrative staff, senior managers, lobby groups and skilled experts in the field were given the opportunity to exchange experiences and to build networks covering a range of target groups.

#### **Project Achievements**

The project made recommendations available to administrative staff on the management of diversity processes. These were developed on the basis of the findings of the project. They provide background on diversity in public authorities, set out challenges, and identify solutions that can be practically implemented. They also make recommendations regarding implementation.

A project report was prepared to outline the project and its outcomes as well as two thematic publications on the topics of 'Diversity Mainstreaming in and by Institutions of Public Administration – Selected Best Practice Examples from European Member States' and of 'Quality Aspect – Equal Opportunities at Work in Public Authorities – Guide on the Subject of Equal Rights – Different Interests; Satisfactory Standards; Tailor Made Solutions'.

#### **Conclusion and Future Prospects**

Administrative staff were informed about diversity and their awareness of the advantages in an approach to diversity, applicable to a variety of target groups, was raised. The project partners rated the exchange of experience in the discussions in public authorities as productive. Participation in this project led to increased publicity for 'protection against discrimination' and 'diversity', especially among the project partners, which was considered conducive to follow-up work on this subject.

'Diversity Mainstreaming is still new to public authorities. The work to establish networks and to exchange experience will be continued. Envisaged follow-up activities include a survey on the guide for administrative staff to evaluate and ascertain further needs and a follow-up workshop to continue the exchange of experience and to jointly elaborate further answers to practical questions.

**Contact person for further information:** Bernhard Franke, [Bernhard.Franke@ads.bund.de](mailto:Bernhard.Franke@ads.bund.de)

## 5. Equality Bodies Delivering Training

Many service providers indicate that they wish to meet their obligations in relation to equality and non-discrimination in the provision of goods and services but that they do not know what to do. Training is a fundamental element in enabling service providers to meet their ambitions and to ensure that their services do not discriminate against service users. It is key in building a skills base within organisations to establish the equality competence of the organisation.

Service providers need more than basic equality awareness training if they are to be supported to develop an equality competent service. They need specialist training on:

- Undertaking equality action planning based on a review of the impact of existing policies, procedures and practices on the diversity of service users;
- Developing equality policies that set out the commitment of the organisation and the standards it wishes to achieve;
- Embedding equality considerations into processes and procedures for planning, policy making and programme design;
- Consulting service users and enabling participation in key decision making;
- Monitoring progress on equality competence and reviewing implementation;
- Developing an equality competent organisational structure.

This specialist training will principally be targeted at those in management or those playing leadership roles on equality within the organisations.

It is important to go beyond specific training events and to encourage service providers to put an equality training strategy in place so that equality training can be maintained on a sustainable basis. This training strategy should provide for induction training for new staff and refresher training for existing staff as well as tailored training to respond to specific needs. This equality training provided to staff should provide them with:

A knowledge and understanding of:

- The equality infrastructure and equality policies of their organisation;
- The equality legislation relating to the provision of goods and services and their obligations in relation to this legislation.

Awareness and understanding of:

- Diversity and the differing needs of groups that experience inequality across the grounds covered by the equality legislation;
- Prejudice, discrimination and inequality and how these phenomena occur.

Skills to enable them to:

- Promote equality, combat discrimination and accommodate diversity in their interaction with other employees and with service users;
- Implement the equality plan of the organisation;
- Assess the specific needs of individual customers with disabilities and those of customers across other equality grounds and identify the most appropriate manner in which to meet those needs.

Training provision to organisations can be resource intensive. Equality bodies can:

- Put an equality training team in place to support service providers to develop equality training strategies;
- Contract equality experts to undertake this training work on their behalf. If equality training is subcontracted to an equality expert, the equality body will still need to monitor the standard of training provided either by developing an equality training template to be followed by the trainer or by undertaking follow-up surveys with service providers.

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE MALTESE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY (NCPE)**

### **Implementing Equality and Sexual Harassment Policies, Setting up Equality Committees and Providing Training**

#### **Project Outline**

The NCPE assists service providers to set up Equality Committees, write and implement sexual harassment and equality policies, and train management and staff.

#### **Project Process**

The NCPE is contacted by the service provider. Work starts in collaboration with the service provider to decide upon the steps needed to set up the equality committee, to write and implement the relevant policies and a training needs analysis is carried out and the necessary training is delivered.

#### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

The grounds covered are usually gender and race, as those are the grounds that are within NCPE's remit in relation to service providers.

#### **Resources**

It is difficult to estimate the budget for this initiative as the work forms a core part of NCPE's remit. One staff member carries out this initiative. Each service provider's needs are different. An average of 15 hours of work per service provider is estimated.

#### **Stakeholders**

NCPE and service providers are the main stakeholders involved.

#### **Project Achievements**

The key achievements include the successful implementation of policies, the setting up of equality committees and the training of management and staff.

#### **Success factor**

There must be a real commitment to the project at all levels of management and staff within the service provider's hierarchy.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

NCPE remains in contact with most of the service providers and any issues that arise in the implementation of this initiative are dealt with in collaboration with NCPE.

**Contact person for further information:** Dr. Romina Bartolo [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt)



## 6. Equality Bodies Offering Direct Support

Equality bodies can offer direct supports to public and private sector organisations to enable them to develop their equality competence. Direct supports can involve a mix of advice, training, guidance materials, or participation in a knowledge transfer process. Direct supports can take the form of grants which enable an organisation to hire an equality expert to help them to establish their internal equality infrastructure. They can also take the form of equality reviews which enable an organisation to assess its performance on equality. Direct supports can be given to large and small organisations.

### CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Support Scheme for SMEs

##### Project Outline

The Equality Authority operated an equality support scheme for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to enable them to establish an equality infrastructure in their companies.

##### Project Process

The Equality Authority established a grant scheme through its European Social Fund-funded Equality Mainstreaming Unit. A company could apply for funding under this SME scheme. This entitled a company to receive 3-5 days' free equality consultancy support from a trained equality expert. The Equality Authority stipulated that the consultancy support had to be used to implement the following outputs:

- The development of an equality policy;
- The development of an equality infrastructure in the company;
- The development of an equality training strategy.

An SME was defined as employing more than 50 but fewer than 250 employees. The equality expert had to fulfil agreed criteria to be eligible to work with companies on this scheme and had to be interviewed to ensure that they had the necessary equality expertise. The scheme was overseen by a committee of representatives of government departments, employers and trades unions.

##### Project Achievement

The project penetrated broadly into the business sector and encouraged SMEs across a wide range of sectors to establish an equality infrastructure. Many SMEs that availed of the scheme were not members of equality-focused business networks. As such, it provided a very effective means of developing their equality competency and their knowledge of equality issues.

##### Grounds of discrimination covered

All nine grounds of the Irish equality legislation.

##### Resources

Two staff members full-time + €97,000 for 38 SMEs in 2010.

##### Stakeholders

Employers, employees, trades unions.

##### Success factor

The scheme reached SMEs that were not otherwise interested in equality and encouraged them to become compliant with equality legislation and equality competent. Using equality consultants was effective in promoting the scheme widely.

### **Challenge**

Demand for the scheme was always greater than the resources available.

**Contact person for further information:** Carol Baxter, [cbaxter@equality.ie](mailto:cbaxter@equality.ie)

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Developing a Municipal Approach to Equality in Service Provision: Equality Lab in the City of Copenhagen**

#### **Project Outline**

In 2010 the City of Copenhagen and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) developed a pilot project to mainstream equal treatment in services provided by nine of the City's institutions. These institutions include day care centres for people with disabilities, a food kitchen serving 3000 citizens daily, a public after school youth centre, a centre for employment and a citizen service centre. The approach of the project has since been used with other municipalities including in a Citizen's Service in Aarhus Municipality (the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in Denmark).

This equality mainstreaming aims to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunities to access and use the services of the City of Copenhagen irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or an intersection of these grounds. It seeks to ensure that institutions understand the principle of equal treatment, are aware of their duty to ensure equal treatment of citizens in planning and implementing policies and procedures, and know how to take account of equal treatment when they provide services for the citizens.

#### **Project Process**

*Step One:* This involved two days of data collection at the institutions and writing a report. The report described the institution, set out the type of services provided, identified who the service users are, and established the equality challenges that face the institution. It made some recommendations as to how these challenges might be met.

*Step Two:* Development of an Action Plan through training in anti-discrimination and equal treatment (workshops). Staff from each institution participated in a one day workshop to introduce the principle of equal treatment, to present the anti-discrimination legislation and explore the equality challenges identified for their institution. The purpose of the workshop was to assist them to draft an equality action plan to meet these equality challenges. In the workshop, staff were guided to identify actions to meet the equality challenges, develop timeframes for implementation, and assign responsibility for implementing the actions to specific teams / individuals.

*Step Three:* Status seminar for all participating institutions with the purpose of providing a platform for exchange of experiences.

*Step Four:* An evaluation report summed up the achievements of the project, the challenges faced, and factors for success. It made recommendations to the City of Copenhagen. The final evaluation is based on interviews with all participating institutions.

DIHR found it necessary to focus on the process of mainstreaming rather than on measuring the impact. It found that the project partners had too little time to be able to measure the impact. Focus was placed instead on kick-starting processes and projects that promote the

principle of equal treatment. As such, DIHR has striven to develop a concept that is sustainable beyond the project.

#### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

The project covers all six grounds of discriminations outlined in the European anti-discrimination legislation.

#### **Resources**

The costs for the Danish Institute for Human Rights were 900,000 Danish Crowns (€120.000). From DIHR a senior advisor, project manager, project assistant and a student assistant were involved. From the City of Copenhagen an intern and a policy officer were involved. Furthermore the institutions had staff time allocated to the project. This varied from institution to institution.

#### **Stakeholders**

The project was carried out as a partnership between DIHR and the City of Copenhagen. The City of Copenhagen was responsible for the initial contact with the institutions. DIHR and the City of Copenhagen were in close contact.

Non-governmental institutions across the six discrimination grounds participated in an advisory committee convened by the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

#### **Project Achievement**

The project has brought about an awareness of rights and legislation relating to equal treatment and non-discrimination. It developed knowledge on mainstreaming of the principle of equal treatment in the provision of goods and services in the participating institutions and on developing and implementing action plans with the purpose of ensuring equal treatment and access for all citizens to their service provision.

#### **Challenges**

The ambitions of the project were pitched at a high level. The number of institutions involved in the project was too high to allow an in-depth approach within each one. The timeframe of one year for the project was too short to enable all phases to be thoroughly implemented. Difficulties were encountered where:

- The decision to take part in the project was taken by senior managers without being adequately communicated to all staff.
- The project was focused exclusively on service users when there were also equality challenges in relation to the staff which in some cases dominated the discussions.
- The staff were bound by guidelines and policies, set outside their institution over which they had no control and which shaped and even created the equality challenges that they face.

#### **Success Factors**

The training of staff in the institutions enabled them to develop a focus on the principle of equal treatment in their institution and to draw up an equality action plan for their institution.

The ownership developed by staff of the equality action plan for their institution was important alongside their ownership of successes achieved as a consequence of this equality action plan.

The leadership and commitment of senior managers in the institutions ensured a follow up to the equality action plan devised and will ensure a follow up to the project itself.

Timing has been significant for turning action plans into concrete actions. The Equality Lab project was particularly useful for those institutions which were already launching initiatives designed to improve service provisions or related initiatives.

The work on equal treatment in the institutions is largely driven by enthusiasts. However, this also makes it vulnerable, for example in case of job change. There should be more focus on how to anchor the work around the institutions.

It is crucial to clearly communicate the institutions' obligation to promote equal treatment and combat discrimination.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The status seminar was a way to monitor the activities set out by the institutions in their Action Plans. At the seminar each institution reported on their Action Plan and what they had achieved. Throughout the project DIHR has been in dialogue with the institutions and continuously followed up on the Action Plans.

DIHR evaluated the process and the impact of the project for the City of Copenhagen. The evaluation shows that a range of criteria has to be in place in order for an equality impact assessment to be carried out successfully. One such criterion is knowledge, recognition and understanding of the principle of equal treatment in service provision among the management and staff of the participating institutions in order to ensure compliance and follow up. Out of the nine institutions, eight had to start from scratch – learning first and then implementing,

### **Follow Up**

DIHR has drafted a Best Practice Catalogue detailing the experiences from the Equality Lab project. This will be distributed at a conference on equal treatment in local governments and serves as a means of inspiration for local government officials and civil servants.

### **Contact persons for further information**

Senior Advisor Mandana Zarreparvar [mza@humanrights.dk](mailto:mza@humanrights.dk) or

Project Manager Lumi Zuleta [lzu@humanrights.dk](mailto:lzu@humanrights.dk)

## 7. Equality Bodies Building Indirect Support

Equality bodies can engage indirectly in supporting organisations by taking a sectoral approach or by creating opportunities for networking between organisations.

### A. Sectoral approach

Equality bodies can work with a particular sector to develop equality competence approaches suitable for that sector. These initiatives can be undertaken with:

- An organisation representing the sector (such as a professional organisation for the construction sector / a professional body for doctors);
- A network of organisations within a sector (such as with a network of retailers in the pharmaceutical sector);
- A network of organisations in a specific region (such as with a local Chamber of Commerce).

Sectoral approaches can:

- Develop initiatives on equality that can be applied across a sector, thereby using equality resources efficiently;
- Encourage equality knowledge transfer between participants within the sector;
- Enable responses to be developed that are suitable to a sector;
- Encourage the creation of equality partnerships within the sector;
- Develop a leadership for equality within the sector.

### CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Sectoral Approach with the Hospitality Sector

##### Project Outline

The Equality Authority worked with the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI), a representative organisation for hotels and restaurants in Ireland, on a two year project to promote equality competence in service provision in the Irish hospitality sector. While the focus was on service provision, the project was also intended to support equality competence in employment practices for what is a highly diverse workforce.

##### Project Process

The Equality Authority organised three learning events for IHI members on three equality themes - combating ageism, making reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities and on cultural diversity.

The Equality Authority worked with the IHI and the Tourism Research Centre of the Dublin Institute of Technology to develop concise guidance material suitable to the needs of the hospitality sector. The guidance material was published as *10 Steps to Equality and Diversity for the Irish Hospitality Sector*. The IHI used the ten steps as the criteria for assessing hotels and restaurants for its Diversity Awards.

##### Key elements

The guidance material identifies 10 steps that businesses can take to promote equality and

diversity in their organisations. The 10 steps are:

- Develop awareness and knowledge of equality and diversity issues;
- Develop a systematic approach to equality and diversity in their organisation;
- Create an organisational culture based on equality and diversity;
- Provide leadership from the top;
- Designate responsibility;
- Develop an equality-friendly recruitment process;
- Promote equality through staff development and training;
- Develop and provide equality-friendly services;
- Develop a collaborative approach;
- What gets measured gets done – monitoring and evaluation.

### **Project Achievements**

The project developed the equality capacity of organisations in the hospitality sector.

### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

All nine grounds covered by the Irish equality legislation, with priority given to the age, disability and race grounds.

### **Resources**

1/12<sup>th</sup> of two staff members' time + €31,000.

### **Stakeholders**

Hospitality sector (hotels, restaurants, recruitment consultants), equality consultants.

### **Success factors**

The commitment of the Irish Hospitality Institute to maintaining involvement in what was a demanding project;

The equality expertise of the Tourism Research Centre of the Dublin Institute of Technology which worked intensively with the Equality Authority to develop equality guidance appropriate to the hospitality sector.

### **Challenge**

The project was undertaken at a time of severe downturn within the hospitality sector leading to the closure of many hospitality businesses.

**Contact person for further information:** Carole Sullivan, [csullivan@equality.ie](mailto:csullivan@equality.ie)

## **B. Networking**

Equality networks provide a useful way to support the development of equality competence among service providers. They can enable service providers to develop relationships of trust with one another so that they are ready to ask questions, seek solutions and share good practice with other members of the network.

Equality networks can take the form of a forum in which members meet to receive training, to hear the latest thinking on equality or to share information. Equality networks can operate in virtual format through e-bulletins and dedicated websites.

Equality networks work best where they bring service providers with similar interests together. A network of small and medium sized enterprises will have very different needs, for example, than a network of large public sector organisations.

Equality networks require ongoing technical assistance to be effective. They need a central co-ordinator who will:

- organise events;
- inform members of the latest equality developments;
- ensure that members' queries and problems are addressed.

An equality body can decide to establish equality networks and to take on the function of co-ordinating them. They can also contract a consultant or a company to undertake this work for them. It is unrealistic to expect the network members themselves to operate the network without dedicated and expert assistance.

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND**

### **Public Sector Equality Learning Network**

#### **Project Outline**

The Equality Authority established an equality learning network within the public sector during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007. The aim of the Public Sector Equality Learning Network (PSELN) is to improve the public sector's capacity to promote equality in service provision. The PSELN gives public sector officials the opportunity to:

- Receive training on equality issues;
- Share good practice on equality in service provision;
- Seek solutions to equality challenges in their organisations;
- Develop equality tools suited to the needs of the public sector.

#### **Project Process**

The Equality Authority organises learning events for PSELN members 4-5 times each year. These have explored topics such as religious diversity, mental health issues, equality screening, developing and providing equality training, making the case for equality, raising awareness of Traveller issues, and measuring the impact of equality.

Learning events are normally held in the Equality Authority. Training is provided by:

- External consultants;
- Other public sector organisations sharing their good practice on equality;
- Equality Authority staff.

The PSELN worked collaboratively to develop an equality screening tool for public sector organisations wishing to review equality policies. The network developed an equality training module for the public sector. The Equality Authority commissioned external equality consultants to support network members in doing these projects.

#### **Project Achievements**

The Public Sector Equality Learning Network helped public sector officials to develop relationships of trust between each other and with the Equality Authority. As a result, these officials are more prepared to contact the Equality Authority or another suitable organisation if they have equality problems that they need to solve. It has developed the equality capacity of

a wide range of public sector organisations. It has contributed to persuading public sector organisations to take action on equality.

**Grounds of discrimination covered**

All nine grounds covered by the Irish equality legislation.

**Resources**

15 days of one staff member's time + €5,000 annually (speakers' fees and catering).

**Stakeholders**

Public sector organisations, equality NGOs (as speakers).

**Success factors**

The PSELN established a good reputation with public sector officials so they are prepared to engage with it and to attend events;

The training provided is based on needs identified by the network members themselves.

**Challenge**

It is difficult to get PSELN members to be proactive and to draft equality tools themselves. They prefer to use the network in a passive way to receive equality training for themselves.

**Contact person for further information:** Stefania Minervino [sminervino@equality.ie](mailto:sminervino@equality.ie)



## 8. Equality Bodies Establishing Standards

Inserting an equality requirement into national regulatory standards that govern different groups of service providers is a simple, low-cost and effective way of ensuring service providers would develop a focus on equality, diversity and non-discrimination in their work.

The inclusion of an equality element in regulations governing the financial sector, for example, would require banks and other financial institutions to take action on equality for customers. Similarly, the presence of an equality component in standards governing the regulation of consumer rights would mean that oversight mechanisms relating to consumer rights would also review the service provider's record on equality when monitoring their compliance with consumer rights regulations. If care standards included a focus on equality, the inspector of nursing homes would review a nursing home's record on promoting equality across the equality grounds.

The advantage of inserting an equality component into regulations governing other sectors is that it fosters pro-equality behaviour across a broad range of service providers. Through one initiative, the behaviour of an entire sector can be changed. Furthermore, it puts the obligation to take equality action on the service provider rather than on the equality body. It enables the equality body to take advantage of existing national monitoring processes that are known to the service provider and with which the service provider has to comply.

### CASE STUDY FROM EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Inserting Equality in Standards for the Further Education Sector

##### Project Outline

This project sought to support the providers of further education to comply with the equality provisions in the standards governing further education.

##### Project Process

The Equality Authority worked with FETAC, the agency overseeing further education in Ireland, to insert equality requirements into its standards for the sector. All education providers must develop equality policies as a condition of registration as a certified provider of further education and training.

The Further Education Support Service (FESS) of the Department of Education and Skills worked with the Equality Authority and key further education organisations to develop a detailed resource to offer guidance for providers of further education and training on complying with the FETAC standard. FESS's *Equality Action Planning Framework: Resource to Support FETAC Registered Providers in Implementing Quality Assurance Policy B2: Equality* was produced in 2010 as a printed and web-based resource.

This resource provides advice and templates on:

- Developing an equality action plan;
- Undertaking an equality audit of services;
- Preparing an equality policy for learners and service users.

The Equality Authority then moved to a direct support form of approach and sought applications from further education providers seeking support for equality projects. It assessed these applications competitively and selected ten projects for support. The Equality Authority provided funding for the following:

- A project to equality screen policies, procedures and programmes relating to service provision;
- A project to insert equality considerations into senior management decision-making processes;
- Projects to integrate Travellers into mainstream education programmes.

The Equality Authority established a panel of equality experts that further education providers can use to support them to undertake training or equality planning and to insert equality processes into the design and delivery of their programmes.

#### **Project Achievements**

The inclusion of equality in the national standard has ensured that all further education providers must take action on equality. As a result, it has prompted education providers to change their practices and to integrate equality into their way of working.

#### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

All nine grounds covered by the Irish equality legislation.

**Resources:** 60 days of one staff member's time + €15,000.

**Stakeholders:** Further education providers, service users.

**Success factor:** Regulatory obligation on further education providers forced them to take action on equality.

**Challenge:** There is a risk that the action on equality may become a 'tick box exercise' as it is not driven by a commitment to equality within the education provider itself.

**Contact person for further information:** Carole Sullivan [csullivan@equality.ie](mailto:csullivan@equality.ie)

Equality bodies can also establish their own standards and invite organisations to achieve these standards. It is useful that some recognition should accompany the achievement of such standards. It is important that monitoring is carried out to ensure organisations maintain these standards over time.

## **CASE STUDY FROM THE MALTESE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY (NCPE)**

### **An Equality Mark**

#### **Project Outline**

NCPE is implementing the Equality Mark. NCPE assesses companies' policies and processes to ensure that they are 'equal opportunity employers' when it comes to gender. Through the process, the companies' policies are analysed, training is given to 'gender focal points' and sometimes to all staff and management. Although the Equality Mark is given for companies' employment processes, all the policies, training and work done within the company affects the company's practices in relation to service provision. One of the criteria used in the Equality Mark evaluation, relates to the provision of goods and services. The NCPE asks for a sample of media campaigns etc. This supports company practice in terms of equality in service provision and raises awareness within companies of the need to challenge stereotypes.

**Contact person for further information:** Dr. Romina Bartolo [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt)

## 9. Equality Bodies Conducting Equality Impact Assessment

Equality bodies can support a service provider to integrate equality considerations into its decision-making processes by assisting the service provider to undertake an equality impact assessment (EQIA) of its policies, procedures and practices. The EQIA will enable the service provider to identify whether its existing policies, procedures or practices are having a negative impact on a particular group covered by the equal treatment legislation. It will identify the actions needed to remedy cases where these are having a negative impact on one or more of these groups.

An EQIA provides an evidence base for policy formulation and programme development within the organisation. It highlights risks, from an equality and non-discrimination perspective, that arise from ad hoc approaches to policy formulation. A further advantage of getting service providers to undertake an EQIA is that it encourages them to undertake consultation processes with their service users.

### CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Equality Impact Assessment Tool for Public Service Education Provision

##### Project Outline

In 2007, the Equality Authority and the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) produced *Guidelines for Conducting Equality Impact Assessments on IVEA and VEC Plans, Policies and Programmes* as one of the actions of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007.

##### Project Process

The Equality Authority collaborated with the IVEA, the representative organisation for service providers in the vocational education sector in Ireland to:

- Produce an equality impact assessment model that would be relevant to the vocational education sector;
- Get the endorsement of the IVEA so that the guidelines would be recommended by it to its member organisations (34 Vocational Education Committees).

Once the guidelines had been published, the Equality Authority issued a call for proposals to all Vocational Education Committees (VECs) for projects to test the guidelines. County Donegal VEC, the main provider of vocational education and training across a large rural county, was selected. It undertook an equality impact assessment of its adult education plan. It was funded by the Equality Authority to contract in an expert to assist them in this work.

##### Key elements

The guidelines:

- Explain what an equality impact assessment is;
- Advice on how to carry out an equality impact assessment;
- Offer an equality impact assessment template specifically designed for the vocational education sector;
- Provide information on data analysis and information collection.

### **Project Achievements**

The project developed an equality impact assessment model and showed how it could be applied successfully in the vocational education sector. The Equality Authority used the learning from County Donegal VEC's work to refine its subsequent projects to undertake equality impact assessments in public sector organisations.

**Grounds of discrimination covered:** All nine grounds covered by the Irish equality legislation.

**Resources:** 10 weeks of one staff member's time + €11,000 (for the equality expert) + publication costs.

**Stakeholders:** Vocational education providers, service users.

### **Success factors**

The commitment to the project of the IVEA, the umbrella organisation for the vocational education sector, gave it credibility among vocational education providers. The IVEA's endorsement encouraged VECs to take action on equality.

The guidance was specifically designed to be relevant to the vocational education sector.

### **Challenge**

EQIAs are still a new and onerous process for vocational education providers to undertake and do not fit easily into existing planning and decision-making processes in these organisations.

**Contact person for further information:** Cathal Kelly, [ckelly@equality.ie](mailto:ckelly@equality.ie)

## 10. Equality Bodies Initiating an Equality Plan

The development of an equality action plan is a key element in equality competence. It is the foundation stone for a planned and systematic approach to equality by the organisation. An equality action plan establishes equality objectives to be pursued by the organisation with targets and timescales that will enable progress to be tracked.

The equality action plan should be based on an equality review of current policies, procedures and practice within the organisation. This review should establish the impact of policies, procedures and practice on groups of service users from across the grounds covered by equal treatment legislation. The review should be done in consultation with organisations representing these equality grounds. Ideally, the equality review should be undertaken by a qualified external equality auditor.

The equality action plan should be developed and overseen by an equality committee established within the organisation to manage its equality work. Equality planning could also be included as part of overall organisational planning by the service provider. The equality committee should report to senior management on the progress made in implementing the equality action plan.

An equality body can:

- Develop models for equality action plans covering equality in service provision for the public sector and for the private sector;
- Provide training to organisations on developing equality action plans;
- Establish a network of equality experts with the expertise to advise organisations on developing equality action plans;
- Provide training to groups representing the equality grounds to enable them to monitor equality action plans covering service provision.

### CASE STUDY FROM THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY IRELAND

#### Equality Action Planning in the County Waterford Vocational Education Committee

##### Project Outline

County Waterford Vocational Education Committee (VEC) undertook an equality action planning project as part of building an equality mainstreaming approach into its work.

##### Project Process

Qualitative data was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with key personnel of five units of the VEC. This was accompanied by an analysis of existing quantitative data gathered from service users of the VEC.

The data was analysed on the basis of three questions in the Equality Authority / IVEA *Guidelines for Conducting Equality Impact Assessments on IVEA and VEC Plans, Policies and Programmes*. These are:

- Does the plan/policy/programme seek to ensure no groups are put at a disadvantage and that there is no discrimination on any of the nine grounds?
- Does it take account of the needs of each of the group and its members in terms of its situation, identity and experience, including ensuring reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities?

- Does it promote equality for each of the groups?

A draft report was produced and discussed with coordinators / senior unit staff of the five units and with senior management. An action plan was developed with actions directed at individual units and at the overall organisation. This included to:

- Establish active targeting and outreach processes in partnership with community development / education groups;
- Introduce systematic equality training for all staff;
- Establish learner committees to get structured feedback on their experience of VEC services;
- Establish an equality monitoring task force within the VEC.

The learning from this project was disseminated to all VECs across Ireland at a seminar for VECs. The report of the project was included in a resource pack produced by the Equality Authority for all VECs on equality mainstreaming.

The Equality Authority provided training to VEC staff, held planning meetings with the VEC to advance the project, provided advice and expertise during the project, and conducted a review of the outputs at the end of the project.

#### **Project Achievements**

County Waterford VEC established an equality action planning process which has provided it with a structured approach for taking action on equality. Many of the actions recommended in this project are underway. Training has been organised for staff. Equality has been included on senior management agendas. Four units have been established for learner input.

#### **Grounds of discrimination covered**

All nine grounds of the Irish equality legislation.

#### **Resources**

15 days of one staff member's time + €20,000.

#### **Stakeholders**

Vocational education providers, service users.

#### **Success factors**

The Equality Authority held a competitive process whereby the VECs selected for funding were chosen for their equality capacity and commitment to the project. As a result, Waterford VEC had the equality capacity needed to undertake the project well.

#### **Challenge**

All VECs are now undergoing structural change which makes it difficult for them to maintain their focus on equality at the same level as before.

**Contact person for further information:** Stefania Minervino [sminervino@equality.ie](mailto:sminervino@equality.ie)

# 11. Equality Bodies Enabling Participation by Service Users

The participation of organisations and individuals representing groups experiencing inequality ensures that service providers gain a clear understanding of the needs of these groups, of their experiences in using services, and of any barriers preventing them from accessing services. This participation can identify easy, cost-effective ways in which services can be improved.

It is important, therefore, that service providers support and enable service users and organisations representing groups experiencing inequality to participate in developing or reviewing services. This participation helps to build relationships of trust between service provider and service user and to set realistic expectations as to the services that can be provided.

Participation can take the form of:

- Consulting service users from across the grounds covered in equal treatment legislation on their experiences of existing services and their views of new services;
- Developing a collaborative approach whereby service providers and service users work together in developing and monitoring the service;
- Building a partnership with organisations representing people from across the grounds covered by equal treatment legislation and consulting with these organisations or involving them in decision making processes.

Participation can be undertaken:

- On a systematic and ongoing basis when service providers have formal processes in which service users are consulted routinely on existing or new services;
- On a partnership basis when service providers have built a relationship with organisations representing various groups experiencing inequality;
- On a specific project basis, in particular when developing equality competence through processes such as an equality review or equality impact assessment within the organisation.

It is important for organisations to acknowledge and address barriers to participation that exist within their own organisation or that can be experienced by service users and organisations representing groups experiencing inequality. These include:

- Service providers, particularly in the public sector, are often reluctant to engage in consultation as they fear that they may raise expectations that they cannot later fulfil;
- Some service providers view consultation as a nuisance which creates work for them without delivering meaningful feedback from those consulted;
- Some service providers do not wish to have to institute the changes to services that may be necessary if feedback from service users is very negative;
- Service users may not have the detailed knowledge of services to enable them to participate meaningfully;
- If there are no equality NGOs representing specific equality grounds, it can be difficult to source service users that can provide representative feedback on services.

An equality body can support the participation of service users and organisations representing groups experiencing inequality in developing / reviewing services from an equality perspective in a number of ways. It can:

- Develop appropriate participation models for organisations involved in public and private sector service provision;
- Develop lists of equality representatives which can be given to service providers undertaking consultation exercises;
- Provide training for organisations representing groups experiencing inequality to assist them in participating effectively in consultation / participation exercises, in particular those that contribute to building equality competence;
- Develop initiatives that bring together public sector organisations or private sector organisations with organisations representing groups that experience inequality to build relationships of trust and to develop shared thinking.

## 12. Equality Bodies Monitoring Progress

Equality bodies can develop tools for monitoring progress on equality competence. These can include tools for internal gathering of administrative data, user satisfaction surveys, internal audits, research and external evaluations.

Equality projects of service provider organisations need to be monitored externally to ensure that they maintain their momentum. The equality body might be in a position to play this role.

## 13. Conclusion

An equality body can help to create a pro-equality culture among service providers by supporting service providers to develop the necessary skills and pro-equality organisational structure.

A strategic approach by equality bodies to supporting service providers to be equality competent does not necessarily involve large commitments in terms of staff time or resources. A successful project in one sector can serve as a model for use in another sector. Equality bodies can share expertise on successful projects which can then be adapted for use in another country.

The key thing is to consider how the equality body could develop a strategic approach to supporting the promotion of equality among service providers. Without such a strategic approach, more service users will remain at risk of discrimination from service providers who lack the knowledge necessary to combat discrimination in their organisations.



# 14. Resources

The Equality Authority has produced guides on promoting equality and non-discrimination in service provision, available on [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie). They include:

Guides on developing equality policies for providers of goods and services:

- *Guidelines for Equal Status Policies in Enterprises;*

Guides on equality tools for customer service in the public and private sectors:

- *Equality Benefits Tool: Your Service Users and You: Realising the Benefits in the Public Sector;*
- *Equality Benefits Tool: Your Customers and You: Realising the Benefits in the Private Sector;*
- *Embedding Equality in Public Services: What Works in Practice.*

Guides for specific sectors on improving their services on specific equality grounds:

- *For Service For All: A Practical Guide For Credit Unions To Improve Accessibility For Their Members;*
- *Dara has the Craic: How Two County Councils Got up to Speed on How to Make Their Services Accessible to People with Disabilities – and Enjoyed Themselves in the Process;*
- *Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities in Community Pharmacies: Some Practical Advice.*

Guides for developing equality competence on a single equality ground:

- *Towards Age-Friendly Provision of Goods and Services.*

Guides on undertaking equality impact assessments:

- *Guidelines for Conducting Equality Impact Assessments on IVEA and VEC Plans, Policies and Programmes;*
- *Guidelines for Second Level Schools on Embedding Equality in School Development Planning.*

---

Equinet Secretariat | Rue Royale 138 | 1000 Brussels | Belgium  
info@equineteurope.org | www.equineteurope.org

*Equality Bodies Supporting Good Practice by Service Providers*  
An Equinet Good Practice Guide | December 2012

ISBN 978-92-95067-68-4

© Equinet 2012

Reproduction is permitted provided the source is acknowledged.

## Equinet member organisations

### AUSTRIA

Ombud for Equal Treatment  
[www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at](http://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at)

### BELGIUM

Centre for Equal Opportunities & Opposition to Racism  
[www.diversite.be](http://www.diversite.be) and [www.diversiteit.be](http://www.diversiteit.be)

### BELGIUM

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men  
<http://figym-iefh.belgium.be>

### BULGARIA

Commission for Protection against Discrimination  
[www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com](http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com)

### CROATIA

Office of the Ombudsman  
[www.ombudsman.hr](http://www.ombudsman.hr)

### CYPRUS

Office of the Commissioner for Administration  
(Ombudsman)  
[www.ombudsman.gov.cy](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy)

### CZECH REPUBLIC

Office of the Public Defender of Rights  
[www.ochrance.cz](http://www.ochrance.cz)

### DENMARK

Board of Equal Treatment  
[www.ast.dk](http://www.ast.dk)

### DENMARK

Danish Institute for Human Rights  
[www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk)

### ESTONIA

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner  
[www.svv.ee](http://www.svv.ee)

### FINLAND

Ombudsman for Equality  
[www.tasa-arvo.fi](http://www.tasa-arvo.fi)

### FINLAND

Ombudsman for Minorities  
[www.ofm.fi](http://www.ofm.fi)

### FRANCE

Defender of Rights  
[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)

### GERMANY

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency  
[www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de](http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de)

### GREECE

Greek Ombudsman  
[www.synigoros.gr](http://www.synigoros.gr)

### HUNGARY

Equal Treatment Authority  
[www.egyenlobanasmod.hu](http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu)

### HUNGARY

Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights  
[www.ajbh.hu](http://www.ajbh.hu)

### IRELAND

Equality Authority  
[www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

### ITALY

National Office against Racial Discrimination - UNAR  
[www.unar.it](http://www.unar.it)

### LATVIA

Office of the Ombudsman  
[www.tiesibsargs.lv](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv)

### LITHUANIA

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson  
[www.lygybe.lt](http://www.lygybe.lt)

### LUXEMBURG

Centre for Equal Treatment  
[www.cet.lu](http://www.cet.lu)

### (FYRO) MACEDONIA

Commission for the Protection against Discrimination  
[www.kzd.mk/mk/](http://www.kzd.mk/mk/)

### MALTA

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality  
[www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)

### NETHERLANDS

Netherlands Institute for Human Rights  
[www.mensenrechten.nl](http://www.mensenrechten.nl)

### NORWAY

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud  
[www.ldo.no](http://www.ldo.no)

### POLAND

Human Rights Defender  
[www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)

### PORTUGAL

Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality  
[www.cig.gov.pt](http://www.cig.gov.pt)

### PORTUGAL

Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment  
[www.cite.gov.pt](http://www.cite.gov.pt)

### PORTUGAL

High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue  
[www.acidi.gov.pt](http://www.acidi.gov.pt)

### ROMANIA

National Council for Combating Discrimination  
[www.cncd.org.ro](http://www.cncd.org.ro)

### SERBIA

Commission for the Protection of Equality  
[www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs](http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs)

### SLOVAKIA

National Centre for Human Rights  
[www.snslp.sk](http://www.snslp.sk)

### SLOVENIA

Advocate of the Principle of Equality  
[www.zagovornik.net](http://www.zagovornik.net)

### SPAIN

Spanish Race and Ethnic Equality Council  
[www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.org](http://www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.org)

### SWEDEN

Equality Ombudsman  
[www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

### UNITED KINGDOM - GREAT BRITAIN

Equality and Human Rights Commission  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### UNITED KINGDOM - NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

ISBN 978-92-95067-68-4

© Equinet 2012

 Equinet  
European network  
of equality bodies



[facebook.com/EquinetEurope](https://facebook.com/EquinetEurope)



[@equineteurope](https://twitter.com/EquinetEurope)



[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)