
Framing harassment and sexual harassment within equality mainstreaming

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"Funded by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund 2007-2013 and by the Equality Authority"



Ireland's EU Structural Funds
Programmes 2007 - 2013
Co-funded by the Irish Government
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Workshop objectives

- To outline the principles of equality mainstreaming as a whole-organisational approach for preventing/re-dressing harassment and other gender-based discrimination
 - To understand the rationale for positioning harassment and sexual harassment within equality policies in workplaces.
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Equality Legislation

- Equality legislation prohibit discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment on nine grounds (gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community)
- Sets a valuable minimum standard of non-discrimination for all organisations
- Harassment is a unique form of discriminatory behaviour - can be a once off incident; can be part of a discriminatory pattern too
- Equality Authority is mandated to produce a statutory code on harassment and sexual harassment (updated in 2012).

What is Equality mainstreaming

- Systematic integration of an equality perspective into everyday work
 - Aims to change organisational culture
 - Its main 'ingredients' are:
 - **Equality policies**
 - **Equality action planning to implement equality policies, including training**
 - **Equality committees/ officers/ liaison staff**
 - **Equality reviews/ proofing/ impact assessments of policies programmes and practices**
 - **A participatory approach by involvement of staff, management and service users**
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The Business Case for Equality



- Creates a work environment where employees are valued and supported.
- Promotes good human resources practice in relation to staff management.
- Provides better legal compliance, thereby avoiding discrimination suits.
- Workplaces with a formal equality policy are associated with a lower rate of unfair treatment (*Pregnancy at Work: A National Survey*)

An an equality action plan may include:

- Appointing and training contact person(s) re: harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination
- Adopt an equality policy with clear reference to harassment and sexual harassment
- Communicate the policy to all employees, managers, contractors, suppliers etc. (briefings, dissemination, etc)
- At a minimum, Equality Training for all managers and supervisors
- Keeping track on any informal or formal complaints, related to equality to identify emerging or structural issues
- Set up an equality committee

Harassment and Bullying in Ireland: Dignity at work policies

- Harassment and bullying in Ireland are often dealt with in 'Dignity at Work' policies; pros and cons!
- Confusion about their definitions and their legislative domains;
- Harassment can be a once-off episode, bullying is not. Bullying is not linked to any specific equality grounds but there is bullying with a discriminatory pattern;
- Harassment and sexual harassment have to take more clearly into account the person's perspective at the receiving end;
- Investigations around harassment and sexual harassment need to be conducted independently.

Harassment as a form of discrimination

- Harassment is often combined with other forms of discrimination.
 - Harassment on the basis of sex-gender and sexual harassment may take different forms and intersect with other characteristics (family status, civil status, race, etc.)
 - By promoting a culture of equality through real mainstreaming, harassment can be prevented and get redress in the workplaces.
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A partnership approach: workers, employers and trade unions

- A successful project funded in 2010 was with the Commercial Mushroom Producers, the Migrant Rights Centre and SIPTU, the relevant Trade Union.
 - This project successfully targeted female migrant workers who were vulnerable to harassment and discrimination in their workplaces.
 - Union representatives reported that the project allowed women to tackle successfully harassment in the workplace, by collective action and improvement of terms and conditions of work.
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A Whole organisation approach by three trade unions (IBOA, CWU and Mandate), 2011

- **Promotion for Equality Policies targeting discrimination and harassment.**
 - **Rolling out of Equality training for Trade Union Representatives to promote policy implementation.**
 - **Equality Handbook focussing on discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment for Trade Union Representatives.**
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Irish University Association's Equality Network

- IUA Equality Network developed and mainstreamed The LEAD – Living Equality & Diversity eLearning project, involved six Irish Universities DCU, NUIG, UCC, UCD, UL and TCD.
 - The e-learning programme includes a specific module on Dignity and Respect, which is focussed on how to tackle harassment, sexual harassment and bullying.
 - Each university has developed its own dissemination plan for the e-learning tool, with a specific focus on staff induction and training of interview panels
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Discussion

- What policies do you have in the workplace to address harassment and sexual harassment?
 - Are their formal and informal procedures?
 - Is harassment generally perceived as a form of discrimination?
 - What are the advantages in your opinion in mainstreaming equality in workplace cultures?
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Some resources

- ISME - Handbook on Equality in the Workplace
- LEAD (Living Equality and Diversity) E learning programme – Irish Association of Universities
<http://www.leadequalitynetwork.com>
- One Family - Six Steps to Promote Equality for Lone Parents in the Retail Sector
- SIPTU and the Commercial Mushroom Producers – Employment handbook in different languages
- ICTU guide on gender identity: definition of transphobic harassment
- IBOA.CWU.MANDATE Equality Handbook for Trade Union representatives

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