

New HR Strategies to Promote Equality in Organisations



An Evaluation of the Dublin Employment Pact Equal at Work Project

by Finbar McDonnell Hibernian Consulting

September 2004





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Foreword

The story of Equal at Work began in summer 2000 when the European Commission announced plans for a special initiative - called EQUAL - to develop innovative labour market programmes promoting inclusiveness. The Dublin Employment Pact is a network of public, private and community sector organisations in Dublin focusing on labour market, education and other development issues. Through the Pact a simple, core idea was soon formulated for a project with maximum potential impact across the Dublin labour market. The economic boom and general labour shortage accompanying it were seen as a major opportunity to improve the position of those most vulnerable in the labour market. A working group consisting of people from a wide variety of organisations identified human resource management practices that could be changed to produce a more open and accessible labour market, in a manner that would be a win-win situation for companies, workers and unemployed people alike. The core aim of Equal at Work was defined as “Inclusive Employment through Open HR Practices”.

So who are those “most vulnerable in the labour market”? Primarily they are people who are unemployed or are in work but with poor levels of educational qualification. Qualification is an important word here as it is not synonymous with skills or abilities. For various reasons to do with the economic development in Dublin, which in the past was often a history of underdevelopment and large scale unemployment, nearly 45% of the workforce have no secondary school leaving certificate and specific groups continue to experience great difficulty in accessing the world of work or, where they do gain access, in progressing beyond entry-level jobs. The economic take off of the 1990s changed much of this, and many people previously outside the labour market have developed considerable levels of informal skill and ability through work. But their lack of formal qualification means that they are often trapped in low-skill jobs below the level of their true ability, and are in danger in any future economic downturn of becoming the long term unemployed of the future.

The EQUAL Working Group of the Dublin Employment Pact analysed the labour market from the perspective of opening HR practices to increase people’s access to and foothold in the world of work. This analysis established that very particular HR dynamics operate in different sectors, and identified the patterns that characterised the public, private and community sectors respectively. While market forces shaped HR recruitment and progression opportunities in the private sector, the public sector was more influenced by the regulatory framework of public policy, and community organisations were driven by an ethos of service to particular communities. Given these fundamentally different dynamics, the project group decided to develop focused multi-agency projects in each of the sectors, targeting realisable change in HR practices.

This complex framework and the desire to impact as widely as possible on the Dublin labour market were why nearly fifty organisations from across the spectrum became actively involved in Equal at Work. This is also why at this early stage it was decided that the project must be accompanied throughout by a rigorously independent formative evaluation system, to criticise, cajole and praise the project as it developed, offering insights and comments to enable the project learn as it went, and redirecting its energies where appropriate. Indeed, one of the first actions of the project following approval for funding was to seek tenders for this task.

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Following a very competitive process, Hibernian Consulting was awarded the contract, and have since carried out the formative evaluation from the start of the project through to its completion. Throughout the stresses and strains of the project, the consultant, Finbar McDonnell, succeeded in maintaining a rigorous independence while impacting continually on the project, enabling it to evolve in an ever more positive direction. For this, and for the quality of the work, the project team feel greatly indebted.

As an integral and dynamic element of the project, the evaluation has in no small way contributed to the widely recognised and acclaimed successes of Equal at Work:

- The introduction of competency based recruitment and in-work progression for Clerical Officer grade in local authorities in place of the mandatory leaving certificate requirement, and the development of appropriate Job Profiles;
- The piloting for the first time in Ireland of Job Rotation in the private sector, enabling workers to undergo training and upskilling while their positions on the production line – assisted by a system of continual supports - are taken by unemployed people wishing to integrate into the labour market;
- The development of a model enabling people with accredited learning through the Fastrack into IT (FIT) Programme to be accepted for third level courses at DCU without the previously required formal school qualification;
- The development of Equality in the Workplace, a training module for entry level staff in public sector organisations in the application of Equality Legislation;
- A survey and analysis of HR policies and practices in Dublin community and voluntary organisations, and the initiating of a process to develop comprehensive and inclusive HR practices for the sector;
- A study of working conditions in the community and voluntary sector in its relationship with the state in delivering community services;
- The development of progression paths for Community Employment participants and non-formally qualified “unskilled” staff in the health sector to the grade of Medical Secretary;
- Production of Strengthening your Business, a staff training module on equality and diversity in the workplace;
- A comparative analysis of client profiling practices and systems of formal and informal workplace learning for low skilled workers in Dublin, Naples, Munich and Bordeaux.

It is, therefore, now a great pleasure to present this detailed evaluation of the Equal at Work Programme to the public so that its very tangible outcomes can inform an even greater level of change towards a more inclusive Irish labour market.



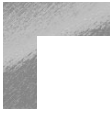
Philip O'Connor
Chair of the Management Committee
Equal at Work

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Executive Summary

EQUAL is an EU-wide programme that aims to promote equality and combat discrimination relating to the world of work. Partly funded by the European Social Fund, Round 1 of EQUAL supported 21 projects in Ireland between 2002 and 2004/5. While the amount of funds available to these projects was tiny by the standards of mainstream public training and labour market programmes, the aim of EQUAL is to fund innovative actions that, if successful, can influence mainstream policy and practice. EQUAL has been described as a 'laboratory' for labour market innovation in Europe.

Equal at Work was one of the 21 Irish projects funded under Round 1 of EQUAL. It had a budget of €1.13m and was led by the Dublin Employment Pact, an organisation that brings together organisations from the private, public and community/voluntary sectors of Dublin's economy. The project involved 48 partner organisations, including Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council, Adelaide & Meath Hospital incorp. The National Childrens Hospital, Dublin Port Company, FÁS, ICTU, SIPTU, IMPACT, Dublin City University, the National College of Ireland, the SFA, a number of Area Partnership companies, private companies and organisations from the community and voluntary sector.

The Equal at Work organisations noted that most previous similar EU-funded projects had directly assisted end target groups that tend to be excluded from the labour market in accessing employment. While recognising the importance of this work, Equal at Work believed that inequalities also arise from organisations' HR practices and policies. While these are often perceived as 'neutral', they can contain outmoded or unnecessary elements which act both against the progress of certain people or groups in the labour market, and against the ultimate interests of the organisations themselves.

With this in mind, Equal at Work piloted 11 actions, which included:

- Reviewing recruitment processes in local authorities, focusing on the General Operative and Clerical Officer entry-level grades, to increase their openness;
- Promoting the progression of hospital administrative staff and CE participants to Medical Secretary posts in hospitals;
- Piloting the Job Rotation model of training/job placement (widely used by companies in other EU countries) with two large Dublin companies;
- Identifying good HR practices in the Community and Voluntary sector, developing a training module to disseminate these, and reviewing the interaction between C&V organisations and the state to increase its effectiveness;
- Piloting Equality Reviews in two organisations and undertaking a comparative analysis of these Reviews.

The different actions were piloted between early-2003 and mid-2004. Some of the outputs arising are listed on the next page.



Selected Outputs from the Equal at Work Pilot Actions

Opening Up Local Authority Recruitment

- Competency Framework developed for Local Authority General Operative grade;
- Competency Framework developed for Local Authority Clerical Officer grade;
- Part played in removing Leaving Certificate or equivalent as a mandatory requirement for recruitment to local authority Clerical Officer positions.

Broadening Access to Medical Secretary Training in Tallaght Hospital

- Testing of training module for Medical Secretary training, including workshop and distance learning dimensions;
- Training of 24 existing hospital employees and CE participants for Medical Secretary positions, of whom 18 were successful in the subsequent exams.

Piloting Job Rotation with Two Large Dublin Companies

- Successful completion of two Job Rotations
- 16 people outside the labour market provided with two weeks high quality pre-vocational training and job placements (of whom 10 offered jobs);
- Training to 40 people from Keelings (Distribution) Ltd. and Freshways-Kerry Foods Ltd.

Improving Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector

- Research reports on HR practices in the community and voluntary sector and on the Interaction between the State and Organisations in sector
- HR/Equality and Diversity Training Module for organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector developed in association with the National College of Ireland.

Undertaking and Comparing Two Equality Reviews

- Equality Reviews carried out in two quite different organisations;
- Comparative Analysis of the Reviews undertaken, focusing on the processes involved in an Equality Review, and on policy implications.

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As stated, the aim of EQUAL projects is to pilot innovative activities and to disseminate learning arising. Based on the actions successfully piloted by Equal at Work, a considerable amount of learning now exists. This is likely to be of particular interest to:

- Local authorities, and organisations interested in promoting the effectiveness of local authorities in Ireland;
- The Departments of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; and Social and Family Affairs;
- Private companies looking to upgrade staff skill levels and recruit new staff;
- Trade Unions, particularly those in the community and voluntary sector or with members in local authorities;
- The Equality Authority, and other equality practitioners.

Further information on the learning arising from Equal at Work is contained in the project evaluation report. Materials relating to the project are also available at the Equal at Work section of the Dublin Employment Pact website (www.dublinpact.ie).

The hypothesis of Equal at Work, that HR structures, policies and processes are crucial in generating greater workplace equality, was validated by the project's work. The challenge now is for the organisations listed above, and others, to use the learning generated by the project to increase both the effectiveness, and the levels of equality, in their organisations.

1 Introduction

1.1 The EQUAL Programme and Equal at Work

1.1.1 The EU EQUAL Programme

EQUAL is an EU-wide programme that runs from 2000 to 2006. The European Commission's introductory brochure on EQUAL sets out the background to the programme¹ :

"In 1997, all 15 Member States agreed to work together to create a better climate for new jobs and to ensure equality of opportunity for everyone, whether employed or looking for a job. The opportunity to participate in a Europe which aims to become the most dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world must be open to all.

We have to find new ways of dealing with the problems of inequality and discrimination which stop Europe from being an inclusive society. This is where EQUAL has a key role to play. EQUAL offers a Europe-wide focus for experimenting with new ways of tackling the problems of inequality and discrimination related to the world of work".

The four 'pillars' of the European Employment Strategy are used by EQUAL, with projects funded under each. These are:

- Employability, which supports people outside the labour force in entering work;
- Entrepreneurship;
- Adaptability, which helps individuals and organisations to adapt to change; and
- Equal Opportunities.

1.1.2 The EQUAL Programme in Ireland

In Ireland, EQUAL has a budget of €47m for 2000-06. Of this, €33.9m is contributed by the European Social Fund, €11m by national public funding and €2.1m by the private sector. While this amount is tiny compared to the spending of mainstream HR and labour market public policy programmes² , the idea is that EQUAL should provide a space for new thinking and innovation, with good ideas that emerge being transferred into mainstream practice and policy.

¹ Further information on the EU-wide EQUAL Programme is available at www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal

² The €47m EQUAL budget for 2000-06 is equivalent to one-third of 1% of the budget of €14,200m (€14.2b) for the mainstream Employment and Human Resource Development Programme.



EQUAL in Ireland is overseen by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and by a national Monitoring Committee, which includes representatives of those Government Departments and agencies whose work is linked to issues of equality or the labour market, the social partners and others. The Department has set up a Technical Support Structure for EQUAL, which supports projects on an ongoing basis. A national Mainstreaming Policy Group supports the mainstreaming of learning arising from EQUAL projects.

The programme has been divided into two 'rounds', with a first call for projects in Summer 2001, leading to 21 Irish projects (including Equal at Work) being chosen for funding. Projects to be funded under the second round of EQUAL are to be selected in December 2004.

1.1.3 Equal at Work

Equal at Work was funded under the Adaptability 'pillar' of EQUAL. It, therefore, did not provide direct supports to end target groups to help them enter the labour market but, rather, had a focus on organisational change. Its aim (expanded on in Section 1.3) has been to work with key labour market actors and organisations in the Greater Dublin Area to pilot 11 innovative changes in Human Resource practices and policies, that can promote equality and combat discrimination.

After a six-month development phase, the project ran from mid-2002 to mid-2004. Its budget was €1.13m, of which €750,000 came from the European Social Fund, with the rest (€380,000 or 33.6% of the total) provided as match funding by the project partners³.

1.2 Origins of Equal at Work

1.2.1 Origins of the Idea for Equal at Work

The co-ordinating partner for Equal at Work was the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP). Originally one of over 90 Territorial Employment Pacts across Europe, the DEP brings together some 100 organisations from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors to address labour market issues across Dublin's four local authority areas.

The origins of Equal at Work date back to a Working Group established by the DEP following a European Commission Communication on EQUAL in 2000⁴. This Group was chaired by the Manager of Northside Partnership, and included representatives of local development organisations, labour market bodies and training agencies (FÁS and the National Training and Development Institute). At the time, national economic growth was strong and unemployment had fallen to around 4%. The workshops suggested that a range of restrictive, outmoded and unimaginative HR practices and policies were causing inequality and

³ Just over 40% of this match funding was provided in cash – the rest being 'in kind' match funding.

⁴ Communication from the European Commission to the Member States, 14th April 2000

discrimination in Dublin's labour market. The Working Group also noted that different HR dynamics operate in the public, private and community/voluntary sectors, and any initiative would need to take these divergences into account.

The Working Group believed that a broad partnership should be established for any EQUAL project. In previous programmes, projects tended to be of a small size, and even very good practice had found it hard to develop beyond the 'pilot' phase. EQUAL seemed to promise that projects would be larger, and able to impact effectively on the mainstream. From the start, therefore, Equal at Work aimed to involve a broad representative partnership, so as to impact in a substantial way on labour market practices in the Dublin region.

Arising from these views, workshops were held in 2000-2001 around the key themes of EQUAL, involving representatives from a range of potential partner organisations⁵. These analysed the barriers to an inclusive labour market in Dublin and established the outline of actions for an EQUAL project. The hypothesis emerging from the workshops was that established HR policies and practices are often perceived as 'neutral' by organisations but that this is often not the case in practice. In some instances, practices were developed to suit a particular time or situation, but have outlived their original purpose. The significant increase in the level of education of the labour force in recent years, and the strategic national emphasis on life-long learning, have also changed the context for HR management.

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Specific examples identified in the workshops of HR policies and practices that acted against equality in the workplace were:

- People were finding it difficult to access jobs due to recruitment practices or requirements which seemed unnecessary;
- Many people in lower-level jobs were finding it difficult to progress, partly due to inflexible organisational practices;
- Problems of progression due to badly designed practices also arose for people on Community Employment and other state labour market schemes;
- Companies were finding it difficult to release workers for training in a tight labour market, when their jobs would need to be 'covered' by other workers;
- Smaller organisations, including in the Community and Voluntary sector, had traditionally not had the resources to invest in good Human Resources policies;
- There was a wider need, in organisations of all sizes and in all sectors, to understand and take into account the implications of the (then) new Irish equality legislation and the role of the Equality Authority.

As well as preventing people access jobs they felt they could do, and limiting progression in organisations, these HR practices and policies meant:

- Many workers and potential workers in Dublin were being restricted in their job satisfaction, and in their careers;

⁵ These workshops were facilitated by Ms. Gráinne Healy on behalf of the Pact.



- Organisations were functioning at less than 100% of their potential because they were not getting the most out of their employees;
- Organisations sometimes breached equality legislation due to a lack of awareness of their duties and obligations.

In summary, the workshops indicated that certain HR policies and practices in the Dublin labour market were causing inequality and discrimination, and acting as barriers to individuals and organisations in achieving their potential. Furthermore, the workshops noted that previous EU and national interventions in the Irish labour market had tended to overlook this issue, and focus on end target groups. For these reasons, the workshops recommended that the Dublin Employment Pact co-ordinate the submission of an application for funding under the Adaptability pillar of Round 1 of EQUAL in Ireland.

1.2.2 Preparing a Proposal under the EQUAL Programme

Given the DEP's wider role, and the identification of problems with HR policies and practices in all sectors, a broad-based 'Development Partnership'⁶ (DP) was put together for Equal at Work. This comprised:

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- Two local authorities – Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council;
 - The Adelaide and Meath Hospital incorporating the National Children's Hospital ('Tallaght Hospital');
 - Five statutory agencies, including FÁS and the Dublin Port Company;
 - Three trade union organisations – ICTU, IMPACT and SIPTU;
 - Four employer organisations or networks of employers, including the Small Firms Association and the South Dublin Chamber of Commerce;
 - Eight training/educational bodies, including the National College of Ireland, Dublin City University and the National Training and Development Institute;
 - 11 Area Partnership Companies or similar organisations;
 - 14 NGOs or community organisations, including organisations that work with Travellers, people with disabilities, homeless people and drug users.

A proposal on behalf of these 48 organisations was submitted by the Dublin Employment Pact in August 2001 and was approved for funding in November 2001.

1.3 Project Objectives and Structure

1.3.1 Overall Project Objective

Documentation developed during the project development phase of Equal at Work sets out the project's overall aim:

⁶ Projects under the EQUAL Programme must be established as 'Development Partnerships' with multiple organisations coming together to implement pilot actions and disseminate the learning arising.

“To develop models of open human resource management policies and practices so as to enable the development of a new inclusive work culture in key organisations in the public, private and community/voluntary sectors in the Dublin region. This culture change will spearhead the drive towards the creation of an inclusive, diverse and equal labour market which will support access and retention through lifelong learning and the application of inclusive work practices to the benefit, in particular, of those experiencing discrimination, exclusion and inequality in the labour market.”

1.3.2 Project Actions

Given that the workshops had concluded that HR policies and practices varied by sector, Equal at Work was organised around four groupings of organisations, or ‘sites’, each leaning predominantly (but not exclusively) to one sector of the labour market. Two of the sites focused on HR policies and practices in public sector organisations, with one site each focusing on private companies and on community and voluntary sector organisations. These four sites were supplemented by an Equality and Diversity Group, which drew members from all sites and sectors.

Each site built on the outcomes of the Pact-sponsored workshops and identified actions to be piloted by organisations in their site. The definition of the actions evolved and developed over time into 11 pilot actions.

Table 1: **Equal at Work Pilot Actions**

	Site/Group	Nature of Action
1.	Public Sector	Review of recruitment processes for General Operative and Clerical Officer entry-level grades in local authorities, with a view to increasing openness
2.	Public Sector	Piloting of new inception training and mentoring processes to support progression at lower staff grades in local authorities
3.	Public Sector	Promoting progression of hospital administrative staff and CE participants to Medical Secretary posts
4.	Public Sector	Promoting equality and diversity training in public sector organisations
5.	Public Sector	Developing bridges for people on Community Employment schemes into employment in local authorities
6.	Private Sector	Piloting of Job Rotation model of training/job placement with two large companies
7.	Private Sector	Developing a tailored third-level progression option for graduates of the Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) Programme
8.	Community/Voluntary	Identifying good HR practices in the C&V sector and developing a training module to disseminate these
9.	Community/Voluntary	Reviewing interaction between C&V organisations and the state, to identify good practice and areas for improvement
10.	Equality and Diversity	Developing training modules around the new equality legislation and on the business case for equality and diversity
11.	Equality and Diversity	Piloting equality reviews in two organisations and undertaking a comparative analysis of these reviews



These pilot actions are described in more detail in Chapters 3-6. However, they show that, within the project's overall objective, it undertook a range of very different actions, relating to different Human Resources policies and practices, across the different sectors of the Dublin economy.

1.3.3 Transnational Partnership

As well as the above actions, implemented through the 48 members of its Development Partnership, the EQUAL Programme requires that projects have a transnational partnership, i.e. with like-minded EQUAL projects from other EU Member States, or accession countries. The idea is that the organisations involved in EQUAL projects in the different Member States will learn from each other, and innovative ideas will transfer internationally.

Equal at Work was part of the PROMIS transnational partnership, which also included projects from Munich, Naples and Bordeaux. Equal at Work specifically identified partner projects in large urban areas, and its partner projects included municipal authorities, councils and labour market organisations.

The PROMIS partnership (reviewed in Chapter 2) aimed to encourage cross-learning and innovation around the integration of excluded groups into the labour market. Specific objectives were to:

- 1 Examine and compare approaches to labour market analysis in each partner city;
- 2 Develop IT methodologies for increasing accessibility to excluded groups of labour market information;
- 3 Develop formal/informal learning methodologies in employment (including qualification/progression modules) and compare good practice;
- 4 Develop a web-based learning platform of best practice linking to other networks of DPs and developing as an EU-wide learning resource.

As part of the PROMIS partnership's work, exchange visits were undertaken as follows:

- to Munich between 23-25 September 2002;
- to Naples between 27-30 May 2003;
- to Bordeaux between 24-26 November 2003.

In addition, Equal at Work hosted its transnational partners to a visit in Dublin between 19-22 April 2004.

1.3.4 North-South Co-operation

As well as its transnational co-operation, Equal at Work was also interested in establishing links with similar organisations in Northern Ireland. However, as there were not many EQUAL projects in Northern Ireland (eight under Round 1), it was difficult to find an EQUAL project that would provide a suitable formal partner

for Equal at Work. As such, the project made direct contacts with organisations similar to those in the Equal at Work DP from April 2002, and this led to a Dublin-Belfast Co-operation Working Group in Autumn 2002. As with the transnational partnership, the aim was to create contacts with other city-wide organisations, engaged in similar work to the Equal at Work DP members, so as to encourage cross-learning. Members of the Working Group from the Northern side included a number of the Belfast Partnerships, the Royal Victoria Hospital, North Belfast URBAN, Belfast Gasworks Employment Mediator Service (GEMS), the Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Sector Association and a Northern Ireland EQUAL project.

This group, which aimed to oversee and facilitate interactions and cross-learning between Equal at Work organisations and similar organisations in Belfast, met on four occasions between Autumn 2002 and mid-2003, as follows:

- 05 December 2002;
- 28 January 2003;
- 12 May 2003;
- 25 June 2003.

As explained in Chapter 2, due to a lack of available funding for this dimension of the project, less work could be undertaken from mid-2003 to mid-2004.

1.4 Project Timeframe and Phases

The broad stages of project work are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: **Broad Phases of Work in Equal at Work Project**

Time Period	Work Undertaken
November 2001 to June 2002	Detailed project development phase - undertaken by all funded EQUAL projects. Recruitment of a Project Manager.
Summer 2002	Re-negotiation of project budget after budget received was significantly lower than original application made. Recruitment of site co-ordinators and project evaluator.
Autumn 2002	Development of Action Plans by each of the four sites, for each individual action.
January 2003 to April 2004	Implementation of pilot actions by the four sites and by the Equality and Diversity Group.
January 2004 to June 2004	Dissemination of learning arising from project actions and efforts to secure mainstreaming of project learning.

Table 2 shows that the project operated within a tight timeframe. Effectively, 2002 was spent in various levels of planning and preparation for the implementation of the pilot innovative actions during a 16 month period from January 2003. The dissemination and mainstreaming work began in early-2004 as the pilot



actions were finishing their work and the final months of the project were dominated by dissemination and mainstreaming activities. The project formally ended on 30 June 2004.

1.5 Objectives and Structure of Evaluation

This Evaluation has a number of objectives:

- to record the work undertaken under the 11 pilot actions of the Equal at Work project and the outputs that arose from this work;
- to record and comment on the work of the project, and its actions, in regard to the dissemination and mainstreaming of project learning, and the longer-term potential of the actions in terms of increasing openness in HR policies and practices in organisations in Dublin and elsewhere;
- to describe and comment on the organisation and structure of the Development Partnership over the project period, the PROMIS transnational partnership and the North-South co-operation (from the perspective of Equal at Work);
- to draw conclusions and identify any recommendations arising from the project.

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To meet these objectives, the Evaluation is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 reviews the operation of the Development Partnership, the Dublin-Belfast co-operation and the PROMIS transnational partnership;
- Chapters 3-6 describe the actions across the four sites and in the Equality and Diversity Group. As one action across the two public sector sites was jointly undertaken and the two sites' actions relate to similar organisations, the work of these two sites is recorded together in Chapter 3;
- Chapter 7 draws conclusions and makes a number of recommendations as regards the learning arising from Equal at Work.

In preparing this Evaluation, and in working as a Formative Evaluator to Equal at Work from mid-2002 to mid-2004, Hibernian Consulting were assisted by many people linked to the project. In particular, we would like to thank Caroline Creamer, Philip O'Connor and Gráinne Healy, who worked centrally on the project, and the key workers at the project sites – including Mary McSweeney, Stephanie Brennan, Paddy Crosbie, Margaret Walsh, Anne Biddulph, Anna Gunning and Adrienne Hayes. We greatly appreciate the support provided by these and by all of those people who assisted us in our work.

2 Equal at Work as a Development Partnership

2.1 Organisation of DP and Project Work

2.1.1 Project Structure

The structure of the Equal at Work project is shown on the following page.

The overall decision making body for the project was the Development Partnership, i.e. the 48 partner organisations. This met three times during the lifetime of the project and established a Management Committee to oversee project implementation – see Table 3⁷. The Management Committee met every ten weeks or so during the lifetime of the project.

Table 3: **Equal at Work DP Management Committee - Member Organisations**

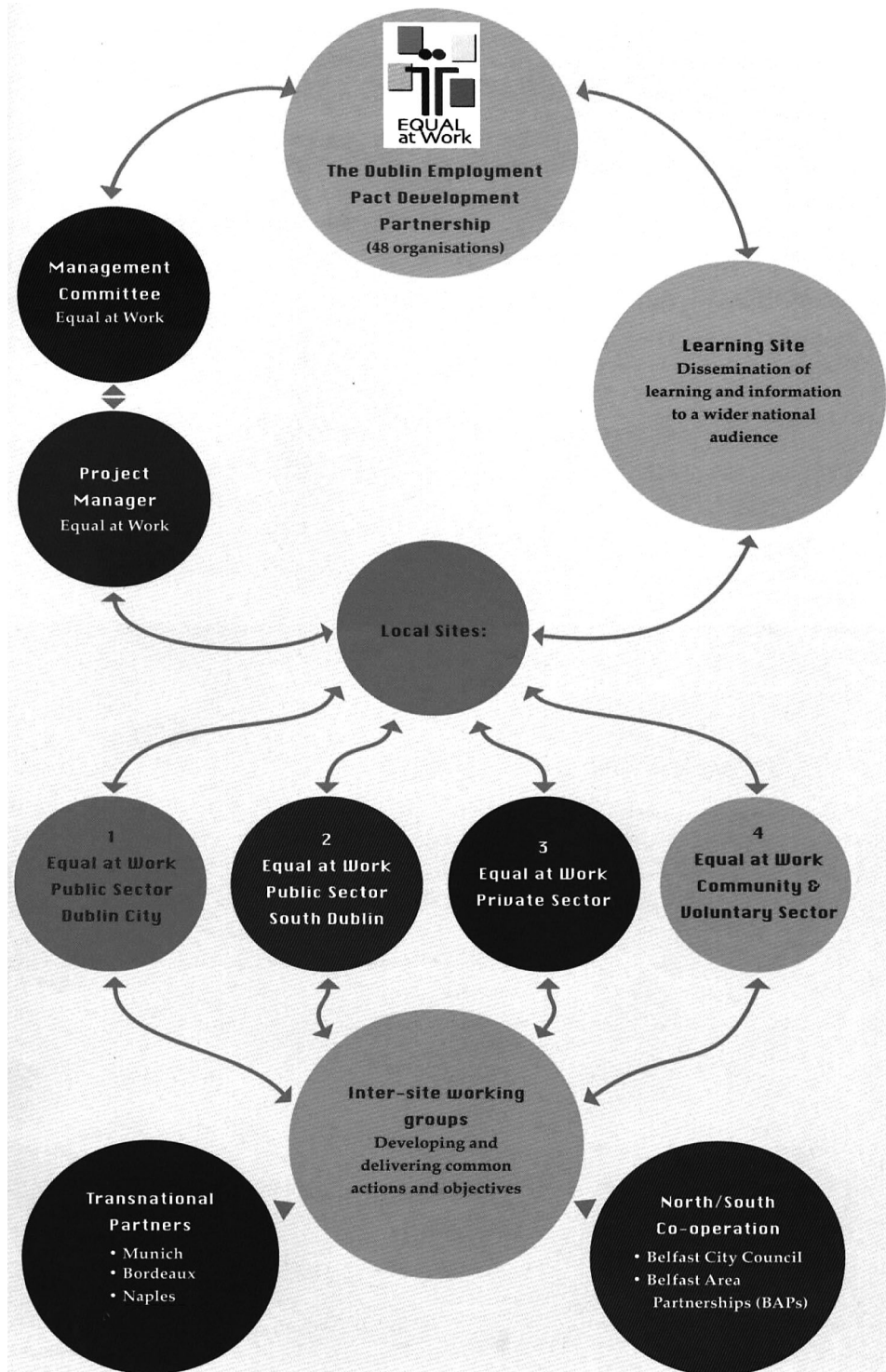
■ Dublin City Council	■ SIPTU
■ Northside Partnership	■ IMPACT
■ Ballymun Partnership	■ Small Firms Association
■ Clondalkin Partnership	■ INOU
■ Dublin Inner City Partnership	■ Gandon Enterprises
■ Exchange House Travellers Service	■ National Training and Development Institute
■ Dublin City University	
■ Tallaght Partnership/Tallaght Welfare Society	

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At a central project level, a full-time Project Manager (Caroline Creamer) was employed for the full period of the project. She was supported on an ongoing basis by a Project Development Consultant (Gráinne Healy) and by the Dublin Employment Pact. The project was also supported by a formative project evaluator (Hibernian Consulting) in relation to the development of action plans, indicators, mainstreaming plans and a number of other project issues.

7 The Director of the Dublin Employment Pact, and the Equal at Work Project Manager, also attended meetings of this Committee.





The diagram shows the four 'local sites' at its centre – these were the vehicles that implemented the innovative pilot actions of Equal at Work, and their membership is set out in Section 2.1.4. The 'sites' were not geographically but sectorally based and contained organisations from the DP that wished to implement one or more of the project's pilot actions. As well as these four sites, representatives from the sites formed an inter-site group that addressed common issues in relation to equality and diversity. The work of the sites is described in Chapters 3-6.

Both transnational and cross-border partners fed into the work of the project, and co-operation in this regard is discussed later in Chapter 2.

2.1.2 Central Project Functions

Ongoing Tasks during the Lifetime of the Project

Over the lifetime of the project, there were a number of project roles undertaken at a central level:

- Overseeing the work of the four sites – as well as visiting the sites on a regular basis, the Project Manager chaired a meeting of the site co-ordinators every six weeks or so during the lifetime of the project
- Work relating to the finances of the project. While the sites were responsible for local finances, the project at a central level reported quarterly to the national EQUAL Technical Support Structure on project finances. It was also responsible for ensuring the project accounts were audited annually.
- Other project administration work, e.g. production of annual reports, non-financial returns and fulfilling other administrative requirements of the EQUAL programme.
- Communication, both within the DP and with outside organisations. A newsletter was produced quarterly by the project describing developments and was circulated to the 48 DP members. There were also regular requests for information from other EQUAL projects, mainstream policy organisations, the media etc.
- Promoting ongoing contacts with other EQUAL projects and speaking at events to promote the profile of the project. This included attending a Europe-wide ESF conference in Paris in December 2003, speaking at an ESF conference in Dublin as part of Ireland's EU Presidency in Spring 2004 and attending an EU-wide EQUAL conference in Vilnius in June 2004.
- Provision of support to the transnational and North-South dimensions of the project (see Sections 2.3 and 2.4), including organising the visit of the transnational partners to Dublin in April 2004.
- Work relating to dissemination and mainstreaming of learning arising from the project actions. This included organising the project's PR (national print and broadcast media) and arranging targeted dissemination and mainstreaming meetings and events by project action (see Chapters 3-6). It also included representing the project at national EQUAL events and on the national EQUAL thematic groups.
- Meeting with the Minister responsible for Labour Affairs, Mr. Frank Fahey TD, on 27th July 2004, to brief him on the outcomes of the project and the opportunities created by the project work for mainstream organisations.

Equal at Work Conferences

Two Equal at Work conferences were held during the period of the project.

The first was held on 25th September 2003 in the Croke Park conference centre. As well as providing an update on the progress of the project, and its actions, this conference included a number of speakers on general issues relating to equality issues, including the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney, the Chairman of Northside Partnership, Padraic White, and the European Commission official



responsible for the EQUAL Initiative in Ireland, Ian Livingstone. The full-day conference also included a number of workshops relating to equality in the workplace. Some 170 delegates attended the conference.

The second was held on 22nd April 2004, at the same venue. This conference coincided with the visit to Dublin of the project's transnational partners, who attended the conference. The conference acted as a showcase for the learning arising from the project and, after a plenary session, was organised into workshops to present the different pilot actions and their work. The day was opened by the Minister for Labour Affairs, Frank Fahey, and speakers included Lucy Fallon-Byrne, Director of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance; Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority; Inez McCormack, the former President of ICTU; Seaghan O'Lanagáin, Chief Executive of the Local Government Management Services Board and Michael McDonnell, Director of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Some 125 people attended the conference.

Submission of Supplementary Action 3 Funding Proposals

At national level, supplementary funds became available in late-2003 to support highly innovative ideas in EQUAL projects that were felt to have national policy mainstreaming potential. By June 2004, Equal at Work had prepared two proposals at a central level in relation to this funding:

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- Work to undertake two Equality Audits and to undertake a piece of comparative analysis between them (see Chapter 6);
- A proposal to undertake further Job Rotation pilot actions (see Chapter 5), and to involve mainstream labour market organisations in this work.

2.1.3 Project Sites

The DP member organisations involved in the four sites (i.e. in directly steering or piloting the project actions) are shown in Table 4⁸. Some organisations became involved in more than one site's activities.

⁸ The remaining DP members, who retained an interest at DP level, were the Irish Management Institute, Dublin City Enterprise Board, South Dublin Chamber of Commerce, the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group, the Forum for People with Disabilities, Fingal Community Forum and Pavée Point Travellers Centre.

Table 4: **Project Sites and Member Organisations**

Project Site	DP Members
Dublin City Public Sector Site (13 member organisations)	Dublin City Council (different departments); Local Government Management Services Board; Gandon Enterprises; IMPACT; Ballymun Job Centre; Blanchardstown Partnership; Finglas/Cabra Partnership; SIPTU; St. Michael's House Inclusive Recruitment; Dublin Port Company; Eastern Vocational Enterprises (EVE) Ltd., Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group
Tallaght/South Dublin Public Sector Site (11)	Tallaght Partnership; South Dublin County Council; National Training and Development Institute (NTDI); PARTAS; Eastern Vocational Enterprises (EVE) Ltd.; Tallaght LES; Tallaght Welfare Society; Tallaght Hospital; IMPACT; SIPTU; FÁS
Private Sector⁹ Site (15)	Northside Partnership; Dublin City University; FIT Programme; Co-operation Fingal; Rural Dublin LEADER Company; Small Firms Association; National Training and Development Institute; Blanchardstown Partnership; SIPTU; Clondalkin Partnership; Northside Business Network; Northside Partnership; Employers' Network; FÁS; Dept. of Social and Family Affairs; Ballymun Partnership
Community and Voluntary Sector Site (17)	Exchange House Travellers Service; Ballymun Job Centre; Dublin Inner City Partnership; KWCD Partnership; Southside Partnership; National College of Ireland; ICTU; The Linkage Programme; Rural Dublin LEADER Company; Focus Ireland; SICCCA; Merchants Quay Ireland, Co-operation Fingal; Fingal Community Forum; INOU; IMPACT

The first organisation mentioned for each site acted in a 'site co-ordinator' role, i.e. calling and managing meetings and managing the financial aspect of the project insofar as it related to the site. Each site employed a full-time or part-time person to undertake this work.

In addition to the work of the sites, membership of the inter-site Equality and Diversity Group is shown below. As well as inviting members of the DP, a number of other organisations were invited to become members of the group, including the Equality Authority and another EQUAL project working with equality and diversity issues.

Table 5: **Equality and Diversity Group - Member Organisations**

Equality and Diversity Group	Equality Authority; FÁS, Dublin City University; TRED EQUAL Project, Focus Ireland; Dublin City Council; South Dublin County Council; Dublin Port Company; Exchange House Traveller Service; NTDI, Breda McNally (Equality Auditor); Tallaght Welfare Society; National College of Ireland; Eastern Regional Health Authority; Health Service Employers Agency; Tallaght Hospital; Local Government Management Services Board; 4 x Site Co-ordinator.
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⁹ The two companies in which Job Rotations were undertaken – Keelings Ltd. and Freshways Ltd. were later co-opted as members of the Private Sector site.





2.2 Functioning of the Development Partnership

2.2.1 Involvement of the Wider DP

Most DP partners have an ongoing involvement with the project through their role on the project sites. However, the project organised three meetings of all 48 partners - in November 2002, in January 2004 and, to formally close the project, in July 2004. In addition to these DP meetings, all partners were invited to attend the Equal at Work conferences in September 2003 and April 2004. They received a quarterly newsletter, prepared by the Project Manager, which included an update on progress achieved by each of the four sites.

At the January 2004 DP meeting, the project Evaluator surveyed DP members on their views on the project. Some 20 organisations completed the questionnaire provided and answers to some of the key survey questions are shown below.

Table 6: Views of Equal at Work DP Members on Aspects of Project

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How well do you feel you have been kept informed about Equal at Work?	Very well: 12	Fairly well: 5	Not very well: 2	N/A: 1
How well do you feel you have stayed involved with Equal at Work?	Very well: 5	Fairly well: 11	Not very well: 3	N/A: 1
How would you rate the ideas behind Equal at Work in relation to the objectives of your organisation?	Important: 14	Unsure: 3	Not important: 1	N/A: 2
How would you rate the progress of Equal at Work (i.e. up to January 2004)?	Very good: 4	Good: 10	Okay: 4	N/A: 2
Do you think it has been worthwhile for your organisation to be involved with Equal at Work?	Yes: 14	Unsure: 4	No: 0	N/A: 2

Source: Hibernian Consulting, Survey of Equal at Work DP Members, 2004

Table 6 indicates that the members of the wider DP were generally very positive about the project and its work. As regards the perceptions of project progress to January 2004, partners not directly involved in implementation, or involved in one site only, may have further improved their perception of the project outputs as dissemination of learning arising from the project actions took place in Spring 2004.

2.2.2 Functioning of the Project Structure

Establishing four sites, and an Equality and Diversity Group, meant putting in place quite a complex structure. However, the idea of the sites generally worked well:

- The issues identified in the original Dublin Employment Pact sponsored workshops varied by sector and the sites allowed each action to be piloted in the context of a specific sector;
- Each site could focus on two or three of the 11 innovative ideas that were being piloted under the project, giving them a practical, action-oriented focus;
- The structure allowed for the maximum number of organisations to be directly involved in project actions, and tapped into the energy of these organisations. This effectively allowed the project to ‘lever’ greater amounts of time and effort into its actions than would otherwise have been the case.

While the site structure worked well, there were two associated disadvantages:

1. The fact that the actions were implemented by a range of organisations reduced the power of the ‘centre’ to drive the progress of actions. For example, if there were personnel changes in a site, this could lead to delays in implementation;
2. While devolution of financial responsibility for actions encouraged responsibility by the sites, it created extra administrative work for the project ‘centre’ and involved some duplication of effort across sites.

While these last points suggest some learning for future similar projects, in general, the site structure was a positive feature of Equal at Work and helped the project to achieve its aims.

2.3 North-South Co-operation

Chapter 1 recorded the aim of Equal at Work to develop a North-South dimension, i.e. to create links with organisations in Northern Ireland similar to the organisations in the Equal at Work Development Partnership, and to use these links to undertake joint actions and foster an exchange of learning.

To this end, a North-South working group was set up in Equal at Work, reporting to the project’s Management Committee, and feeding into a Dublin-Belfast group that was established. From late-2002 to mid-2003, the Dublin-Belfast group met on a number of occasions and papers were prepared comparing equality legislation North and South, and on work already undertaken in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity.

To progress to joint actions, however, required funding and it proved very difficult to obtain funding for this aspect of the project, despite the Project Manager meeting with the different organisations and programmes that fund North-South co-operation. This lack of funding was a source of frustration for the project, which felt that the benefits of co-operation would easily outweigh the costs, if funding could be found.

The frustration of the project in this regard was reinforced by a belief that the structures put in place nationally to promote North-South co-operation on EQUAL did not lead to much practical co-operation. A small number of North-South events were held for all EQUAL projects, North and South, which allowed for some networking. However, the Belfast-based organisations with which Equal at Work wished to work were generally outside the (small number of) Northern Ireland EQUAL projects. This meant that they were not eligible to attend these events.



A lack of funding for this dimension of the project meant that very little activity occurred between mid-2003 and mid-2004. The main exception to this was attendance by the project's Northern partners at the two Equal at Work conferences.

2.4 The PROMIS Transnational Partnership

2.4.1 Objectives of PROMIS Partnership

Equal at Work was part of the PROMIS transnational partnership, which included three other EQUAL projects:

- Arbeitskräfteentwicklung im Grobraum Munchen, The Municipality of Munich;
- Sinapse, a training and social inclusion agency in Bordeaux;
- Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) Programme of the Commune of Naples.

The Transnational Co-operation Agreement between the partners stated:

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“The Partnership is a network of cities and, while the emphasis of each project is different, each faces the common problems of large-city urban labour markets. While unemployment levels vary between the cities, many of the same target groups are involved. The cities in this partnership thus share common interests in tackling access and equality in the labour market.”

The Agreement also states the overall and specific objectives of the PROMIS partnership:

“The common objective of the partnership is to maximise opportunities for creating inclusive and equal access to the labour market by currently excluded groups in each of the regions involved and consequently in Europe.

Specifically, the partners wish to work together in examining the following issues and in developing tools for inter-city transfer and joint learning with regard to these issues:

1. Examining and comparing approaches to labour market analysis in partner cities;
2. Developing IT methodologies to increase the accessibility to excluded groups of labour market information;
3. Developing formal/informal learning methodologies in employment, including qualification/progression modules and comparing good practice;
4. Developing a web-based learning platform of best practice linking to other networks of DPs and developing as an EU-wide learning resource.”

In practice, each partner took responsibility for leading a specific piece of work. Naples was responsible for labour market analysis across the four cities; Munich for developing the PROMIS website; Bordeaux for profiling participants across the projects and Equal at Work for developing formal/informal learning methodologies in the workplace.

An issue for PROMIS was that, while the four different EQUAL projects had commenced their work at the same time, they had different end points. In fact, Equal at Work was the first to end and therefore was a strong driver of the PROMIS work during 2003, to ensure progress and outputs before it ended in mid-2004.

2.4.2 PROMIS Partnership Exchange Visits and Outputs

An important part of the PROMIS work programme involved transnational exchange visits. These allowed for meetings to be held on the joint actions, and for an exchange of experience and information in relation to local good labour market practices. Transnational exchange meetings were held in Munich in September 2002, in Naples and Bordeaux during 2003 and in Dublin in April 2004. These visits tended to involve the following activities:

- presentations on local labour market;
- visits to local organisations working to promote labour market inclusion;
- interaction between partners from different countries;
- meeting of management committee of PROMIS.

The hosting of the Irish transnational exchange visit involved a considerable amount of work for the Equal at Work Project Manager, and for the project sites. As well as the social and cultural events organised for the visiting delegations, activities during the visit (19-22 April 2004) included:

- visits to organisations from all four project sites (including to South Dublin County Council, Tallaght Hospital, Dublin City Council, Ballymun Civic Offices and the Speedpak company);
- meetings on the common tasks of PROMIS, held in Dublin City Council;
- attendance at the Equal at Work project conference on 22nd April 2004.

The Dublin visit saw the publication of four draft reports by PROMIS entitled:

- Labour Market Profiles;
- A Comparison of Approaches to Client Profiling;
- Comparative Study of Approaches to Formal/Informal Learning;
- Interim Evaluation of the PROMIS Transnational Project.

This Evaluation will not attempt to summarise these documents, which are each some 25-30 pages long, are based on substantive research and contain learning arising from the four EQUAL projects. The fact that some of the reports were in interim form reflected the fact that the other projects¹⁰ were continuing until 2005 and planned to continue the PROMIS work.

¹⁰ Copies of these reports are available from the Dublin Employment Pact.



2.4.3 Comment on PROMIS Transnational Partnership

Equal at Work put considerable effort into the transnational partnership work, including the development of a template for each site to record learning arising from the exchange visits, previsit meetings to define in advance to the host project themes of interest to each site, meetings in Dublin after each trip to discuss the outcomes arising, and work between exchange visits to fulfil its obligations to the partnership.

Having reviewed the outcomes of PROMIS with the different people from Equal at Work who were involved in this dimension of the project, the general view was that the specific outputs of the partnership were useful, and of generally good quality. This was reflected in the separate (interim) evaluation of PROMIS¹¹, which concluded: 'The general assessment shows that the PROMIS consortium is judged useful to all of the partners. They appreciate the usefulness of the transnational meetings which exchange information about the four national projects involved in the consortium. The importance of an electronic platform to empower the relationship within the PROMIS partnership is well underlined. PROMIS is judged to be an efficient mechanism for giving each partner a better knowledge about new learning approaches'.

The organisations involved in Equal at Work would agree with this conclusion, i.e. that PROMIS was a good mechanism for information exchange. However, the Equal at Work partners also felt that the added value of the transnational dimension of the project was somewhat disappointing, i.e. the outputs of PROMIS were largely limited to information exchange and did not seem to percolate into influencing the core pilot actions of Equal at Work.

Several reasons were suggested for this. Despite the effort put into finding appropriate partners, it was felt that only the Munich project contained much real learning for the Equal at Work actions. Secondly, given the different timeframes, it was felt the other partners did not bring sufficient urgency to PROMIS in 2003, when Equal at Work was at its most open to receiving new ideas into its pilot actions. Thirdly, it was agreed that the time inevitably needed to get to know and understand new partners, from different countries and with different labour market organisations, made it difficult to move beyond information exchange in the time available.

Notwithstanding these feelings that the transnational dimension could have added more value to the core project actions, the partners agreed that learning, and contacts for future learning, had emerged from the PROMIS partnership, as well as the specific output of the four transnational reports produced.

11 Professor Christian Bérard, Interim Evaluation of the PROMIS Transnational Project, Bordeaux University, April 2004.

3 Innovative Actions of Public Sector Sites

3.1 Introduction

This is the first of the chapters that describe and comment on the 11 actions piloted under Equal at Work (see Table 1). Chapter 3 covers five actions piloted by the two public sector sites. For each of the actions, the idea that was piloted, the work undertaken during 2003 and 2004, and any outputs arising are described. The efforts in Spring 2004 to disseminate any learning arising are also described, and each section ends with a comment on the action.

Of the five actions in Chapter 3:

- the action in Section 3.2, around local authority recruitment, was undertaken jointly by the two Equal at Work public sector sites. This allowed for input from Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council;
- innovations around the Inception and Mentoring process for local authority employees (Section 3.3) were piloted by Dublin City Council;
- the Medical Secretary training (Section 3.4) directly involved Tallaght Hospital, supported by Tallaght LES, FÁS and other site members;
- the new module on equality and diversity training (Section 3.5) was developed by Dublin City Council and the Dublin Port Company; and
- the investigation of issues around progression from Community Employment into public sector employment (Section 3.6) involved, in particular, Tallaght Partnership and South Dublin County Council.

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3.2 Action 1: Opening Up Local Authority Recruitment

3.2.1 Innovative idea of Action

This action related to recruitment policies for people working at General Operative and Clerical Officer grades in local authorities. The idea was to make these policies fairer and, at the same time, improve the quality of recruitment decisions.

The action aimed to move the relevant recruitment processes to being based on the identification of the competencies required to do the specific jobs in question. From the perspective of job applicants, this would mean that people with the requisite skills can access the jobs, i.e. whatever their backgrounds, there are no unnecessary or artificial barriers to selection¹². From the perspective of a local authority, it means that the skills required for particular posts (including the ability to progress over time) would be directly tested in the

¹² Other cultural barriers may still remain, e.g. a 2002 study by Pavée Point Travellers' Centre as to why Travellers found it difficult to access Clerical Officer jobs in the civil service noted a number of cultural barriers that remained even after the recruitment process was based on competencies. However, at least some barriers are removed by moving to a competency-based recruitment process.



recruitment process, rather than being evaluated using proxy indicators (such as educational qualifications).

The pilot action was developed in the context of a requirement by local authorities for applicants for Clerical Officer positions to have a Leaving Certificate, or equivalent educational qualification. This was a national requirement set down by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, as the Clerical Officer grade is defined at national level. People who left school without a Leaving Certificate, and subsequently developed skills in the workplace, were discriminated against, and the partners in Equal At Work felt the requirement was unfair, and ageist.

The aim in relation to Clerical Officer recruitment was therefore to see if this perceived artificial and discriminatory requirement could be removed, and to develop a competency-based system of recruitment to replace it, and improve on it.

For the General Operative grade, recruitment has traditionally been interview-based and has not required specific educational qualifications. In this case, the pilot action aimed to link recruitment more closely to the actual competencies required for the job, so as to move recruitment towards best practice.

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3.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Overview of Work Undertaken

The work for this pilot action was mainly undertaken by Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council. Other partners from the two public sector sites, including the Local Government Management Services Board, supported the work, as did two occupational psychologists from the Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners (OCSLAC), who provided consulting inputs.

There are two analytical phases in moving a recruitment system from being based on educational qualifications, or other interview-based criteria, to being based on competencies:

- the first involves analysing the specific roles of those people who undertake the jobs involved, so as to develop a competency framework for the jobs. This identifies the key knowledge, skills and abilities required to carry out the roles;
- the second involves reviewing the selection process for the roles to ensure that people with the requisite skills can access the roles, whatever their background or circumstances. This includes understanding how people become aware of available positions, as well as examining all aspects of the application and selection process, with a focus on ensuring that the process does not discriminate unfairly against applicants with the competencies to undertake the roles.

These analytical phases must either be accompanied, or followed, by a process of change within an organisation's recruitment systems and processes. As with all processes of change, this will require communication, consultation, an action plan and the possible overcoming of resistance.

Both the General Operative (GO) and Clerical Officer (CO) grades in local authorities incorporate a range of specific jobs. Also, changes to recruitment require considerable discussion, and both local authorities involved have a commitment to an internal process of partnership. For these reasons, it was decided that the first step above (the job analysis) should be the focus of Equal at Work, providing a base for a new recruitment system in the available timeframe.

The work undertaken was overseen by a Steering Group across both sites, which included both management and union representatives, as well as representatives of Equal at Work and the OCSLAC.

Job Analysis

The first part of the work related to the General Operative grade and the analysis was undertaken by the OCSLAC in August and September 2003. Some 150 GOs in Dublin City Council were met, some individually and some in focus groups. The research also involved meeting GO supervisors to obtain their opinions on the qualities needed to be a good General Operative, as well as a number of senior managers in the Council.

A similar process was undertaken as regards Clerical Officers, in October and November 2003, in both Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council although, in this case, the research was undertaken by employees of the local authorities. The work began with a two-day training course given by the OCSLAC to those who would be undertaking the job analysis. This training was rated very highly by the people who received it and the OCSLAC was praised for the support it provided. Between 150 and 200 COs then had their jobs reviewed across the two Councils, with a mix of ages, gender and work departments.

This job analysis work led to the production of draft Job Competency Frameworks for the two grades. HR staff from both Councils met the OCSLAC to discuss these, and the agreed draft Job Competency Frameworks were then presented to the Steering Group for the action, for discussion, before being agreed in April 2004. The discussions also involved the internal partnership processes in the two local authorities and a meeting with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to inform it of the work of the action.

Two 'Competency Framework' documents emerged from this process and, as an example, an overview of the Clerical Officer Competency Framework is shown on the next page.





Table 7: Clerical Officer Competency Framework - Overview

Competency Title	Summary Statement of Competency
Customer Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is respectful, courteous and professional when dealing with customers ■ Understands their needs and expectations and acts on these appropriately ■ Is willing to represent the Local Authority in a positive manner through delivery of a prompt and efficient service ■ Is capable of dealing with difficult customers in an effective manner
Working with People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is aware of the importance of working as part of a team in order to meet targets ■ Actively participates as a team member and is co-operative and helpful to colleagues ■ Has an ability to develop and maintain good working relationships with fellow team members and other colleagues within the organisation
Thinking and Doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adheres to set practices and procedures in order that work is completed to a high standard ■ Demonstrates an ability and a willingness to identify relevant information ■ Prioritises workload and generates effective solutions
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demonstrates commitment to the role and delivery of a high quality service ■ Is flexible and adaptable in their approach to work ■ Is interested in their job and willing to learn new skills ■ Uses initiative to suggest and try a better way of doing things
Managing Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Has good written communication skills in order to understand correspondence and reply accordingly ■ Has an ability to do basic calculations unaided by a calculator

Table 7 shows the detailed nature of the competencies set out, based on the research at CO level. A similar Framework was set out for the GO grade.

Without abolition of the national requirement for a Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) qualification for CO positions, the development of the Competency Framework could not act as a basis for development of a new process of recruiting. During 2003 and 2004, Equal at Work made the point to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government that this requirement could be discriminatory. This point was also made by others, and was being examined by the Department itself. After a process of consideration, the Department issued a circular in April 2004 entitled 'Amendment of Clerical Officer Qualifications'. This stated: 'The effect of the order is to amend the Clerical Officer Qualifications to enable relevant experience to be taken into account for the purposes of admitting potential candidates to Clerical Officer competitions where such candidates may not fulfil the Leaving Certificate requirement'.

3.2.3 Outputs from Action

- Competency Framework for Local Authority General Operative grade;
- Competency Framework for Local Authority Clerical Officer grade;

- Part played in removing Leaving Certificate or equivalent as a mandatory requirement for recruitment to local authority Clerical Officer positions.

3.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

This action has a high potential as regards dissemination and mainstreaming. The primary direct targets are Irish local authorities, all of whom have General Operative and Clerical Officer grades that mirror those in Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council.

The action also provides a further major example of the use of competencies as a basis for recruitment in the Irish public sector. As such, it may provide a basis for extending the model further, including to more senior positions in local authorities.

As regards progress, a plan for disseminating and mainstreaming the learning arising was developed by Dublin City Council and South Dublin County Council in February 2004.

As stated above, a meeting was held with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April 2004 to inform them of the work and copies of the Competency Frameworks were submitted to the Department when completed.

The Equal at Work conference in April 2004 had a workshop session (ran twice during the day) on the work undertaken in this action. This was attended by HR staff from a number of other Irish local authorities.

There was considerable media interest in this project action and the work of the action, combined with the abolition of the Leaving Certificate requirement by the Department, led to stories in a number of national newspapers in April 2004, as well as a 2-minute story on RTE's 9pm main evening news programme.

The Local Government Management Services Board provides management services as well as HR and IR support and advice to local authorities and has a mandate to promote best practice in this regard. The Board was involved in the action and was therefore fully aware of its work. Moreover, at the April 2004 Equal at Work conference, the Board's Chief Executive expressed support for the work and said the LGMSB would help to develop the new recruitment processes.

Finally, through the partnership process in the two local authorities involved, the work was fully shared with the relevant staff trade unions which, in turn, circulated the Competency Frameworks within the Union structures.

In June 2004, as the project ended, the two local authorities involved were looking to work with the Office of Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission to develop testing processes to identify the competencies in future recruitment processes. They were hoping to involve the other two Dublin local authorities (Fingal and Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown) in this work before disseminating it more widely. There



were also plans to incorporate some of the knowledge from the Job Analysis research in recruitment processes planned for Autumn 2004.

3.2.5 Comment on Action

The two Job Analysis Frameworks are based on solid research and a proven methodology. They were overseen by the OCSLAC. As such, they provide very useful starting points for local authorities in moving their entry-level recruitment for Clerical Officers and General Operatives to being based on competencies. The move by the Department of the Environment and Local Government to abolish the mandatory Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) requirement for Clerical Officers also supports this process. The result is the potential for a fairer recruitment process for these grades. This could open up to 10,000 jobs to people previously excluded from them.

The involvement of local government employers and trade unions in the process shows that the potential exists for a move to a competency-based recruitment system to take place on a partnership basis.

The efforts to disseminate and mainstream this action mean that all of the key relevant actors were made aware of the work of the action during the life of the project. The close involvement of, and commitment from, the Local Government Management Services Board was particularly important in this regard.

Steps required to move this action forward after Equal at Work include developing the testing processes for the new competencies, piloting these and disseminating the learning arising to all Irish local authorities.

3.3 Action 2: Improving Inception and Mentoring Processes in Local Authorities

3.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

Dublin City Council made significant efforts in the late-1990s to become an attractive place to work and this was reflected in good levels of staff recruitment and retention even when labour shortages emerged in the economy. This action aimed to further improve the career paths of people working with the Council at the General Operative and Clerical Officer grades. The action plan prepared for this action stated:

“Being an employer of choice remains an important element of the strategic goals of the Human Resources department (of the Council), which is continuously changing its practices to ensure that they remain as best practices. This action will focus on a number of elements that are critical in attracting, retaining and developing motivated, efficient staff who want to work in a challenging but supportive environment”.

Specifically, the aims were to:

- Improve the Induction programme for Clerical Officers (COs) in Dublin City Council, which would include information about career progression and life-long learning opportunities in Dublin City Council;
- Develop for the first time an information programme for people entering Dublin City Council at the General Operative (GO) grade ('outdoor staff');
- Review whether mentoring or coaching could be adopted as management tools to support people at the GO and CO grades to progress within the organisation, including possible greater movement of personnel between these grades;
- Promote life-long learning through production of a leaflet, articles in in-house publications and through other communication channels.

3.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

This action linked to existing work being undertaken by the Council's Training Unit and the two pieces of work were able to complement each other. The work also linked to the Council's introduction of a Performance Management Development System (PMDS) for staff, following from the government's Strategic Management Initiative and from the national benchmarking process.

Group meetings were held with 23 CO recruits in October 2002, and again (with the same people) in July 2003. A survey undertaken at the first of these meetings profiled the recruits and investigated their reasons for joining Dublin City Council and their expectations as regards job progression. The second meeting discussed how the staff members viewed progression after nine months in the organisation, and their views on life-long learning. In addition, discussions were held with staff who had previously availed of the Council's scheme of assistance for staff undertaking courses of study.

Following from the information gained in these meetings, Dublin City Council piloted:

- a new system of induction for new recruits at the Clerical Officer grade;
- an information session for outdoor staff, at all levels of their careers;
- a module on coaching and mentoring, as part of the existing Management Development Programme (aimed at middle managers in the Council).

In addition, the HR Department developed a leaflet on life-long learning opportunities in the Council, with an Introduction by the City Manager. This was launched in March 2004.

3.3.3 Outputs from Action

- Revised Induction Process for Clerical Officers – 90 people went through this new process during the



lifetime of the project;

- New information session for outdoor staff (covering GOs and supervisors) – 700 people attended these sessions, spending one day in the Council's Civic Offices;
- New mentoring/coaching module for the Management Development Programme – training was provided on this module to 300 middle managers in the Council;
- 10,000 copies of a leaflet on life-long learning opportunities for employees in the Council–circulated to all 6,500 staff within Dublin City Council;
- Special low price negotiated for Council personnel who enrol on the IPA's one-year part-time course on local government in Ireland.

3.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The first work around dissemination had to take place within Dublin City Council and the HR department drove this process, in co-operation with senior managers. The outputs listed above show that a wide level of dissemination was achieved.

On a wider basis, potential learning arises for other Irish local authorities, as many of the grades and processes would be similar. Dissemination to this wider group was facilitated by the inclusion of the Local Government Management Services Board on the local site Steering Group for the action and by the dissemination of information on the action at the Equal at Work conferences.

In addition, information on the action was presented to:

- A group of US academics interested in life-long learning issues who were on a study visit to Dublin City Council;
- The Equal at Work transnational partners, including the Municipality of Munich and the Commune of Naples.

3.3.5 Comment on Action

The challenges of taking good care of its employees and of engendering a culture of life-long learning were on the agenda of Dublin City Council before Equal at Work. With the Equal at Work project budget tighter than originally planned (see Chapter 1), there was not much project funding available for this action. However, in co-operation with the Council's Training Unit (who delivered the training under the programme), the project allowed a number of useful and practical steps to be taken in relation to these issues.

Dublin City Council was happy that these steps would further aid its level of employee retention and would increase levels of employee satisfaction. They would also serve to increase equality within the organisation and support the progression of workers at the lower levels of the local authority.

3.4 Action 3: Broadening Access to Medical Secretary Posts in Tallaght Hospital

3.4.1 Innovative Idea of Action

This action was piloted in the Adelaide and Meath Hospital, Incorporating the National Children's Hospital (generally known as 'Tallaght Hospital'). It emerged as Tallaght Hospital has a low level of progression of staff from the entry-level Grade 3 (clerical) positions to Grade 4 positions. It therefore agreed to pilot a module of Medical Secretary training, for two distinct groups:

- to people already working at Grade 3 level in the Hospital;
- to people on Community Employment/Jobs Initiative (CE/JI) schemes in the Tallaght area with some administrative skills (e.g. some computer and keyboard skills were needed for the course), who were interested in progressing from CE/JI to possible work in Tallaght Hospital.

The specific skills required by a medical secretary (and the core content of the training in this action) relate to familiarity with pathological conditions, medical instruments and clinical procedures; and skills in audio transcription.

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If successful, the project felt the action could:

- benefit the Hospital by providing training to people for specialised positions;
- benefit workers at Grade 3 in the Hospital by providing a route for promotion and greater job satisfaction;
- benefit people on CE/JI schemes by demonstrating a new progression route.

3.4.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Work Undertaken

The first element of the work was in sourcing a training module for the Medical Secretary position. Such a module had already been developed in Wicklow and previously piloted in Blessington Education Centre at NCVA Level II¹³ to VTOS participants. The woman who designed the module, and delivered it in Blessington (Ms. Peggy Doyle), was willing to act as tutor for the two courses delivered as part of this action.

The first course to be delivered was to people already working in Tallaght Hospital. The hospital advertised for course applicants in July 2003 and selection involved personnel from Tallaght Hospital and Equal at Work. Of some 40 people who applied, 10 employees at Grade 3 level were selected - the training began in September 2003.

¹³ Accreditation at NCVA Level II requires that eight training modules are completed. All participants in this action completed three training modules (medical terminology, anatomy & physiology; and audio transcription) and those from CE/JI completed a fourth – word processing. Additional modules can be undertaken by participants at any future time.



The training occurred on four full days during September. The hospital released staff for the time required and provided access to a training room (with some PCs). This is in line with the hospital's general policy of trying to support staff training. Medical dictionaries were provided for all participants by Equal at Work and dictaphones (provided through FÁS funding) were loaned to participants for a period of a month to allow them to practice skills being learned outside of course time.

Following completion of the course, exams were taken by the participants in April 2004 (FETAC Level II exams take place once a year). To ensure the skills learned were maintained up to the exams, Tallaght Partnership arranged a number of workshops for participants between October 2003 and March 2004. It also facilitated some distance learning activities during this time, in conjunction with the course tutor. Nine of the 10 people who had undertaken the training sat the exams and all were successful.

Subsequent to the exams, a further day of training on general skills in the workplace, linked to progression and greater responsibility, was organised by the project.

The second training course, i.e. for CE/JI participants, took place over ten weeks (two days per week, three hours per day) between November 2003 and January 2004. Again, the course was well over-subscribed, with some 38 people applying, 20 being interviewed and 14 women chosen. These included a number of people from specific target groups – three had a disability, one was a former drug user, one was a Traveller, eight were lone parents and two were widows. Ten of the 14 women had childcare needs, and wished to work on a part-time basis. The training took place in the Obair Training Centre in Fettercairn, Tallaght, and participants who needed extra support had such support provided by the Local Employment Service in Tallaght. As with the first cohort, support was provided to trainees after the formal training ended, to bridge the period up to the exams. After completion of the exams, STEPS, a motivational training programme was delivered to participants by the Local Employment Service.

Despite the fact that these people were not employees of Tallaght Hospital, the Hospital facilitated brief periods of work experience for the participants in early-2004. Some 12 of the 14 people who began the training completed it, and all of these undertook the work experience part. Some 11 of these 12 people subsequently sat the exams in April 2004. All of the CE/JI participants involved were subsequently referred to a mediator with Tallaght LES to support their progression into employment.

Views of Stakeholders Involved

Participants on both courses completed an Evaluation Form, prepared by the Equal at Work local site coordinator, and also wrote a short report on their experiences.

On the first course (for people already in the Hospital), all ten participants felt the course was useful. However, the general view was that delivery was too condensed (i.e. that one day per week for four weeks, with homework, was too intense), and delivery would be improved by being spread over a longer timeframe. The timeframe of the course made its content more difficult, participants thought. Some participants felt one PC per trainee would be more effective than sharing machines. Nine of the ten participants said that they

would recommend the course to other staff members.

On the second course, comments were also positive. All but one participant felt that the course was useful, would recommend it to other CE/JI participants, would be prepared to pay for the course and would do it in their own time. As with the first group, there were some comments that the volume of material was large for the time available.

The view of Tallaght Hospital was that the course was very useful from its perspective, given its need for people to be available, and to be coming through, as Medical Secretaries. Indeed, in June 2004, the Hospital was looking at whether it could find the funds internally to run a further course (for people already at Grade 3 in the hospital), using the same training module.

3.4.3 Outputs from Action

- Testing of training module for Medical Secretary training. While this module had already been developed, this action piloted the module in two different, demanding environments. It also piloted the workshops and distance learning dimensions of the training;
- Modification of the training module and subsequent submission of revised module to FETAC for accreditation by Tallaght Partnership. Approval was received in June 2004 for this locally devised module entitled 'Medical Secretarial Studies';
- Training of 10 people at Grade 3 level in Tallaght Hospital for Medical Secretary position, of whom nine sat and were successful in the subsequent exams;
- Of these 10 people, one had already been promoted to a Medical Secretary position by June 2004 (just weeks after the exams) and one person, who had been on a temporary contract, had been made permanent by the hospital;
- Training of 14 people from local Community Employment/Jobs Initiative schemes for Medical Secretary positions, of whom 11 sat the exams, with nine successful in all exams (and two people partially successful);
- Provision of work experience to 12 people from local CE/JI schemes in Tallaght Hospital;
- Interview arranged in June 2004 for one of the CE/JI participants with a view to taking up a temporary post in the hospital.

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3.4.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

There were a number of dimensions in disseminating the learning from this module:

- The training module was improved and made more widely available;
- The presence on the 'local site' of Tallaght Hospital, and its close involvement in the work, meant that a route was created for the mainstreaming of the action by the hospital. There were indications in June 2004 that this was taking place;



- Letters were sent to all GPs in the Tallaght area as regards the training, from the perspective of supporting the progression of the participants;
- A local evaluation of this action was undertaken in June 2004 by Mr. John Finnegan, Evaluator, and there were plans to circulate the report arising from this evaluation to other hospitals that might be interested in similar training;
- At the Equal at Work conference in April 2004, a workshop was held for interested delegates on this action (run twice) – chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive of the Health Service Employers Agency;
- Articles on the action were printed in local newspapers and in a number of national newspapers.

3.4.5 Comment on Action

The pilot action relating to Medical Secretary training points up a number of issues:

- there appears to be a lack of Medical Secretarial training in the Irish health sector. The oversubscription to the internal Tallaght Hospital training course, and the wish of the hospital to repeat the course, indicates that demand for such a course exists;
- there is a pent-up demand by people working at lower level administrative grades within hospitals for such training, i.e. this is a practical manifestation of a desire for 'life-long learning';
- the pilot with CE/JI participants shows that a demand also exists in this area for such a progression option, and the exam results achieved show that participants can learn the skills required in a relatively short time period;
- a training module now exists with potential relevance to hospitals, CE/JI schemes and other organisations.

The gap shown up suggests that other training gaps may exist for lower-skilled staff in the Irish health sector. Addressing this situation would be consistent with the national policy emphasis on life-long learning and could have a medium-term positive impact on the general performance of the Irish health services.

3.5 Action 4: Equality and Diversity Training in Public Sector Organisations

3.5.1 Innovative Idea of Action

Equal at Work had an overall inter-site group looking at equality and diversity in the workplace, and this group's work is discussed in Chapter 6. However, Dublin City Council and the Dublin Port Company (both part of the Dublin City Public Sector site) were also interested in developing equality

and diversity training materials and in piloting such training in their organisations.

3.5.2 Description of Work Undertaken

A number of steps were taken in preparing the ground for this action:

- A meeting was held between representatives of Dublin City Council and the Equality Officer of Wexford County Council, which had developed a pilot programme of equality and diversity training for its staff.
- A survey was undertaken of the equality and diversity training that had been used by the organisations that were members of this Equal at Work site.
- As part of a wider visit from representatives of Belfast City Council, Dublin City Council discussed its policies on equality and diversity training, and its approach to dealing with the Northern Ireland equality legislation.
- A number of focus groups were held with General Operatives and Clerical Officers to discuss previous training delivered by Dublin City Council on equality and diversity. These obtained the views of 33 employees at these grades.

Following these pieces of research, an equality and diversity training module was developed, in association with Dublin City Council's Training Section and Social Inclusion Unit. This was prepared as a CD for trainers of entry level staff, and included:

- a 30-overhead PowerPoint presentation on equality and diversity, covering definitions, the nine grounds on which discrimination occurs, how it affects individual employees, cases, and overheads for material on the policies of the organisation delivering the training;
- notes for the trainer on background material and on delivering the presentation.

This training module was piloted in both Dublin City Council and in the Dublin Port Company in Spring 2004. The pilots involved 16 people in the Port Company, with the training delivered in a two-hour session. The trainer reported a very good reaction, with the trainees commenting that they had previously associated 'equality' only with gender issues, not with the other eight grounds. The first pilot in the Council was to six staff members. In both cases, the trainers felt afterwards that the core material was fine and that the CD could now be disseminated more widely.

3.5.3 Outputs

- Training module in relation to equality and diversity, in particular targeted at staff at lower grades;
- Notes prepared for the person delivering this training;
- Training module piloted in two organisations;
- 500 copies of 'Equality in the Workplace' CD prepared and distributed – in the two organisations involved, across the Equal at Work DP, and to outside organisations.



3.5.4 Dissemination and mainstreaming

As stated, the CD produced was piloted by two organisations on the site during the project. In the case of Dublin City Council (with 6,500 employees), the CD was being disseminated through its internal trainer network in June 2004, and will become part of its standard internal training options. For the Dublin Port Company, it planned to link use of the CD to the recommendations arising from the Equality Audit it was undertaking in 2004 (see Chapter 6).

Outside of the site:

- The CD was provided to the Equality Authority for its information and perhaps to disseminate further;
- The CD was provided to the TRED EQUAL project, which has links to networks of trainers in Ireland and which planned to disseminate it in this regard;
- The CD was provided to the Westmeath EQUAL project, which planned to use it in the same way;
- The Local Government Management Services Board circulated the CD to the Equality Officers in all Irish local authorities;
- The CD was distributed at the Equal at Work April 2004 Croke Park conference and at the May 2004 national EQUAL conference at the Helix Centre in Dublin;
- The contents of the CD have been posted on the Equal at Work website (at www.dublinpact.ie) and will continue to be available for download from the site.

Given the fact that changes occur in equality legislation, and that new cases emerge, there is a need to update the CD over time. Plans in June 2004 to do this involved the Local Government Management Services Board updating the presentation annually and sending these changes to the Dublin Employment Pact for incorporation into the version of the presentation posted on the Equal at Work website.

3.5.5 Comment on Action

In the context of the strengthening of Ireland's equality legislation in recent years, the development of such training modules is an issue facing many organisations and Equal at Work provided a context for Dublin City Council and the Dublin Port Company to develop such a module. The output is a very practical and easy-to-use presentation, which has been made widely available by the project.

Issues arising are:

- Further dissemination of the CD (and perhaps further production of CDs);
- Updating of the presentation after the end of the project's life;
- Linking the output with other materials that are available nationally in relation to equality and diversity training.

3.6 Action 5: New Progression Routes from Local Authority CE Schemes

3.6.1 Innovative Idea of Action

This action related to the progression of people on Community Employment (CE) government sponsored schemes into local authority employment. At present, progression routes for people completing such schemes are often badly defined. This action aimed to identify specific problems that arise, and to improve progression, using South Dublin County Council as a pilot organisation.

The action took place at a time of cutbacks and reforms to CE nationally.

3.6.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Two focus groups were held with participants on CE schemes in the South Dublin County Council area. One of these was held in Tallaght (five participants) and one in Clondalkin (eight participants). A third focus group was held with CE supervisors (four direct participants, three others provided input later). The focus groups were held in May/June 2003 and each discussion lasted for some two hours.

These found that participants undertake a range of tasks that appeared to be similar to tasks undertaken by people at General Operative and Clerical Officer grades in the Council, including technical, administrative and customer service tasks. Some former participants had progressed to full-time work in public sector organisations.

The CE participants felt there was a general lack of information on vacancies that arise in South Dublin County Council and the skills that would be required for jobs. The supervisors felt that the small CE training allowances greatly restricted training opportunities for participants in practice. It was also said that the sponsor may not prioritise this aspect of CE and, if that is the case, participants might not receive much training. On the participant side, most participants had a low awareness of any personal development and training plan. The CE training provided therefore appeared to be somewhat random, and not linked to progression plans.

Participants felt that rapid changes in the jobs market were not reflected in the content of CE training programmes. Without work experience, their time on CE could therefore see them drift even further from a real job. A further gap was identified around career guidance for participants.

Participants identified a number of basic obstacles to getting a job, including low literacy skills and educational qualifications, ageism in recruitment processes, prejudices against certain groups or against people from certain areas and a lack of confidence. These were not perceived as being addressed on their Community Employment scheme.



Some participants and supervisors felt that they were sometimes not seriously considered for employment by South Dublin County Council, even for jobs they already undertake, or largely undertake.

CE supervisors also said that they did not see good progression routes from their jobs. Again, they cited issues such as a lack of formal education qualifications and ageism in recruitment processes. They also seemed unhappy with the CE Supervisors course, run by FÁS, as a stepping stone into work outside the programme.

A range of issues and problems were therefore identified fairly readily. The groups suggested that greater information be provided to CE/JI participants on public sector progression options, with more focused career guidance and periods of job placements.

Having considered the outcomes of the focus groups, the relevant Equal at Work site, led by Tallaght Partnership, set up a Working Group (including South Dublin County Council) to pilot a number of actions to address issues raised in the focus groups.

A recommendation that a FÁS representative be present when South Dublin County Council is informing a Supervisor that a scheme is closing was accepted by FÁS and implemented. New channels of communications between the Council and CE supervisors were opened to allow for job vacancies etc. to be better publicised.

In Summer 2004, South Dublin Council decided to take between five and ten people on temporary work placements from CE schemes. This would provide work experience in a range of Council areas (i.e. not just in the 'Community' section of the Council's work, where many CE participants already work) and would constitute a potential first step to developing a route for CE participants to progress to working within the Council.

3.6.3 Outputs

- Written report documenting the outcomes of three focus groups with CE supervisors and participants on problems with the programme, in the context of a case study, i.e. South Dublin County Council;
- Changes to practices instituted by both South Dublin County Council and FÁS at local level;
- Piloting of work placement scheme for CE participants in Summer 2004 by South Dublin County Council.

3.6.4 Dissemination and mainstreaming

The report on the findings of the focus groups was sent to FÁS by the Manager of Tallaght Partnership in October 2003. This focused on the issue of raising the CE training allowance. The FÁS Manager for Community Services in Dublin passed the letter to the national Director of the FÁS Community Services Support Unit, who has responsibility for Community Employment within FÁS nationally.

The findings of the focus groups were also fed into the wider national debate on the re-form of Community Employment. This was possible as the Manager of Tallaght Partnership was a member of a national advisory group on the reform of CE which, in 2003/2004, was being chaired by the Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The research from this Equal at Work action fed directly into this group and influenced changes to CE at national level.

At a more local level, the presence of South Dublin County Council on the site provided a mechanism for the local mainstreaming of some of the practical suggestions arising. If the Summer 2004 work placement scheme was successful, the Council would have opened a route that could have implications over time for dozens, if not hundreds, of CE workers in the area.

3.6.5 Comment on Action

This action had a dual result:

- Practical local improvements, as well as a local raising of awareness of the issues around some of the problems with the content of CE and with progression routes out of CE;
- Research-based input into the national debate on the reform of CE, at a time when national policy makers were actively looking for ways to reform and improve its operation.





4 Innovative Actions of Private Sector Site

4.1 Introduction

The vast majority of Irish employment is in the private sector – consequently, there is a large requirement to promote equality and combat discrimination with Irish companies. While most private sector employers do not follow equality agendas for altruistic reasons, the private sector has significantly contributed to equality in the labour force in recent years through its strong job creation. There is also a ‘business case’ associated with aspects of equality and diversity, e.g. life-long learning for low-skilled employees or diversity programmes in customer service can directly benefit company profits. In the past, EU programmes have found it difficult to engage with the private sector and this Equal at Work site attempted to undertake two actions in this regard.

4.2 Action 6: Piloting Job Rotation with Two Large Dublin Companies

4.2.1 Innovative Idea of Action

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Irish companies have traditionally been poor at providing training to employees and the proportion of their turnover spent on training is well below the international average. In the context of a need to upgrade skill levels in the Irish economy, this is a national strategic issue. As well as holding back the development of workers who do not receive training, the situation has two further negative effects:

- If people do not up-skill and progress in a company, this may mean fewer new entry-level jobs, and makes it harder for people with entry-level skills to enter the company; and
- The lack of training and progression has a knock-on effect on the performance and development of businesses.

A commonly cited practical reason as to why companies do not release staff for training is the problem of ‘covering’ for them while they undertake training.

The Job Rotation model, which emerged in Denmark, is seen as a potential solution to some of the above problems. It has been piloted in most EU states and integrated by a number of them into their labour market policy programmes. One study¹⁴ showed that, over the 1996-99 period, over 1800 Danish companies used Job Rotation (directly affecting over 80,000 employees), as well as 740 German companies and 200 Portuguese companies. A presentation¹⁵ to the Equal at Work conference in April 2004 showed that Job Rotation was being rolled out in 2004 in Poland, the Czech Republic and other new EU accession countries.

¹⁴ Institute of Educational Sciences (2002), Job Rotation – A Lifelong Learning Opportunity, Bucharest

¹⁵ Job Rotation in the EU, Presentation by Ms. Birgit Gericke, EU Job Rotation Association



Job Rotation involves:

- Training people not currently working in the company or organisation (usually unemployed people) to undertake the jobs of people being released for training;
- Training some people in the company to act as mentors to the people coming in as replacements;
- Releasing employees for tailor-made, enterprise-specified training;
- Possible progression within the company of those existing employees who receive training, which may create space for some of those people who went in as replacements to continue in their entry-level jobs on a longer-term basis.

A successful Job Rotation thereby benefits a number of stakeholders simultaneously:

- It provides training and real work (not an artificial 'work experience'), at least for a period of time, for people who are unemployed;
- It helps companies to grow, and supports growth through up-skilling workers, without creating shortterm gaps in company staffing when people are trained;
- It provides elements of life-long learning for workers, something Irish companies have traditionally not been good at;
- It supports the objectives of government labour market programmes, through the tackling of unemployment, through the up-skilling of workers, through improving companies' performance, and potentially through greater labour market flexibility.

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In some countries, the people who go into the company as replacements operate on a panel and move from one company to another as replacements (i.e. they do not wish to become permanent company employees). The model can also be modified to operate, for example, on a seasonal basis. In the two Equal at Work pilot Job Rotations undertaken in 2003, the people who went into the companies were unemployed or looking to (re)enter the labour force, some being from target groups that can find it difficult to get jobs.

The Equal at Work action followed from a first pilot Job Rotation in Ireland, undertaken by Northside Partnership and Aer Rianta in 1999. An Evaluation of this project recommended that further pilots¹⁶ be undertaken, including in the private sector.

4.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Overview of Work Undertaken

Two Job Rotations were undertaken by the Equal at Work private sector site in 2003:

- Keelings (Distribution) Ltd., a fruit and vegetable distributor with 900 employees, based near Dublin Airport; and

¹⁶ Farrell Grant Sparks (1999), Job Rotation: Meeting the Challenges of the Labour Market in the New Millennium, published by Northside Partnership

- Freshways-Kerry Foods, a 300-person company that makes and distributes sandwiches. It is owned by the Kerry Group and based in the IDA Industrial Park between Ballymun and Finglas.

While the concept of Job Rotation is relatively straightforward, its practical implementation is a complex operation. A range of preparations need to be completed and co-ordinated to allow the Rotation to run smoothly.

The two pilot Job Rotations in 2003 had the following ten steps:

1. Preparation and identification of company – formation of a Job Rotation team;
2. Agreement with company of outline Job Rotation plan, contracts, systems needed for Job Rotation and existing employee training needs;
3. Publicity and information provision to attract applicants;
4. Interview process and choice of people for Job Rotation;
5. Preparation of training modules required;
6. Discussion with Dept. of Social and Family Affairs and FÁS regarding benefits and training allowances;
7. Identify training space and provide pre-vocational training and information on company;
8. Identify company personnel to be trained as mentors and provide training;
9. Undertaking the Job Rotation;
10. Follow-up with company.

Description of First Job Rotation (Keelings Ltd.)

Based on previous contact with Northside Partnership, a possible need for a Job Rotation was identified with Keelings (Distribution) Ltd. The company was expanding rapidly in 2002/2003, and was planning to move premises. As such, it both needed new employees and wanted to up-skill existing workers, to encourage them to accept greater responsibilities.

A first meeting was held with the HR Director of Keelings in January 2003 to discuss this need, to explain the concept and to ask if Keelings would be interested in taking part in a Job Rotation. Two further meetings were held in the following weeks at which more information was exchanged on Keelings' training needs and operations, and on the mechanics of the Rotation. Support was provided to the company in developing job and person specifications for the positions it wished to fill. Agreements were then drafted both for Keelings and for the participants, and a contract between Keelings and the project (represented by Northside Partnership) was signed in late-February 2003.

Advertisements for applicants were placed in two local newspapers, with the Local Employment Service, with referral organisations, with the FÁS Employment Services, with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and through the partners in the Equal at Work private sector site. It was planned that the application and recruitment process would take place during March and April but Keelings wished to accelerate this. An open day was held at Northside Partnership on 05 March 2003 and, together with other applicants, some 33 people were interviewed. Keelings had eight places but it was felt that some people might drop out so 12 people were chosen for the pre-vocational training. Interviews were undertaken by a three-person interview



panel, with criteria agreed in advance. Of the 12 people chosen, nine were men and three were women.

The 12 included:

- Three people who were long-term unemployed;
- Three women returners;
- Two young people;
- Two immigrants;
- One ex-prisoner;
- One Traveller.

As the participants were being recruited, the training modules to be delivered as part of the Rotation were prepared in association with Keelings Ltd. and Optimum Ltd., a company chosen to work with Equal at Work on this project action. These discussions occurred in relation to:

- The mentoring training to be provided to Keelings workers before the participants went into the company;
- The up-skilling training for the existing Keeling employees;
- The pre-vocational training for participants in the Rotation.

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The pre-vocational training was undertaken by Optimum Ltd. over two full weeks. The modules related to soft skills, such as communications, negotiations etc. rather than specific Keelings-related skills. The participants told the Equal at Work Evaluator that they found this training of high quality and very useful.

A task which had to be undertaken before the training started was to liaise with FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs to end unemployment-related payments and arrange for training allowances for the duration of the Job Rotation. This is a detailed job (for 12 people) but was completed with the co-operation of FÁS.

All 12 participants finished the pre-vocational training, which presented a dilemma as Keelings had wanted to take eight people. In the event, they took nine, with the other three being provided with alternative work placements by Northside Partnership.

The tight timeframe and the fact that Keelings were very busy at this period meant that the mentoring training (for Keelings employees, to help the people going into Keelings to integrate) was not provided before the Job Rotation itself began. Instead, this was provided at the same time as the other up-skilling training being provided to the existing Keelings employees.

The Job Rotation occurred over a four week period from 07 April to 02 May 2003. The people going into Keelings worked there over that period and the people from Keelings being trained received their training over an eight-day period which overlapped with the end of this period. The first 1.5 days for those going into Keelings were given over to induction training; the remainder of the time was spent working in a refrigerated warehouse.

In the first week, a problem arose as the people who had gone into Keelings were being paid the FÁS training rate (approximately €120 per week for those over 18 and €60 for the two people under 18), considerably less than the wage of their fellow workers in the warehouse. The company felt that, while the participants were doing the same hours as the existing workers, their productivity would not reach the average worker's level of productivity for a period of weeks¹⁷. Following discussions with the Equal at Work private site co-ordinator, seven of the participants decided to continue to get the benefits of the work experience and the possibility of a job at the end of the period. However, two of the nine people left at this point. The other seven participants finished their Job Rotation work, some in the warehouse and two in administrative jobs.

Eight Keelings personnel undertook the up-skilling training. The content of this training was agreed with Keelings to ensure it was what the employees needed within their jobs. Five of the eight found the training "excellent" and three found it "very good". A concern expressed by the trainees was that the new skills might not be used, and might not form a basis for progression – while this was outside the control of Equal at Work, the point was passed on to Keelings that the expectations of the employees had risen in line with their skill levels. A further 12 people received mentoring training, both in relation to the Job Rotation participants, and for their ongoing work.

Of the seven participants who completed the Job Rotation, certificates were presented on 06 May 2003. Keelings offered six of the seven full-time jobs with the company.

One year later, in May 2004, of the seven people who participated in the Job Rotation:

- two were still working with Keelings (by that time, one was in the administrative area and one in the finance unit);
- another three had moved to other education/training - one as an apprentice, one in college and one doing work experience with an accounting firm;
- one had left Keelings due to a family illness; and
- the final person had left Keelings for another job.

Learning from First Job Rotation

While the Job Rotation was successfully completed, the Equal at Work private sector site identified a number of learning points from the pilot with Keelings (Distribution) Ltd.:

- Part of the process of identifying applicants should be to investigate whether the specific work undertaken by the company is likely to be of interest to them in the longer-term;
- Linked to the above point, but also to manage expectations, information should be given on (and perhaps a trip organised to) the participating company during the prevocational training phase;
- Co-operation and interaction are needed with FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs to ensure participants' benefits situations are managed;
- Not undertaking the mentoring training in advance of the participants entering the company is not a viable

¹⁷ The policy of the Equal at Work project was that Job Rotation should not in any way be a mechanism for undercutting the pay of existing workers. If gaps emerged between FÁS allowances and normal wage rates for doing a certain job, then the company would 'top-up' the allowances to the level of the normal wage.

'short-cut', as having (the) trained mentors is a success factor for the participants going in. Some of the early difficulties with participants might have been avoided in this case if the mentors were in place;

- In organising a Job Rotation, the project manager should be sensitive to the idea of participants being paid less than regular employees, especially if it is perceived that both sets of workers are asked to undertake similar tasks;
- While outside the control of the Job Rotation itself, the training of the employees of the company should optimally be linked to a wider progression and up-skilling plan within the company.

Some of the above issues relate to the mechanics of undertaking a Job Rotation, others relate to the fact that these pilots were targeted at people not currently in the labour market, some of whom had not held a job for some time.

Description of Second Job Rotation (Freshways-Kerry Foods)

Contact was made with Freshways (owned by Kerry Foods) in May 2003. Freshways was undergoing a phase of rapid expansion in 2003 and was already working with a number of local Job Centres. As with Keelings, this real business situation created challenges that seemed amenable to a Job Rotation as part of the solution. Following discussions, it was decided to undertake a Rotation with the delivery drivers, an area where the company was finding it difficult to attract and retain staff. The Equal at Work project worked with the company to draw up job and people specifications for the driver positions.

To ensure the Rotation was managed tightly, and potential problems identified early, a project management mechanism was put in place. Central to this was the scheduling of a project management meeting every two weeks in the run-in period to the Rotation, with weekly meetings held during the Rotation itself.

Interviews took place during October 2003 and four long-term unemployed men were recruited to take part in the Rotation. The fact that the drivers need a C1 driving licence was felt to have limited applicants as there is a high demand for people with such licences.

The pre-vocational training was held for two weeks and, as with the first pilot, feedback from the four trainees was very positive. Also as with the Keelings case, the further (tailored) training courses were drawn up at this time.

A two-day training session was provided in Coolock Enterprise Centre for 10 Freshways employees who were to act as mentors for the participants entering the company. These people were chosen from all parts of the company, and the process was linked to Freshways' existing 'Good Buddy' system for new employees. Feedback on this training from the Freshways HR Manager was very positive, and she indicated that the company would be interested in repeating the training in 2004, even outside a Job Rotation framework.

Final preparatory actions involved the four men who would be going into Freshways attending a number of training sessions with Freshways and shadowing existing employees for a week. The training included a

company induction and modules on food hygiene, rules and regulations, handling returns and health and safety rules. The 'shadowing' took place between 03-07 November 2003, with three of the four men working with drivers for the week and a fourth working in the Freshways stores.

While the four men knew the unsocial hours they would be expected to work beforehand, the 'shadowing' week was their first actual experience of it. Working from 4am to mid-day, one of the four decided not to continue with the Rotation after this week. This was despite being offered an alternative Rotation option within the company.

The remaining three men undertook Job Rotations in the following weeks:

- 10-14 November 2003;
- 24-28 November 2003.

The Job Rotations were focused on the delivery area, with the three men progressing over the period to each having their own distribution routes. The people going in allowed for ten Freshways employees to be released (drivers and others), each of whom received five days training in a range of areas identified as relevant by Freshways, such as decision driving, IT, food hygiene, manual handling and presentation skills. The content of the course (case studies used etc.) was tailored to the needs of the company. As with the mentoring training, the Freshways HR Manager said that the company would be interested in repeating the training outside of Job Rotation in 2004 or 2005¹⁸.

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A presentation of certificates was made to those who completed the Job Rotation at the company on 12 December 2003. The company offered all three men who undertook the Rotation employment, and these offers were accepted by two of the men. (One of the men decided that he did not want to work the hours involved, and was not interested in an alternative offer of employment in the store rooms.) Both of those who accepted full-time jobs with Freshways-Kerry Foods were originally from Nigeria. The men said that a crucial benefit to them of Job Rotation was the breaking of a 'No Irish experience, No job' cycle that they had previously experienced in applying for jobs.

Learning from Second Job Rotation

In conversation with the Equal at Work Evaluator, the private sector site identified a number of further learning points as arising from this second pilot Job Rotation:

- A Job Rotation that focuses on jobs where specialised skills are required (such as a C1 driving licence), will limit the numbers applying, and perhaps mean they are more likely to move on to other companies later. It may be appropriate in a particular case to focus on such specialist skills but applying the Rotation in an area of more general skills will provide a greater match with the skills of unemployed people and make recruitment of participants easier;

¹⁸ The company was also interested in a further Job Rotation, outside the delivery driver area



- A benefit of the training provision is that a company has demonstrated to it in a very real way the benefits of training for its employees. This may lead to the company paying for further employee training itself, after the Rotation is finished;
- If the Rotation is for an extended period, this can allow for the release of a number of employees for training which is a multiple of the number of people going into the company (e.g. 3:1 for Freshways on the core company skills and 7:1 if the people being trained in mentoring skills are included);
- People out of work for a considerable period of time may need other supports, e.g. around lack of confidence or even depression, to enable them to work through the different parts of a Job Rotation and to adapt back to the working environment;
- On a practical level, both cases show that much of the work of undertaking a Job Rotation is in carefully setting up a Job Rotation team, drawing up the job specifications, recruiting the participants, talking to the company (or organisation) involved, devising the different relevant training modules and assigning the mentors. Once the different systems and modules are in place, the Rotation itself then can be relatively quick. A project management system is still needed, however, to ensure problems emerging are identified as early as possible.

4.2.3 Outputs

Keelings (Distribution) Ltd.

- 12 people outside the labour market provided with two weeks high quality pre-vocational training and job placements;
- seven of these people offered full-time jobs;
- training provided to 20 people from Keelings Ltd., eight in relation to job progression and 12 in relation to mentoring skills.

Freshways-Kerry Foods Ltd.

- four people outside the labour market provided with two weeks high quality pre-vocational training and job placements;
- three of these offered full-time jobs;
- training provided to 20 people from Freshways Ltd., 10 on mentoring skills and 10 on other relevant work skills.

In total, therefore, there were 16 people given job placements, of whom 10 were offered jobs. In addition, 40 people received training on two pilots.

In June 2004, one year after the first Rotation and six months after the second Rotation, four people from the job placements were still working with the companies involved. All of these were non-nationals, perhaps indicating the difficulty for this target group of getting a chance in the labour market. A further five people who

had been placed had either progressed to other jobs or were participating in full-time training, i.e. Job Rotation had helped them to move on from their period of unemployment.

4.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

As Equal at Work felt that the Job Rotation model had significant potential in Ireland, a submission was made in Spring 2004 to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the National Mainstreaming Policy Group as regards funding for work around the dissemination and mainstreaming of the two pilot Job Rotations.

The proposal envisaged the following further work during 2004 and 2005:

- Establishment of a 'Job Rotation Strategic Development Committee' to oversee further Job Rotation pilot actions and to identify relevant learning to be mainstreamed into national labour market policy. This Committee would include relevant government departments, employer organisations and trade unions;
- Undertaking of six further Job Rotation pilots, in different sectors of the economy;
- Evaluation of the two pilots under Equal at Work and the six further pilots with a view to identifying and supporting the mainstreaming of learning arising for Irish labour market policy.

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4.2.5 Comment on Action

Job Rotation is a relatively new concept and experience in other EU countries has shown it to have the potential to support both new employment and lifelong learning for existing workers. These are strategic issues in the Irish labour market. A first Irish Job Rotation pilot took place in 1999 and an Evaluation of that pilot stated: "there should be no delay in rolling out a nationwide pilot Job Rotation programme embracing both public and private sectors".

In fact, these two Job Rotations (undertaken in 2003) represented the next Irish pilots. They mean that Job Rotation has now been piloted in two private sector companies in Ireland, as well as in a public sector company. As one would expect from pilots, further learning arose (documented above) from both pilots.

The pilots targeted people who were some distance from the labour market in their job placements. Some had been unemployed for some time; others were members of groups that tend to experience significant labour market exclusion. Yet, after two weeks pre-vocational training and a short job placement, almost all of these people were offered jobs by the two companies in question. This shows that the model can be effective as a confidence-building, training and job placement tool for unemployed people. (It may also have implications for other training programmes for unemployed people.)

The interaction with the unemployed people involved also raised other issues. One is the existence of low levels of confidence, and even depression, among people who have been unemployed for some time. This



indicates a need for other (non-labour market) supports ('flanking measures') to accompany the kind of pre-vocational training supports provided on the two Equal at Work pilot actions.

In terms of the up-skilling of existing employees, the pilots show that Job Rotation can be effective in this context, if the training is provided in the context of a wider plan by the company to up-skill and expand people's roles. Companies partaking in Job Rotations should be encouraged in this regard. This part of the model means that Job Rotation has the potential to be an effective tool for life-long learning.

From the perspective of the companies, both companies expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Job Rotation pilots. Both were interested in repeating the process with Equal at Work and, as no further funds were available for Equal at Work pilots, the companies were looking at other ways to undertake similar exercises.

Given the scope of the pilot actions, one could argue that the term 'Job Rotation' does not capture fully the work undertaken. The two pilots included:

- Intensive training before people entered the companies;
- Ongoing support during the Job Rotation (to the participants and to the companies);
- Post-placement efforts to ensure all participants used the experience as a positive step in their career development.

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The Equal at Work Job Rotation pilots provide further evidence of the potential power of Job Rotation as a labour market tool, simultaneously addressing two problems in Ireland's labour market, and supporting companies' growth strategies. As such, while it is not possible to say on the basis of these two pilots that the model should be mainstreamed into national policy, the pilots worked in themselves and build a case for a more broadly-based pilot to be undertaken, preferably with engagement from key players around state training and employment policy. These could bring their expertise to bear on the issue of whether Job Rotation can be a useful labour market tool in an Irish context. A wider pilot project could also examine subsidiary issues, e.g. around the benefit/cost ratio of Job Rotations (in the short-run and over time), about the likely relative merits of Job Rotation in different sectors, and about the structures that might need to be put in place if Job Rotation were to be extended in Ireland.

4.3 Action 7: Supporting Further Progression for FIT Graduates

4.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

A successful pilot action in the 1990s under the EU EMPLOYMENT Initiative led to the Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) programme in Ireland. This provides intensive IT training to unemployed (mainly young) people without formal technical qualifications, from disadvantaged areas, and has been very successful in enabling participants to move into jobs for which they would not otherwise be considered. The programme

now receives mainstream funding and has been copied internationally.

However, several years on, an issue arising in the Dublin Employment Pact workshops of 2000 was that if people who trained through FIT wanted to progress further in their jobs, or wanted to change jobs, the lack of a recognised third-level qualification acts against them. In other words, FIT was helping people to get good first jobs but the lack of a formal qualification was then limiting career progression.

This Equal at Work action involved the project and, in particular, two of the Private Sector site partners (FIT itself and Dublin City University) working to see if a progression option could be developed to allow FIT graduates to progress to a third level course, with their prior learning and work experience being taken into account. The action also aimed to see if FIT graduates could access third level qualifications while remaining in employment.

4.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

Preliminary discussions were held with Dublin City University (DCU) as regards the devising of a progression course for FIT graduates in Spring 2003. Questionnaires were subsequently distributed to FIT graduates themselves as to their requirements from such a course.

Based on the discussions, it was identified that a possible route already existed for third level qualifications, i.e. through Oscail, the National Distance Learning Centre, which is based at DCU. However, the survey indicated that, while many FIT graduates wanted progression, they did not necessarily want a third level qualification. This route was seen as geared for 'high flyers'. The Private Sector site was therefore challenged by the Equal at Work research findings to broaden its action.

In this context, a proposal was submitted for funding as part of a transnational project (the ICT Career Compass Programme) under the EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme, which the European Commission's website describes as 'a laboratory of innovation in the field of lifelong learning'. In Autumn 2003, funding of some €480,000 was provided to the ICT Career Compass Programme across five countries (Finland, Italy, Slovenia, Greece and Ireland), of which over €100,000 is earmarked for the Irish part of the project, over a two-year period from October 2003.

This Leonardo project has a number of objectives in relation to FIT, namely developing:

- an access programme to higher education and to other national certification options;
- an ICT Career Guidance Manual for trainers;
- a curriculum for a positive work ethic;
- an induction programme for tutors/career guidance counsellors;
- career development resources for employers, employment services and training institutions;
- a benchmarking guide of ICT industry certifications;
- career progression pathways in ICT;



- alumni structures;
- a virtual Career Information Centre – ‘ICT Career Compass Online’.

This above list shows that the original objectives, as envisaged under Equal at Work, have been broadened out in the context of the Leonardo-funded project.

4.3.3 Outputs

- Responses of FIT graduates to survey by Equal at Work Private Sector site;
- Proposal submitted under EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme.
- Funding of over €100,000 accessed and transnational project started around improving progression for FIT graduates.

4.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Given the timeframe of the Leonardo-funded action, its outputs had not emerged by June 2004. However, the Equal at Work output can be defined as the proposal successfully submitted for funding under the EU Leonardo programme. This has potentially important implications for FIT graduates after the project ends in Autumn 2005.

4.3.5 Comment on Action

This action correctly identified an area where innovation was required. Its initial scoping research then redefined the precise nature of the challenge for FIT. This led to a substantive proposal around third level access for unemployed young people being developed. Given the funding required for this work (which was accessed under the EU Leonardo programme, this action can be seen (and was seen by the direct participants) as a very successful outcome from Equal at Work.

5 Innovative Actions of Community and Voluntary Site

5.1 Introduction

The community and voluntary (C&V) sector has been defined¹⁹ as encompassing organisations with the following five characteristics:

- Organised, i.e. with an institutional presence and structure;
- Non-governmental, i.e. they are institutionally separate to the state;
- Non-profit, i.e. they do not return profits to their managers or owners;
- Self-governing, i.e. they fundamentally run their own affairs;
- Voluntary, i.e. they attract voluntary contributions of time and money.

The important economic, social and cultural role of the C&V sector in Ireland was recognised in the government's 2000 White Paper²⁰. However, little research has been undertaken on the sector and, in the context of Equal at Work, the C&V Sector site decided to undertake two pieces of research.

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5.2 Action 8: Improving HR Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector

5.2.1 Innovative Idea of Action

The first of the two actions aimed to review HR practices in organisations in the community and voluntary sector in Dublin. The objective was to build an understanding of the range of practices in operation and to identify good practices. Once identified, these could then form the basis for a HR training module for the sector. Findings could also lead to a campaign, based on solid research, to improve practices.

The action was innovative firstly because no research had been undertaken previously on this important area of management practice, across a large sector of the Dublin economy. Secondly, given the large number of small, often under-funded, organisations in the community and voluntary sector, many organisations lack the resources to provide in-house training and tailored materials generally don't exist for HR training in the sector.

¹⁹ Based on Donoghue, Salamon and Anheier (1999), *Uncovering the Nonprofit Sector in Ireland: Its Economic Value and Significance*, Dublin and Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University and National College of Ireland.

²⁰ *Supporting Voluntary Activity: A White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector.*



5.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The first (research) part of the action was undertaken by a number of members of the C&V Sector site, co-ordinated by the Ballymun Job Centre and the site co-ordinator (located in Exchange House Travellers Service).

Questionnaires were distributed in the sector in May 2003 and replies were received from 40 organisations. While all of these were based in Dublin (following the focus of the project), more than half were national organisations, so the findings are likely to have a validity nationally as well as for Dublin. When a draft report on the results of the survey had been prepared, a focus group consisting of nine organisations was held to explore the results further. These nine organisations were survey respondents who had identified specific problems they were having with their HR, or which had implemented innovative practices.

The research was discussed by wider site members, and a report produced at end-2003. In addition to the overall report, the site prepared a summary of the results for wider dissemination. The research showed that:

- almost half (47%) of community and voluntary sector organisations in Dublin do not have a written policy on any aspect of HR (e.g. equal opportunities, training, volunteer opportunities, promotion of diversity or work/life balance);
- some 65% do not have a written equal opportunities policy;
- while organisations mostly do not have formal work-life balance policies, they try to be flexible in this regard to meet employee needs;
- some 24% do not use interview panels and 30% do not keep written notes of interviews. However, nine out of ten respondents use job descriptions, which are updated before each recruitment process;
- most C&V organisations have moved, or are moving, towards competency-based recruitment, but find its implementation challenging;
- most organisations do not proactively support diversity through recruitment, e.g. through targeting traditionally under-represented groups;
- 35% of organisations felt that they could offer no opportunities for employee progression and 75% of employees do not have career development plans;
- participants in the focus group felt that fair and effective systems of staff appraisal were unusual;
- all of the organisations surveyed made some financial provision for training, and 57% of full-time staff had access to certified courses (FETAC, NUI etc.).

The research could not cover all parts of the C&V sector, and a larger survey would be needed to validate these results across what is a large and diverse sector. The Equal at Work research was mainly focused on organisations working with social inclusion issues. However, the findings provide real and new evidence that many organisations in the community and voluntary sector do not follow best practice as regards HR policies. In general, this is not because of any failure to understand the importance of managing and supporting people in the organisations, but because organisations tend to be small and under-resourced, and lack specific HR expertise.

A summary report of the research findings (also including the summary research findings from the second piece of research undertaken by the site – see below) was launched in the National College of Ireland on 29th March 2004, with some 35 organisations from the C&V sector in Dublin attending.

Having undertaken the research part of the action, a Working Group was set up by the site in October 2003 to work with the National College of Ireland (itself a site member and member of the Working Group) to see if the research could provide a starting point for the development of a HR training module for the sector. The NCI already runs a training course for managers in the C&V sector and, based on the findings of the Equal at Work research, it developed a new module, focusing on Equality and Diversity and other HR issues. This module was completed and delivered in June 2004. The module was then being evaluated and the NCI would then decide how to integrate it into its existing courses.

‘Ownership’ of the new training module remained with the Equal at Work project. The project was planning to post the module on the Equal at Work website (www.dublinpact.ie), thus allowing any organisation from the Community and Voluntary sector to use it. It was also being disseminated through the organisations involved in the project.

A second strand of action that developed involved efforts to lobby to increase the levels of equality between employees in the community and voluntary sector and those in other sectors. The results of the research were presented to a number of trade unions or related bodies – see below.

The general discussions in the group relating to HR policy in the sector also led to involvement in two areas originally outside the remit of the group:

- The group came to the belief that the FÁS Excellence Through People scheme, which aims to promote excellence in HR practices in Irish organisations, could be broadened in its scope to better incorporate issues relating to equality and diversity. The group made a submission to FÁS and its suggestions fed into a revamping of Excellence Through People in 2004;
- The group was involved in preparing a submission by the EQUAL Initiative nationally to the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) in relation to its work. In particular, the group pointed out the importance of the community and voluntary sector in Ireland and emphasised that it should be fully included in the work of the NCPP.

As well as its primary function, this working group, and site, therefore also acted as a kind of ad-hoc body putting forward the views of the community and voluntary sector on a number of matters during 2003 and 2004.

5.2.3 Outputs

- Research Report: Recruitment, Career Development and Equality and Diversity Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector in Dublin;



- Summary of Research Results on HR Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector – 1,000 copies printed and distributed (after initial print run of 500 ran out, a further 500 were printed);
- HR/Equality and Diversity Training Module for organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector (developed with the National College of Ireland);
- Presentations to trade unions as regards conditions in the sector;
- Discussions by organisations in the sector as to how to improve the situation;
- Submissions to FÁS as regards its Excellence Through People scheme and to the National Centre for Partnership and Performance.

5.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The dissemination and mainstreaming of the outputs of this action, at least in the first instance, was closely linked to the work of the site with the National College of Ireland, as described above. The involvement of the NCI with the Site from the start meant that this dissemination and mainstreaming took place 'naturally'.

As stated, the training module was being made available more widely in the sector. All community and voluntary organisations in Equal at Work were made aware of it, and meetings were held with representative groups of the sector to ensure knowledge of the module would be disseminated more widely.

In terms of beginning a process of change, a joint presentation of the research findings was made to a number of trade unions and related organisations, namely IMPACT, the ATGWU, SIPTU, the Dublin Trades Council and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Follow-up one-to-one meetings were requested by SIPTU and IMPACT and held. These unions were considering if they could better organise in the sector with a view to improving equality between the workers in the sector and in other sectors of the economy.

On 14th June 2004, a half-day seminar was organised by this Equal at Work site in Croke Park, where SIPTU and IMPACT responded formally to the Equal at Work research and set out their plans for the sector (and challenges they saw ahead). The Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Association (NICVA) attended and provided insights on the situation in Northern Ireland and possible areas of co-operation.

5.2.5 Comment on Action

While the research undertaken in this action does not cover the whole community and voluntary sector in Ireland, it provides the first quantitative data on HR practices in the sector. Furthermore, the findings of the research were validated by a focus group comprising organisations from the sector and by the site itself, which contains 13 organisations from the sector.

Perhaps contrary to popular beliefs, the research shows that HR practices in the C&V sector generally do not meet the highest standards, and are probably further away from best practice than either the HR

practices of the public or private sectors.

Given the importance of the sector for the Irish economy and for Irish society, as affirmed by the 2000 White Paper, this finding requires a wider response than was possible under Equal at Work. Nevertheless, the project was able to organise a twin-track response, which incorporated elements of dissemination and mainstreaming. The development of a HR training module with the NCI provided a tool for organisations in the sector in terms of upgrading their practices and the dissemination of the research results to the trade unions may result in work to build union membership in the sector, and to address the inequalities between sectors in Ireland.

Given the somewhat fragmented nature of the community and voluntary sector in Ireland, there remained a challenge in finding a 'home' from which the work of disseminating the research findings (and improving HR conditions in the sector) would be driven. However, Equal at Work had made a number of efforts in this regard.

5.3 Action 9: Improving State Interaction with the Community and Voluntary Sector

5.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

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The second action in this site arose from a feeling among the C&V organisations in Equal at Work that there was room to improve relationships between the sector's organisations and their state funders. Over time, an array of funding relationships has emerged between organisations in the sector and government departments and agencies. This has led to extra administration for organisations in the sector, as well as exposing them to arrangements that vary in their levels of long-term effectiveness for the sector.

As with the previous action, while this was anecdotally recognised, there had never been any research on the issue. This action reviewed current arrangements and attempted to identify models of good practice, with a view to clarifying and improving the relationships of C&V sector organisations with the arm of the state that funds them.

This second site action was related to the first in that a model of good practice interaction with the state would provide an opportunity to build good HR practices into organisations' activity plans.

5.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The Community and Voluntary Sector site gathered information on the interaction between organisations in the sector and their state funding organisations²¹. Following agreement of a research questionnaire, a survey was undertaken between April and June 2003. The organisations surveyed were chosen randomly from both

²¹ The research for this action was undertaken by the Unique Perspectives consulting company.



national groups and community-based projects/groups. Of 64 organisations surveyed, 31 responses were received. To supplement the survey, face-to-face research interviews were undertaken with three intermediate bodies that channel funding from the state to the C&V sector, and with five organisations in the sector.

The research results showed that:

- most organisations in the sector undertake multiple activities and define themselves under multiple headings;
- some eight out of ten C&V sector organisations receive funding from more than one government department;
- in the survey undertaken, the most common funders were the Depts. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Social and Family Affairs; Health and Children (via the ERHA) and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and FÁS;
- funding from different departments and agencies comes with different conditions, covers different aspects of operations and has different reporting requirements;
- 86% of C&V sector organisations in Dublin would like a more standardised relationship with funding bodies;
- 40% of state funding does not cover annual increments for employees;
- 60% of funding does not cover any contribution to employee pensions;
- 67% of funding does not provide for an element of staff training;
- the above items are more likely to be funded if the money provided is 'core funding' as opposed to 'short-term' or 'project-based' funding;
- while some 70% of C&V sector organisations use the public sector pay scales as their starting point, people in the sector have lower levels of benefits, given the same qualifications and experience;
- some 72% of employees depend on the annual receipt of funding for renewal of their employment contract;
- employment in the sector (based on the organisations surveyed) is predominantly female, with well over half of full-time staff (up to 76%), and 91% of part-time staff, being women;
- organisations feel the terms of their relationships with state funding organisations place them at a disadvantage in staff recruitment and retention.

The findings indicate that the relationships of C&V organisations with the state sector are complicated and there seems to be no reason as to why such an array of relationships is necessary. This situation has a knock-on implication for the levels of administrative work required of C&V organisations.

The results also suggest that state funding often does not allow for the kind of good HR practices that are the norm in the public sector itself (and which have been developed over the years, including under the national social partnership arrangements). Salary increments, pension contributions, family-friendly work practices and training are often not funded in this female-dominated sector, and there are higher levels of job insecurity.

A report of the research findings was published at end-2003. A set of summary findings were combined with the summary findings of the research on HR practices and both were launched at end-March 2004.

5.3.3 Outputs

- Full research report: Working Conditions and Human Resource Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector;
- Summary of Research Findings (combined with findings from the research on HR practices – 1,000 copies printed);
- Dissemination of research findings and follow-up meetings with organisations that can influence state policy towards the sector.

5.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

In the first half of 2004, the site discussed the research findings, and possible next steps, with a number of organisations:

- the Community and Voluntary Sector Pillar of the national social partnership agreement;
- the C&V representatives on the Implementation Advisory Group for the White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the C&V Sector – the summary research report was also circulated at a full meeting of this Advisory Group;
- representatives of trade unions and the Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Association (NICVA), as part of the seminar held in Croke Park on 14th June 2004.

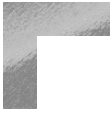
In addition, the findings were disseminated to other government departments and via the Equal at Work conference of April 2004 (where a workshop on the Community and Voluntary research was held).

5.3.5 Comment on Action

As with the other action of this site, this action undertook research on an important issue for the C&V sector, which had not previously been researched in Ireland. The research findings show that unnecessary administrative requirements exist for organisations in the sector through having multiple templates for interaction with state funding agencies. There appears to be a strong case for a state-funded project in this area to develop one or more common templates, across government departments. This will ultimately improve both the productivity and effectiveness of the sector, and facilitate procedures to oversee funding provided to the sector.

Insofar as this second piece of research reviewed HR practices in organisations funded by the state, it found that the C&V sector is a 'poor relation' to the public and private sectors as regards its HR practices, despite the high regard for its social, cultural and economic work expressed in the 2000 White Paper. While improving this situation has resource implications, the comments in the White Paper imply that such an investment should take place, to underpin the long-term performance of the C&V sector in Dublin.





6 Innovative Actions of Equality and Diversity Group

6.1 Introduction

Ireland has seen considerable change in recent years in its equality legislation and this creates obligations for organisations in terms of compliance, as well as opportunities to benefit by embracing diversity. A range of the organisations in Equal at Work, across the different sites, were interested in exploring their obligations under the new legislation and in identifying opportunities in the new environment. For this reason, an intersite working group was established to work on commonly agreed actions in relation to equality and diversity. Membership of the group was set out in Chapter 2 – it included several organisations not part of the Equal at Work project, most notably the Equality Authority. This group had no dedicated staff person and work was undertaken by sub-groups consisting of people from the Equal at Work and the other organisations involved. Members of these groups undertook assigned tasks, and reported back to the inter-site Working Group on progress.

Two actions were defined by the inter-site group.

6.2 Action 10: New Training Materials on Equality and Diversity

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6.2.1 Innovative idea of Action

This action aimed to develop training materials for organisations in relation both to the equality legislation and to the general benefits of equality and diversity. This was focused in the first instance on providing materials for the 48 organisations involved in Equal at Work (which included some major Dublin employers), and then on disseminating materials developed to organisations not involved in the project.

6.2.2 Description of Work Undertaken

A survey was carried out of the 48 Equal at Work organisations as regards their equality and diversity training and their views on the equality legislation. The results suggested that the organisations were atypical in a national context - compared to the results of research undertaken for the national Equal Opportunities Framework Committee, the Equal at Work organisations were more likely to have undertaken equality training.

The survey found that tools to evaluate the effectiveness of training in relation to equality and diversity are needed. Indeed, in a number of organisations, even when training had occurred, information on numbers trained, materials used etc., were not readily available.

Based on the survey and the views of the group, the following materials were produced:



- a list of contact names and organisations in relation to each of the nine grounds covered under Ireland's equality legislation;
- a catalogue of training materials available across the nine grounds and, more generally, in relation to equality and diversity training;
- a 38-overhead PowerPoint presentation ('Strengthening Your Business') on the business case for equality and diversity, which covered legal requirements, cases and the financial benefits of embracing equality and diversity. The presentation was customised into three versions – for public, private and community/voluntary sector organisations. Background notes were prepared for the trainers delivering the presentation.

These materials were combined on a CD, with 700 copies produced in June 2004. A hard copy (with dedicated folder for materials) was also produced by the project.

The training pack was validated through pilot training sessions with organisations in all three sectors in Spring 2004 and participants' comments were incorporated. In addition, the material was submitted to the Equality Authority for review before being finalised.

6.2.3 Outputs

- A training pack (hard copy, CD and web versions) on equality and diversity, targeted at the 48 organisations in Equal at Work, and at other organisations.

6.2.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

Hard copies of the training pack were distributed at the Equal at Work conference in April 2004 and at the national EQUAL conference at the Helix Centre in June 2004. Copies of the CD version of the training pack were distributed in June 2004 to:

- the 48 Equal at Work DP members;
- Sectoral representative bodies, e.g. IBEC, SFA, National Association of Community and Voluntary Bodies etc.;
- Other EQUAL projects in Ireland, via the Adaptability and Equal Opportunities thematic network for EQUAL at a national level;
- the TRED and Westmeath EQUAL projects;
- The Equality Authority.

An electronic version of the presentation was posted on the Equal at Work website (www.dublinpact.ie).

Through its membership (and chairing) of the project's Equality and Diversity group, the Equality Authority was fully familiar with the work and was considering in June 2004 how the pack might be disseminated more

broadly, and how it might be updated in the future. As co-chair of the national EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group, it was also planning to draw the attention of this group to the product produced.

6.2.5 Comment on Action

The survey work undertaken under this action showed that, while Equal at Work organisations may be more aware of the equality legislation than other organisations, many are still absorbing its implications. This group produced a practical training pack to help organisations in this regard.

It is likely that this work will have a direct benefit to the 48 organisations in the Equal at Work DP during 2004, and to other EQUAL projects. Issues arising more broadly are:

- The further dissemination of the pack, as it is likely to have a wide relevance;
- The updating of the material over time;
- The linking of the material to other materials coming on stream from the EQUAL Initiative and from other sources.

6.3 Action 11: Undertaking and Comparing Two Equality Reviews

6.3.1 Innovative Idea of Action

The second action of the inter-site group involved reviewing the practices of two Equal at Work organisations in relation to equality issues. These were Dublin Port Company and Exchange House Travellers Service, a community and voluntary sector organisation that works with Traveller issues. Based on the reviews in these quite different organisations, the action undertook a comparative analysis of the processes of undertaking an equality review, in order to draw some generic lessons, perhaps allay fears other organisations may have about equality reviews, and show the benefits such reviews can have.

The action was assisted by funding from EQUAL nationally, given the action's potential strategic significance. As such, its timeframe was not limited by the end of the Equal at Work project but continued after that point, reporting to the Equality Authority.

6.3.2 Description of Work Undertaken

The two Equality Reviews commenced in Summer 2003. The final report on the Exchange House review was submitted in May 2004 and an abridged version was being distributed within the organisation in June 2004. Preliminary findings from the review in Dublin Port Company were submitted at start-June 2004.



In relation to the comparative analysis of the two reviews, a presentation was made to the Inter-Site Equality and Diversity Group by Breda McNally, the consultant undertaking this work, in June 2004. In describing her task, she stated: 'The Comparative Analysis does not include an assessment of, or commentary on, individual Equality Reviews or their competencies but rather focuses on the Equality Review process. The ultimate purpose of the exercise is to inform the Equality Review process as a whole, both at policy and practice levels, and to enhance understanding generally as to what an Equality Review looks like and what it involves'.

As the two reviews were still ongoing, the Comparative Analysis was also still ongoing in June 2004. However, based on a preliminary analysis of the reviews, some key activities and potential challenges were beginning to emerge, as shown on the next page.

Table 8: **Preliminary Identification of Stages and Issues Arising in an Equality Review**

<p>Introductory Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Getting buy-in (from management, employees, trade unions etc.)■ Clarifying purpose and roles (and allocating resources)■ Assuring consultation and confidentiality (throughout)■ Working in a partnership mode■ Agreeing access to data, information and people <p>Data Gathering Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Dealing with off-site or 'atypical' work patterns (e.g. shift workers, part-time workers, job sharers, out-reach workers etc.)■ Dealing with literacy issues■ Agreeing minimum data and information requirements■ Getting access to data and information■ Structuring interviews, questionnaires etc.■ Ensuring high response to questionnaires etc. <p>Data Analysis Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Choosing how to analyse data and information gathered■ What to include, how to present and what to do with a first (and subsequent) drafts of the Review report <p>Action Planning Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Agreeing a challenging but implementable Action Plan■ Dealing with conflict – e.g. differing responses to the findings in the Review and different views about what should be done about these <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Using the Equality Authority's Equality Review template■ Skills transfer – how to ensure that capability within the organisation is built – and related issues regarding ownership and use of materials used and/or developed■ Providing 'consultancy' as part of the Review

Source: Preliminary Findings of Comparative Analysis of Equality Reviews, Training and Evaluation Services Ltd., June 2004

Further issues were expected to arise in Autumn 2004 as the final versions of the two organisational reviews were produced.

6.3.3 Outputs

- Equality Reviews in two quite different organisations;
- Reports on these reviews submitted to the Equality Authority;
- A Comparative Analysis of the two reviews, focusing on the processes involved in undertaking an Equality Review, and any policy implications.

6.3.4 Dissemination and Mainstreaming

The audience for the two specific Reviews was primarily in the organisations concerned, with recommendations arising for improvements in their equality processes and structures.

For the Comparative Analysis, the proposed audience was much wider and was expected to include HR practitioners, members of the national EQUAL Policy Mainstreaming Forum, EQUAL project participants and others. This report constituted the first analysis of equality reviews in Ireland. Once finalised, it was planned that this report would be launched at a seminar for equality practitioners.

6.3.5 Comment on Action

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The two organisations directly involved in the Equality Reviews felt that they had been very useful, both in identifying areas for improvement in the organisations and as a general tool to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues.

The Comparative Analysis work has significant national potential as a way of establishing Equality Reviews as a widely used tool to promote equality and diversity. The plans to publish the comparative analysis work, and to launch the report at a seminar for equality practitioners, meant that a route had been established to disseminate this analysis, arising from Equal at Work, into a wider discussion on the use of Equality Reviews in Ireland.





7 Conclusions and Implications of Project

7.1 Conclusions

7.1.1 Objectives of Equal at Work

Equal at Work arose from a series of workshops organised by the Dublin Employment Pact in 2000 and 2001. These identified that, in some circumstances, HR structures and processes do not act positively, or even neutrally, but can act as obstacles to equality and diversity in Dublin's workplace. Such unintended obstacles can exist both for people already working in organisations and for people not in work but who wish to enter the organisations. While most previous EU funded projects had focused on direct support to end target groups, Equal at Work decided to focus on trying to change such HR structures and processes.

The formal project objective, as set out in advance, was as follows:

“To develop models of open human resource management policies and practices so as to enable the development of a new inclusive work culture in key organisations in the public, private and community/voluntary sectors in the Dublin region. This culture change will spearhead the drive towards the creation of an inclusive, diverse and equal labour market which will support access and retention through lifelong learning and the application of inclusive work practices to the benefit, in particular, of those experiencing discrimination, exclusion and inequality in the labour market.”

To achieve this ambitious objective, Equal at Work was organised around four groupings of organisations, or 'sites', each leaning predominantly to one sector of the labour market. The pilot actions of Equal at Work are listed in Table 9.





Table 9: Equal at Work Pilot Actions

	Site/Group	Nature of Action
1.	Public Sector	Review of recruitment processes for General Operative and Clerical Officer entry-level grades in local authorities, with a view to increasing openness
2.	Public Sector	Piloting of new inception training and mentoring processes to support progression at lower staff grades in local authorities
3.	Public Sector	Promoting progression of hospital administrative staff and CE participants to Medical Secretary posts
4.	Public Sector	Promoting equality and diversity training in public sector organisations
5.	Public Sector	Developing bridges for people on Community Employment schemes into employment in local authorities
6.	Private Sector	Piloting of Job Rotation model of training/job placement with two large companies
7.	Private Sector	Developing a tailored third-level progression option for graduates of the Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT) Programme
8.	Community/Voluntary	Identifying good HR practices in the C&V sector and developing a training module to disseminate these
9.	Community/Voluntary	Reviewing interaction between C&V organisations and the state, to identify good practice and areas for improvement
10.	Equality and Diversity	Developing training modules around the new equality legislation and on the business case for equality and diversity
11.	Equality and Diversity	Piloting equality reviews in two organisations and undertaking a comparative analysis of these reviews

The actions show the broad scope of the ambition of Equal at Work. Indeed, when the project received less EQUAL funding than it had applied for in 2002, there was some discussion as to whether the number of actions should be reduced. While some actions were modified, the project decided to stick with its original actions, given their importance to Dublin’s workplace. The fact that the actions were all implemented (as set out in Chapters 3-6) was due to significant amounts of time (much unrecorded) being put into the Equal at Work actions by the organisations involved.

7.1.2 Equal at Work as a Development Partnership

Overall Project Structure

Establishing four sites, and an Equality and Diversity Group, meant putting in place quite a complex structure. However, the idea of the sites generally worked well:

- The project issues identified varied by sector and the sites allowed each action to be piloted in the context of a specific sector;
- Each site could focus on two or three of the 11 pilot actions, giving them a practical, action-oriented focus;
- The structure allowed for the maximum number of organisations to be directly involved in project actions, and facilitated the project in ‘levering’ greater amounts of time and effort from organisations;

- Despite the large number of organisations in the project's Development Partnership (48), a survey undertaken for this Evaluation showed that almost all of these felt well informed about the project, had stayed involved with its work and believed this work was important to their organisations.

While the site structure worked well, there were associated disadvantages:

1. The fact that the actions were implemented by a range of organisations reduced the power of the 'centre' to drive the progress of actions;
2. The devolution of financial responsibility for actions created extra administrative work for the project 'centre' and involved some duplication of effort across sites.

While these last points suggest some learning for future similar projects, in general, the site structure and project system of communication helped the project to achieve its aims.

North/South Co-operation

In relation to North/South activity, Equal at Work established a Dublin-Belfast Co-operation Working Group in 2002 and this group met four times in 2002 and 2003. However, the project was unable to access funding to support activities under this dimension of the project and activities were largely limited to exchanges of information on the situations regarding equality and diversity in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. The Northern partners of Equal at Work attended the two conferences organised by Equal at Work to disseminate learning arising from the project.

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Transnational Partnership

Equal at Work put considerable effort into its transnational partnership work, including preparation for each transnational exchange visit to maximise learning, meetings after each trip to discuss the outcomes arising, and work between exchange visits to fulfil its obligations to the partnership. The view of the project stakeholders was that learning, and contacts for future learning, had emerged from the PROMIS partnership, as well as the specific output of the four transnational reports. This positive view was reflected in a transnational evaluation of PROMIS, which concluded: 'The general assessment shows that the PROMIS consortium is judged useful to all of the partners. They appreciate the usefulness of the transnational meetings which exchange information about the four national projects involved in the consortium'.

The Equal at Work partners felt, however, that while PROMIS generated useful outputs, these were largely limited to information exchange and did not percolate into influencing the project's core actions. This was partly due to different project timeframes (with Equal at Work ending before its partners' projects) and the time inevitably needed to understand new partners from different countries and with different labour market organisations.



7.1.3 Achievements of Equal at Work

Outputs of Equal at Work

Chapters 3-6 described the implementation of the 11 Equal at Work actions between early-2003 and mid-2004. The outputs generated by these actions are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: **Outputs of the Equal at Work Pilot Actions**

Opening Up Local Authority Recruitment

- Competency Framework for Local Authority General Operative entry-level grade;
- Competency Framework for Local Authority Clerical Officer entry-level grade;
- Part played in removing Leaving Certificate or equivalent as a mandatory requirement for recruitment to local authority Clerical Officer positions.

Improving Inception and Mentoring Processes in Local Authorities

- Revised Induction Process for Clerical Officers – 90 people went through this new process during the lifetime of the project
- New information session for outdoor staff (covering GOs and supervisors) – 700 people attended these sessions, spending one day in the Council's Civic Offices
- New mentoring/coaching module for the Management Development Programme – training was provided on this module to 300 middle managers in the Council
- 10,000 copies of a leaflet on life-long learning opportunities for employees in the Council – circulated to all 6,500 staff within Dublin City Council
- Special low price negotiated for Council personnel who enrol on the IPA's one-year part-time course on local government in Ireland.

Broadening Access to Medical Secretary Training in Tallaght Hospital

- Testing of training module for Medical Secretary training. While this module had already been developed, this action piloted the module in two different, demanding environments. It also piloted the workshop and distance learning dimensions of the training;
- Modification of the training module and subsequent submission of revised module to FETAC for accreditation by Tallaght Partnership. Approval was received in June 2004 for this locally devised module entitled 'Medical Secretarial Studies';
- Training of 10 people at Grade 3 level in Tallaght Hospital for Medical Secretary position, of whom nine sat and were successful in the subsequent exams;
- Of these 10 people, one had already been promoted to a Medical Secretary position by June 2004 (just weeks after the exams) and one person, who had been on a temporary contract, had been made permanent by the hospital;
- Training of 14 people from local Community Employment/Jobs Initiative schemes for Medical Secretary positions, of whom 11 sat the exams, with nine successful in all exams (and two people partially successful);
- Provision of work experience to 12 people from CE/JI schemes in Tallaght Hospital;
- Interview arranged in June 2004 for one of the CE/JI participants with a view to taking up a temporary post in the hospital.

Equality and Diversity Training in Public Sector Organisations

- Training module developed in relation to equality and diversity, in particular targeted at staff at lower grades;
- Notes prepared for the person delivering this training;
- Training module piloted in two organisations;
- 500 copies of 'Equality in the Workplace' CD prepared and distributed – in the two organisations involved, across the Equal at Work DP, and to outside organisations.

New Progression Routes from Local Authority CE Schemes

- Written report documenting the outcomes of three focus groups with CE supervisors and participants on problems with the programme, in the context of a case study, i.e. South Dublin County Council;
- Changes to practices instituted by South Dublin County Council and FÁS at local level;
- Piloting of work placement scheme for CE participants in Summer 2004 by South Dublin County Council.

Piloting Job Rotation with Two Large Dublin Companies

- Successful completion of two Job Rotations
- 16 people outside the labour market provided with two weeks high quality pre-vocational training and job placements;
- 10 of these people offered full-time jobs;
- Training provided to 40 people from Keelings (Distribution) Ltd. and Freshways-Kerry Foods Ltd., 18 in relation to job progression and 22 in relation to mentoring skills.

In June 2004, one year after the first Rotation and six months after the second Rotation, four people from the job placements were working with the companies involved. A further five people who had been placed had progressed to other jobs or were participating in full-time training.

Supporting Further Progression of FIT Graduates

- Responses of FIT graduates to survey by Equal at Work Private Sector site;
- Subsequent submission of funding proposal under EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme;
- Funding of over €100,000 accessed and transnational project started around improving progression for FIT graduates.

Improving HR Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector

- Research Report: Recruitment, Career Development and Equality and Diversity Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector in Dublin;
- Summary of Research Results on HR Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector – 1,000 copies printed and distributed;
- HR/Equality and Diversity Training Module for organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector developed in association with the National College of Ireland;
- Presentations to trade unions as regards conditions in the sector;
- Workshop for organisations in the sector on how to improve the situation;
- Submissions to FÁS (in co-operation with wider Equal at Work project) as regards its Excellence Through People scheme and to the National Centre for Partnership and Performance.

Improving State Interaction with the Community and Voluntary Sector

- Research report: Working Conditions and Human Resource Practices in the Community and Voluntary Sector;
- Summary of Research Findings (combined with findings from the research on HR practices – 1,000 copies printed and distributed);
- Dissemination of research findings and follow-up meetings with organisations that can influence state policy towards the sector.

New Training Materials on Equality and Diversity

- Development of a training pack (hard copy, CD and web versions) on equality and diversity, customised by sector and targeted at the 48 organisations in Equal at Work, and at other organisations.

Undertaking and Comparing Two Equality Reviews

- Equality Reviews carried out in two quite different organisations;
- Reports on these Reviews submitted to the Equality Authority;
- A Comparative Analysis of the Reviews, focusing on the processes involved in an Equality Review, and any policy implications.

Table 10 shows the scale of the work undertaken by Equal at Work, and the achievements of the pilot actions. A huge amount of work was undertaken by the project, across a range of areas, leading to a series of practical outputs for the organisations involved.

Innovation

A principle of the EQUAL programme is innovation, i.e. while the budget for EQUAL is small, EQUAL should fund innovative actions which may influence policy and practice in mainstream organisations. While specific potential implications are set out in the next section, the outputs listed above indicate a range of innovative actions to address current issues regarding equality and diversity in the different sectors of Dublin's economy.

In terms of the EU-wide definitions of innovation for EQUAL, three categories are identified. Different Equal at Work actions fall under each category:

- Process-oriented innovations develop new or improved methods/approaches to reaching objectives. Equal at Work actions in this regard include the attempts to make local authority recruitment processes more equal or the piloting of new ways of providing medical secretarial training in hospitals.
- Goal-oriented innovations formulate new objectives, new subject areas, new uses or new target groups. Project actions in this category include the use of Job Rotation as a tool in the Irish private sector and the Comparative Analysis of Equality Reviews in an Irish context.
- Context-oriented innovations address the political and institutional structures in which activities take place and aim to re-organise 'existing settings'. Project actions in this category include the efforts in the community and voluntary sector to improve HR practices in the sector and to develop common templates for state interaction with the sector.

Dissemination and Mainstreaming Activity

Chapters 3-6 describe the considerable efforts of the Equal at Work pilot actions to disseminate the learning arising from their work. Each action undertook a programme of targeted dissemination relating to specific learning arising from their action. Activities included a mix of local evaluations of pilot actions, production and launch of action-level reports, bilateral meetings with mainstream organisations, action-related workshops and local and PR efforts. These activities by individual actions were supplemented by two project-wide conferences in Croke Park, by participation at national EQUAL events, and by a national PR campaign which achieved publicity for project actions in the national print and broadcast media.

7.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

The nature of EQUAL projects is that they are time limited and, after they end, learning arising should, where appropriate, influence national policy and practice. As well as efforts by the projects themselves to encourage such mainstreaming, a national EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group exists to support this process.

Based on the Equal at Work pilot actions, implications arise for a range of mainstream organisations. See Table 11.

Table 11: **Organisations that can Learn from Equal at Work Actions**

Organisations	Potential Areas of Learning
Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Local Authorities; Local Government Management Services Board; Public Sector Trade Unions	<p>Learning arises for local authorities, and organisations concerned with their effectiveness, from a range of actions under Equal at Work. Specific relevant outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Practical frameworks to help to move recruitment processes for General Operatives and Clerical Officers to a competency-based system ■ Insights as to how to improve employee inception and mentoring processes, and to promote life-long learning ■ Equality and diversity training tool (tailored to workers at lower grades) and tool on the business case of equality and diversity (aimed at managers) ■ Suggestions as to how CE schemes can be better integrated into local authorities
Public Sector Bodies in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Equality and diversity training tool (tailored to workers at lower grades) and tool on the business case of equality and diversity (aimed at managers) ■ Information on using Equality Reviews as a HR tool
Hospitals; Health Sector Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New ideas (including a training module) for training medical secretaries
Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback from CE participants and supervisors on problems with such schemes as regards content and progression ■ Testing of Job Rotation as a potential labour market tool ■ Suggestions to improve life-long learning for FIT graduates
Organisations in the Community and Voluntary sector; Trade Unions in the C&V sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research data detailing good and bad points of HR practices in the C&V sector ■ Two HR training modules, developed with the National College of Ireland ■ Recommendations as to how the C&V sector's relationship with the state can be more effective ■ Training module on the business case for equality and diversity training ■ Information on using Equality Reviews as a HR tool
Dept. of Social and Family Affairs (implementing White Paper on C&V sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research findings on the multiple relationships between the community and voluntary sector and the state, and suggestions for improving the situation
Private sector companies, and their representative organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information on using Job Rotation as a tool to train and recruit workers ■ Training module on the business case for equality and diversity ■ Information on using Equality Reviews as a HR tool
HR and equality Practitioners; The Equality Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Several tools for equality and diversity training, and a review of the processes involved in an Equality Review

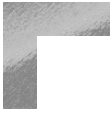


This Evaluation provides a starting point as regards specific points of learning arising. However, mainstream organisations will need to access the original materials developed during the project in order to access the relevant learning. If they did not receive these materials during the project's dissemination and mainstreaming phase of work, all materials have been posted on the Equal at Work section of the Dublin Employment Pact website (www.dublinpact.ie).

Equal at Work became more aware as it produced its outputs of the challenge of trying to change organisations' structures and processes. The academic literature on organisations portrays them as complex interactions of people, structures, processes and cultures, with changing 'coalitions' of actors influencing behaviour. These different aspects of an organisation interact with each other and, thus, changing an organisation's structures or processes needs to be done in a careful and planned way.

What seems clear from the outputs that emerged from Equal at Work in mid-2004 is that the project's original hypothesis was valid, i.e. HR practices and processes can be crucial instruments in promoting equality and combating discrimination in the workplace. Equal at Work undertook a large amount of high quality, focused work between 2002 and 2004 in trying to bring about positive change to HR practices and policies in Dublin's labour market. The challenge arising from the project for the mainstream organisations identified is to consider how they can take forward the outputs and learning arising from Equal at Work, so as to increase the levels of equality in their workplaces.







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