



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

E109/151/01

26 September, 2001

To all Departments and Offices

Circular 42/2001: Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service.

A Dhuine Uasail

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to inform you that a new Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service has been developed and agreed with the Civil Service Staff Unions under the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. The new policy was formally launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance on Tuesday, 25th September, 2001. It replaces the 1986 Equal Opportunity Policy and Guidelines.

The new policy will be issued to all staff shortly and should be issued to all new entrants to the Civil Service from now on.

A new Strategic Approach

Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service is designed to bring a more strategic focus to the achievement of gender equality. The policy restates the commitment of the Civil Service to gender equality and sets out the principles under which the policy operates. The definition used is based on that given in the Employment Equality Act, 1998, namely differences between men and women may not be used unjustly to favour or to disadvantage one in relation to another. Heads of Departments should also be aware that Departments as employers are responsible in law for upholding equality legislation and should therefore be aware of their obligations under equality legislation.

The principles of the policy state that equality of opportunity is not a minority matter, but a key issue which directly or indirectly affects all aspects of every man and woman's working life. Inequality of opportunity is not only illegal, it is morally and socially unjustifiable and is wasteful of people, the main asset of the Civil Service.

As part of the new approach, the policy requires individual Departments to set strategic objectives and equality goals for increasing women's representation, particularly at the higher management levels. Departments are required by Government decision to include such targets in their Strategy Statements. It also requires Departments to implement a programme of affirmative action to deal with obstacles to career progression identified in their own organisations. These initiatives will be taken in the main human resource management

73-79,

Sráid an Mhóta Íocht.,

Baile Átha Cliath 2,

Éire.

73-79,

Lower Mount Street,

Dublin 2,

Ireland.

Telephone: 353-1 676 7571

Facsimile: 353-1 604 5499

LoCall: 1890 66 10 10

VPN: 8109

<http://www.irigov.ie/finance>

(HRM) policy areas of recruitment, placement and mobility, training and staff development, promotion, work and family issues, language and harassment.

The inclusion of strategic objectives and equality goals in each Department's Strategy Statement is a key element in the achievement of gender equality in the Civil Service. Under the Strategic Management Initiative each Head of Department is required to report annually to his or her Minister on progress in relation to all the strategic objectives, goals and action plans specified in the Department's Strategy Statement. These Annual Reports are presented to Government and laid before the Oireachtas. Progress on gender equality in the Civil Service will therefore be monitored annually and at the highest level.

Support Documents

The new policy is accompanied by two documents which are designed to assist Departments in achieving their gender equality objectives and goals: '*Making Gender Equality Happen*' and '*Monitoring Gender Equality*'.

Making Gender Equality Happen provides guidance on setting equality objectives and on best practice in relation to the main human resource management areas: recruitment, placement and mobility, training and staff development, promotion, work and family issues, language and harassment. It is of particular relevance to line managers and supervisory staff as they are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the gender equality policy.

Monitoring Gender Equality sets out the responsibilities of all staff in achieving gender equality, from the Head of Department to individual staff. The Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance have stressed that while the policy applies to all staff, and all staff have a role to play in the achievement of gender equality, the commitment of Heads of Departments and managers will be critical to the success of the policy.

Other grounds under the Employment Equality Act, 1998

A new policy on equality of opportunity '*Diversity in the Civil Service*' is currently in preparation. It covers the other eight grounds, besides gender, under which the Employment Equality Act, 1998 prohibits discrimination. These grounds are: marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Mise le meas

Joe McGovern

Asst. Secretary