



Environmental Protection Agency

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Engaging
Enabling
Empowering



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion, and to treating all employees equally, regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, age, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community or socio-economic background.

The EPA's culture is one that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with core values and behaviours of being:

- Professional;
- Trustworthy;
- Customer and stakeholder focussed;
- Collaborative; and
- Innovative.

The EPA workforce is made up of a wide range of employees with diverse backgrounds, circumstances and skills. We value our workforce – they are our greatest asset.

The EPA will continue to demonstrate high standards in relation to EDI in how we attract, develop and retain staff, to ensure the commitment, engagement, wellbeing, and performance of our workforce.

Our Vision for EDI

The EPA's vision for EDI is to be a leader and role model in equality, diversity and inclusion in the public sector nationally and internationally, and for EDI to be at the heart of all we do. The EPA will strive to create a work environment in which all employees will be able to thrive, be respected and have a real opportunity to participate in and contribute to EPA activities so that they can achieve their fullest potential.

In order to achieve our vision, we will continue to take active steps based on the principles of:

- Equality of Opportunity;
- EDI Awareness Raising and Consultation;

- EDI Mainstreaming;
- Universal Design Access;
- EDI Data Monitoring; and
- Legislative Compliance.

We will achieve this through the development of an annual programme of work, which will include but not limited to a range of EDI priorities:

- The development of a fulfilling and progressive work culture and work environment, one that strengthens and promotes the values of the EPA to ensure that all employees support, value and respect each other.
- The design and implementation of a number of specific change initiatives which support equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Ongoing implementation and monitoring of the following:
 - our Equality of Opportunity policy
 - our Dignity at Work policy and Procedures
 - our Code of Practice for employment of people with disabilities
- EDI data monitoring: having an effective data monitoring and analysis process that supports this policy.
- The defining of EDI challenges and identification of priorities and mechanisms to address these.

Outcomes

The EPA believes that by having a culture that seeks, respects, values and harnesses differences it will:

- increase employee satisfaction;
- foster a creative and innovative workforce;
- attract top talent; and
- enable employees to share varying points of view.

1. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and also to the following groups:

- Interns and summer student placements;
- Visitors, including external persons or agencies using the EPA's premises, facilities or services; and
- Individuals working or acting on the EPA's behalf, including suppliers of goods and services.

In relation to our employees, this policy applies (but is not limited) to recruitment and selection of employees, assessments, scholarships and awards, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of employment, benefits and pay, conduct at work and the staff grievance and disciplinary procedures.

2. LEGISLATION

This policy reflects the EPA's commitment to ensure compliance with the following Acts.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, which prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation in relation to nine specified equality grounds: gender, family status, civil status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller community.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 prohibit discrimination in employment, including recruitment, promotion, pay and other conditions of employment on the nine grounds set out above. The Acts also prohibit harassment and sexual harassment, and these forms of inequality are addressed in our Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures.

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 prohibit discrimination (subject to some exemptions) in the provision of and access to goods and services, on the nine grounds set out above.

The Disability Act 2005 places an obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

The Gender Recognition Act 2015 enables a person aged 16 or over to have their preferred gender

recognised in law, and it facilitates a person to change their gender from male to female or from female to male.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires all public bodies to implement 'the Public Sector Duty' and to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users, and everyone affected by their policies and plans. The specific obligations under 'the Public Sector Duty' are outlined in Section 3 of this policy (responsibilities of senior management).

3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees:

All employees have responsibilities under the EDI Policy. These responsibilities are as follows:

- making themselves aware of the EPA's EDI Policy;
- complying with the provisions of the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures (which covers harassment, sexual harassment and bullying) which requires all employees to treat others with dignity and respect;
- participating in training that supports the implementation of the EPA's EDI Policy, as appropriate; and
- demonstrating sensitivity to equality and diversity issues in their programmes of work, content and use of external resources.

Failure to comply with the EDI Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures may result in complaints being made against employees under the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures and/or the Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Senior Management:

Senior management are responsible for:

- providing strategic leadership on all EPA EDI related matters and initiatives;
- promoting and championing the EDI policy;
- providing strong leadership on EDI at all levels in the EPA;

- implementing 'the Public Sector Duty' – to ensure that equality is promoted, discrimination is prevented and the human rights of everyone affected by the EPA's policies and plans are protected; including the following specific 'Public Sector Duty' responsibilities:
 - assessing and identify the human rights and equality issues relevant to the EPA's functions e.g. when preparing strategic plans
 - identifying policies and practices that are in place or that they plan to put in place to address these issues; and
 - reporting on the EPA's developments and achievements (e.g. in annual reports) in a manner accessible to the public (e.g. in annual reports).
- Reflecting the diversity of the EPA in publicity and other materials;
- making external contractors aware of their responsibility in relation to equality and respect and that they comply with EPA policies;
- arranging that public events are held, wherever possible, in accessible locations; and
- providing opportunities for all employees to receive training on EDI related matters.

Line Managers:

Line managers are responsible for:

- setting a good example by treating all EPA employees and other groups (as defined under Section1 – Scope) with dignity and respect;
- promoting a respectful and inclusive environment;
- managing unacceptable behaviour (harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying) in accordance with relevant policies, in particular the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures and the Grievance Policy and Procedures;
- increasing awareness of EDI and promoting a positive research, learning and social environment; and
- understanding their responsibilities under the EPA's Equal Opportunities Policy when they are involved in recruitment and selection processes. Human Resources will make all those involved in the procedures for the appointment of employees fully aware of their obligations in line with this policy.

Human Resources:

Human Resources are responsible for:

- providing employees with appropriate equality training for their role so that everyone in the EPA is aware of their personal responsibility to support and promote EDI;
- providing employees and their Unions' representatives with appropriate fora to discuss equality and diversity issues, raise any concerns and to involve them in the development and delivery of our EDI objectives; and
- communicating the EDI Policy widely through a variety of channels so that it is embedded into all EPA policies.

4. OTHER POLICIES

There are several EPA policies in place which support and are included in the vision of the EDI policy and they should be read and implemented in conjunction with this policy.

These policies include, but are not limited to:

- Code of Conduct for Directors and Staff of the EPA
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Code of Practice for Employment of People with Disabilities
- Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures
- Grievance Policy and Procedures

Appendix 1: Definitions

Equality is ensuring that individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favourably (either through direct or indirect discrimination), in line with the provisions of the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015. Equality seeks to advance equality of opportunity in access to employment, training, development, career opportunities.

The equality grounds are:

1. Gender (including gender identity): a person's gender identity including male, female, transgender or non-binary;
2. Civil status: a person's civil status be it single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, civil partnered and formerly civil partnered;
3. Family status: being a parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability;
4. Sexual orientation: a person's sexual orientation;
5. Religion: a person's religious belief, background, outlook or lack of belief;
6. Age: a person's age, this ground does not apply to a person aged under 16;
7. Disability: includes physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
8. Race: race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin; and
9. Membership of the Traveller Community: recognised as an ethnic group

Diversity means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. Diversity involves understanding, appreciating and embracing difference.

Inclusion is a sense of belonging; it is about creating a culture and work environment where everyone feels valued and respected; an inclusive culture allows everyone to thrive at work, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. It is where all employees feel acknowledged and valued for their contributions to the EPA and supported in their career and personal development.

EDI mainstreaming: is about ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded and mainstreamed into every aspect of EPA life, which includes assessing and improving the impact of our policies, procedures, practices and communications on EDI.

Universal Design: is about ensuring that access and widening participation are promoted, supported and the responsibility of all. Fundamental to this approach is the belief that equality of access incorporates both entry to EPA and access to an inclusive work environment.

Legislative compliance: ensuring compliance with the legislation set out in section 2 of this policy.