

**Research Report**  
*into*  
**Improving Labour Market  
Placement Rates**  
*for*  
**Disadvantaged Groups**



*Produced by*  
***FGS Consulting***  
*for*  
*Equal at Work*  
*March 2006*

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1	REPORT OBJECTIVES.....	1
1.2	METHOD.....	1
1.3	REPORT STRUCTURE.....	3
<b>2</b>	<b>LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1	INTRODUCTION .....	4
2.2	THE TRANSFORMATION OF IRELAND’S LABOUR MARKET.....	4
2.3	GROUPS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN GAINING EMPLOYMENT.....	6
<b>3</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION .....	10
3.2	A TYPOLOGY OF BARRIERS .....	10
3.3	BARRIERS REPORTED BY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS.....	11
3.4	OVERCOMING BARRIERS .....	16
<b>4</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES &amp; ORGANISATIONS PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION</b> ....	<b>21</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION .....	21
4.2	EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS .....	21
4.3	CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SERVICE PROVIDERS .....	22
4.4	SUGGESTED CHANGES FOR FIRMS AND FOR POLICY .....	23
<b>5</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF FIRMS</b> .....	<b>26</b>
5.1	CHAPTER INTRODUCTION .....	26
5.2	CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYERS.....	26
5.3	LESSONS FOR STATE SUPPORT AND OTHER FIRMS.....	29
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>31</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION .....	31
6.2	KEY FINDINGS – THE PROBLEM .....	31
6.3	CONCLUSIONS – THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM.....	32
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS – THE SOLUTIONS.....	34

## ANNEXES

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Report Objectives

This report was produced by FGS Consulting for Equal at Work. The study's Terms of Reference set out three objectives for this study as follows:

1. *'To bring together the principal findings and recommendations from the significant reports and pieces of research undertaken in the past 2 – 4 years into the barriers encountered by those experiencing difficulty accessing the labour market in Ireland'*
2. *'Against this background, interviews with partner companies and organisations will capture their experiences from both the supply and demand sides of the labour market'*
3. *'The report will make recommendations addressing policies and practices of:*
  - i. *government departments and state agencies;*
  - ii. *local and national employment services, including specialised services for groups with particular needs; and*
  - iii. *the private sector'.*

## 1.2 Method

This report is based on a review of reports and research undertaken over the past four years on the barriers encountered by people experiencing difficulty in gaining employment in Ireland (hereafter referred to as disadvantaged groups). It is also based on a confidential survey of members of the Equal at Work private sector cluster. Figure 1 below lists the key reports and papers reviewed as part of this study.

**Figure 1-1: List of Reports Summarised As Part of the Study**

<b>Reports on the Labour Market Situation of People Disadvantaged in the Labour Market</b>
<b>Women and Men in Ireland: Facts and Figures, NDP Gender Equality Unit, 2003</b>
<b>Labour Market Initiatives: A Gender Perspective, NWCI, at Equal at Work &amp; WINS Seminar Series Belfast, 2005</b>
<b>Accommodating Diversity in Labour Market Programmes, WRC Social and Economic Consultants, Equality Authority, 2003</b>
<b>Labour Participation Rates of the Over-55's in Ireland, (for EGFSN &amp; NCC) PACEC, FORFÁS, 2001</b>
<b>Aging and Labour Market Participation, Russell &amp; Fahey, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2004</b>
<b>Disability and Labour Market Participation, Gannon &amp; Nolan, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2004</b>
<b>Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland, Gannon &amp; Nolan, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2005</b>
<b>Reports on the Labour Market Situation of People from Disadvantaged Groups</b>
<b>Getting out of the House; Women returning to Employment, Education and Training, Russell, Smith, Lyons &amp; O'Connell, ESRI, The Liffey Press, 2002</b>
<b>Labour Market Inequalities for Older People in Ireland, Basten, Irwin and Heaney, Equality Authority, 2003</b>

Labour Market Experiences of People with Disabilities, Bruce, Equality Authority, 2003
The Labour Market needs and Experiences of Minority Ethnic Groups, Particularly Refugees in Ireland, Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, WERRC, UCD, 2002
Travellers' Experiences of Labour Market Programmes, Pearn Kandola, Equality Authority, 2003
NESF Lone Parents Report (Report No. 20), NESF, 2001
Issues in the Employment of Early School Leavers, O'Shea & Williams, ESRI, 2001
Migrant Workers and Their Experiences, Conroy & Brennan, Equality Authority; CIF; IBEC; ICTU & <i>Know Racism</i> , 2003
Minority Ethnic People with Disabilities in Ireland, Pierce, Equality Authority, 2003
Barriers to Employment Affecting Travellers, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and People with a Disability, INOU Briefing Paper, 2003
<b>Evaluation Reports on Active Labour Market Programmes</b>
Evaluation of the Level of Provision and Targeting of Measures under the EHRDOP 2000-2006, Fitzpatrick Associates, 2001
Mid-term Evaluation of the EHRDOP 2000-2006, Fitzpatrick Associates, 2003
Update (Final) Evaluation of the EHRDOP 2000-2006, FGS Consulting, 2005

Members of the Equal at Work private sector cluster were also consulted and their views were obtained through a confidential survey. Figure 1.2 lists the organisations that completed the confidential questionnaire.

**Figure 1-2: Members of the Private Sector Cluster Who Completed a Questionnaire<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Employment Services &amp; Organisations promoting social inclusion</b>	
Northside Partnership	Ballymun Partnership
Ballyfermot Local Employment Service	Work 4 U
Integrating Ireland	
<b>Private Sector Firms in the Equal at Work Private Sector Cluster</b>	
EBS Building Society	Meteor Mobile Communications plc
Irish Life & Permanent plc	Jurys Doyle Hotel Group plc
eircom plc	
<i>1. Completed questionnaires were also received from the Equal at Work Project Manager and the Advisor to the private sector cluster.</i>	

## 1.3 Report Structure

The remainder of this report consists of five chapters structured around the study objectives as follows:

- **Chapter 2 Labour Market Inequality:** Chapter 2 shows that despite the transformation of Ireland's labour market at a macro level over the last decade a number of groups continue to experience considerable difficulty in gaining employment, reflecting the fact that labour market inequality remains a significant problem;
- **Chapter 3 Experience of People in Disadvantaged Groups:** Chapter 3 discusses the barriers experienced by people in disadvantaged groups in accessing the labour market based on a review of relevant reports and papers over the last four years;
- **Chapter 4 Employment Services & Organisations promoting social inclusion:** Chapter 4 discusses the views of the employment and voluntary sector service providers in the Equal at Work private sector cluster on the main barriers hindering people from disadvantaged groups from gaining employment, the challenges experienced by these service providers when seeking to assist people from disadvantaged groups to gain employment and their views on the lessons for private sector employers and for labour market policy;
- **Chapter 5 Experience of Private Sector Firms:** Chapter 5 discusses the experience of firms in the Equal at Work private sector cluster. It describes challenges faced by these firms in actively recruiting people from disadvantaged groups and presents the views of firms, based on their experiences to date, on the lessons for state supports and for other firms;
- **Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations:** Chapter 6 presents this report's conclusions and recommendations.

## 2 LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITY

### 2.1 Introduction

The objective of this Chapter is to demonstrate that despite the excellent performance of the Irish labour market over the last decade a number of groups continue to experience considerable difficulties gaining employment.

Section 2.2 describes the transformation of the Irish labour market over the last decade. It also discusses the medium-term challenges facing Ireland. However, despite the transformation that has taken place at a macro level, Section 2.3 shows that a number of groups continue to experience difficulty in gaining employment.

### 2.2 The Transformation of Ireland's Labour Market

Ireland's labour market has been transformed at a macro level over the last decade. Table 2.1 shows that employment has increased rapidly, unemployment has declined rapidly and the country has moved from being a net exporter to being a net importer of labour.

**Table 2-1: Transformation of the Irish Labour Market 1995 to 2005**

Employment ('000s)	1995	2005	Change	% Change
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,281.7</b>	<b>1,929.2</b>	<b>647.5</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Full-time</b>	<b>1,127.8</b>	<b>1,597.5</b>	<b>469.7</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Part-time</b>	<b>153.9</b>	<b>331.7</b>	<b>177.8</b>	<b>116%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>798.8</b>	<b>1110.1</b>	<b>311.3</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>482.9</b>	<b>819.1</b>	<b>336.2</b>	<b>70%</b>
Unemployment ('000s)	1995	2005	Change	% Change
<b>Total</b>	<b>177.4</b>	<b>85.6</b>	<b>-91.8</b>	<b>-52%</b>
<b>Long-term unemployed</b>	<b>103.2</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>-75.6</b>	<b>-73%</b>
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>		
<b>Long-term unemployment rate</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>		
Migration ('000s)	1995	2005	Change	% Change
<b>Emigration</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>-16.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Immigration</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>Net migration</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>53.4</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>28.1</b>

Source: Central Statistics Office, Quarterly National Household Survey and Population and Migration Estimates Release

Employment has increased by nearly 650,000 or 51%, up from 1.281m in 1995 to 1.929m in 2005. Both male and female employment increased, with a particularly rapid increase in female employment. Female employment increased by 70% (336,200) and male employment increased by 39% (311,300).

Total unemployment is now half of what it was a decade ago. In 1995 there were 177,400 unemployed people whereas this has fallen to 85,600 in 2005, a 52% decrease. Long-term unemployment is nearly a quarter of what it was. There were 27,600 long-term unemployed people in 2005 compared to 103,200 in 1995, a decline of 73%.

As a result of this transformation, the unemployment rate and the long-term unemployment rate have both declined significantly. The unemployment rate declined from 12.2% in 1995 to 4.2% in 2005, and long-term unemployment rate declined from 8.4% to 1.7%.

Reflecting the significant growth in employment opportunities and the growth in earnings, the country switched from being a net exporter to being a net importer of labour. The number of emigrants in 2005 was half the number in 1995, 16,600 compared to 33,100. While the number of immigrants in 2005 was more than twice the number in 1995, 70,000 compared to 31,200. As a result 53,400 more people entered the country than left the country in 2005, compared to 1,900 more people left than entered.

Following this transformation Ireland faces a number of medium-term labour market challenges. These are presented in Figure 2.1

**Figure 2-1: Medium-term Challenges for the Irish Labour Market**

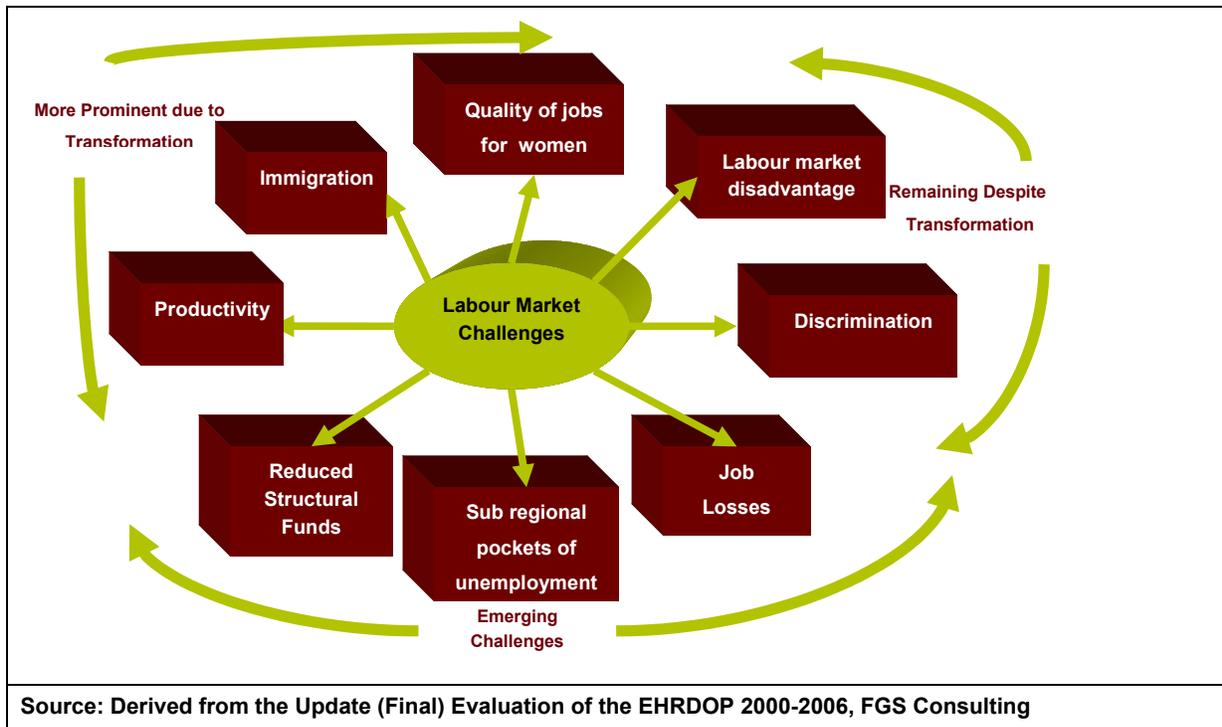


Figure 2.1 shows that the medium-term challenges fall into three broad categories. First of all there are challenges that have become more prominent as a direct result of our recent success. These include the increased need to enhance labour productivity, the need to successfully integrate immigrants into the labour market and into society, and the need for greater focus on enhancing the quality of jobs for women (and hence the gender pay gap).

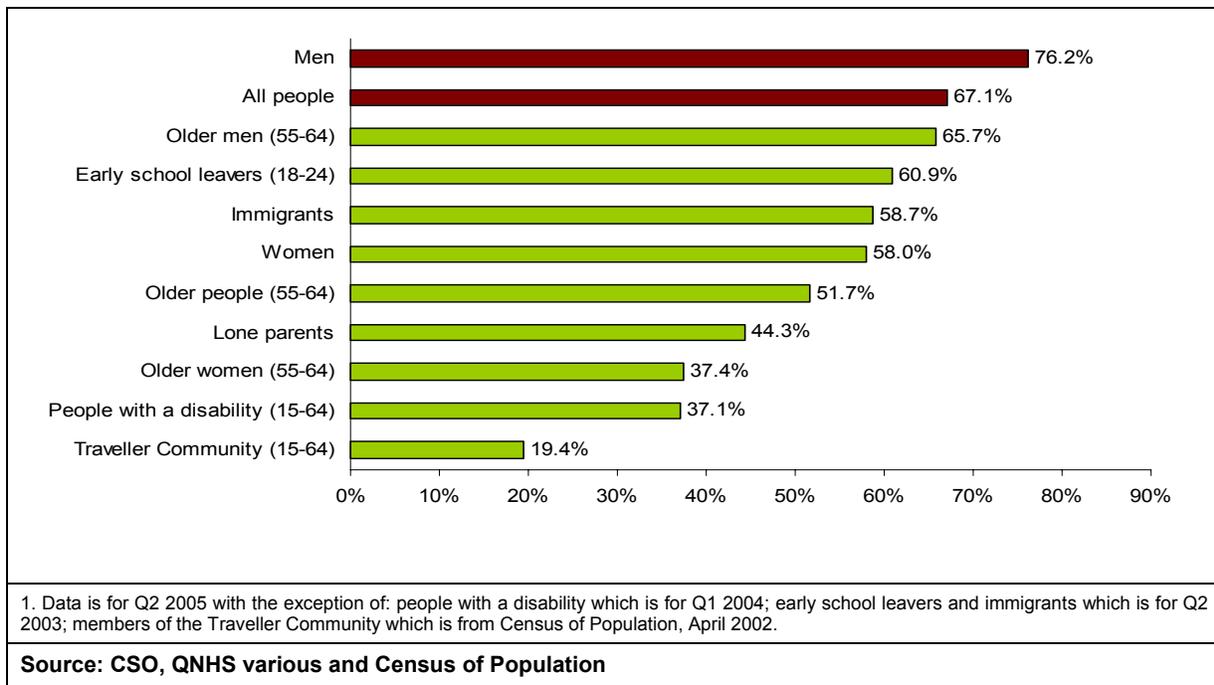
There is also a second set of challenges that have emerged as a result of recent success. Due to Ireland's rising cost base the country is likely to experience more job losses in lower value-added manufacturing and in less skilled sectors of the economy, Ireland is likely to experience greater sub-regional pockets of unemployment due to the concentration of traditional and less sustainable industries in certain areas and Ireland will have reduced levels of Structural Funds available to invest in education and training.

The final set of challenges relate to the fact that despite Ireland's recent success, labour market disadvantage and discrimination remain major issues in the Irish labour market. As a result of these two factors a number of groups continue to experience difficulties in gaining employment despite the phenomenal growth in employment over the last decade. We discuss this in more detail in Section 2.3.

### 2.3 Groups Experiencing Difficulty in Gaining Employment

Despite the rapid expansion in employment over the last decade a number of groups have experienced difficulties in gaining employment. Figure 2.2 shows that the employment rates (the share of people in a particular group who are employed) remain extremely low for a number of groups such as early school leavers, immigrants, women, older people, lone parents, people with a disability and members of the Traveller Community.

**Figure 2-2: Employment Rates by Group Q2 2005**



The overall employment rate across the economy in Q2 2005 was 67%, i.e. 67% of people of working age were in employment. However, Figure 2.2 shows notable differences across groups. For example, employment rates are 76.2% for men but only 58% for women. Employment rates for immigrants are only 58.7% and for older people aged 55-64 employment rates are only 51.7%.

The employment rate for early school leavers is also below the overall employment rate, 60.9% compared to 67.1%. What is perhaps most telling for early school leavers is their very high unemployment rate at 17.6% compared to an overall average of 4.2%.

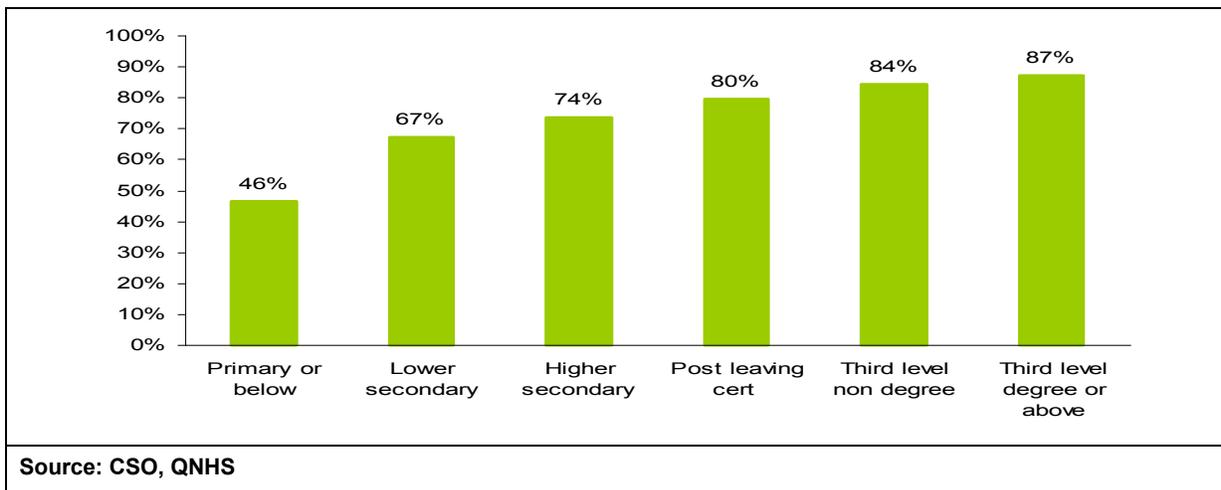
Figure 2.2 also shows that there are a number of groups that have extremely low employment rates, and where less than half of the members of the group are employed. For instance, lone parents have an employment rate of only 44.3%, only 37.4% of older women are employed, people with a disability have an employment rate of only 37.1% and only 19.4% of members of the Traveller Community of working age are employed.

Of course there are other groups who have also experienced difficulties in gaining employment, but for whom data on employment rates is not available. These include minority ethnic groups, ex-prisoners, people with alcohol and addiction problems etc. Two key factors influencing lower employment rates are the following:

1. Labour market disadvantage, specifically low levels of educational qualifications, competencies and skills;
2. Discrimination, specifically discrimination and unequal treatment arising from group membership.

Figure 2.3 shows clearly that employment rates are positively related to levels of educational attainment. This is a very strong relationship; employment rates increase from 46.5% for people with no formal educational attainment to 87.3% for people with third level education. This is a relationship that holds true for both men and women, and other evidence (see Annex B) suggests that it holds true across the board for different groups of people.

**Figure 2-3: Employment Rates by Level of Education Attainment, Q2 2003**



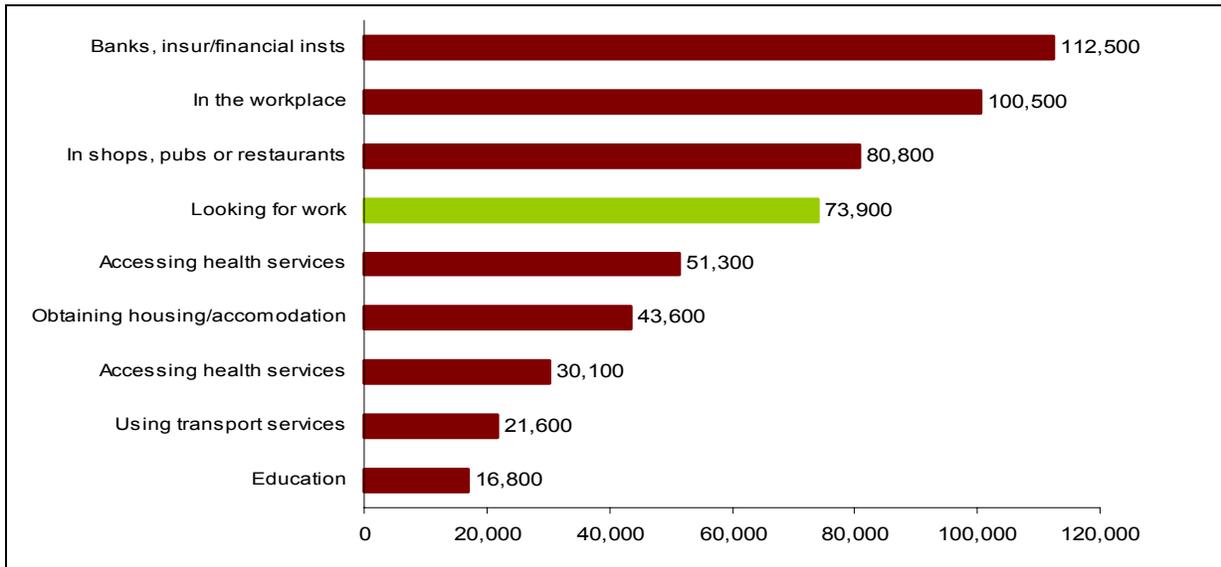
Recent data from the Central Statistics Office highlight the extent of discrimination experienced in Ireland. In the fourth quarter of 2004, an estimated 382,000 or 12.5% of people aged 18 and over reported that they had experienced discrimination in the last two years. Of these, the majority (271,300 people or 71%) indicated that they experienced it more than once.

The incidence of discrimination varies across a wide range of socio-economic variables such as age, economic status, nationality, religion and ethnicity. The groups that reported the greatest levels of discrimination were people from non-white ethnic backgrounds (31%), unemployed people (28.8%), non-nationals (24.4%), non-Catholics (21.6%), people with a disability (19.6%), and young people aged 18 to 24 (17.6%).

A quarter (25.5%) of the people who felt they were discriminated against said it has had a ‘serious effect’ on their lives and nearly half (47.6%) said it had ‘some effect’ on their lives. Despite this, the vast majority of people (60%) did not take any action (verbal, written, official complaint or legal action) in relation to the discrimination experienced. A contributing factor is a lack of knowledge or understanding of their rights. A quarter of people who reported experiencing discrimination indicated they had no understanding of their rights from an equality perspective. The groups reporting the highest incidence were the groups least likely to take action, and they were the least well informed about their rights under equality legislation.

Figure 2.4 shows the areas in which people indicated they experienced discrimination. It shows that ‘looking for work’ is the fourth most common area in absolute terms where people reported experiencing discrimination. A total of 73,900 people reported that they experienced discrimination when looking for work.

**Figure 2-4: Areas in Which People Indicated they Experienced Discrimination**



Source: CSO, QNHS

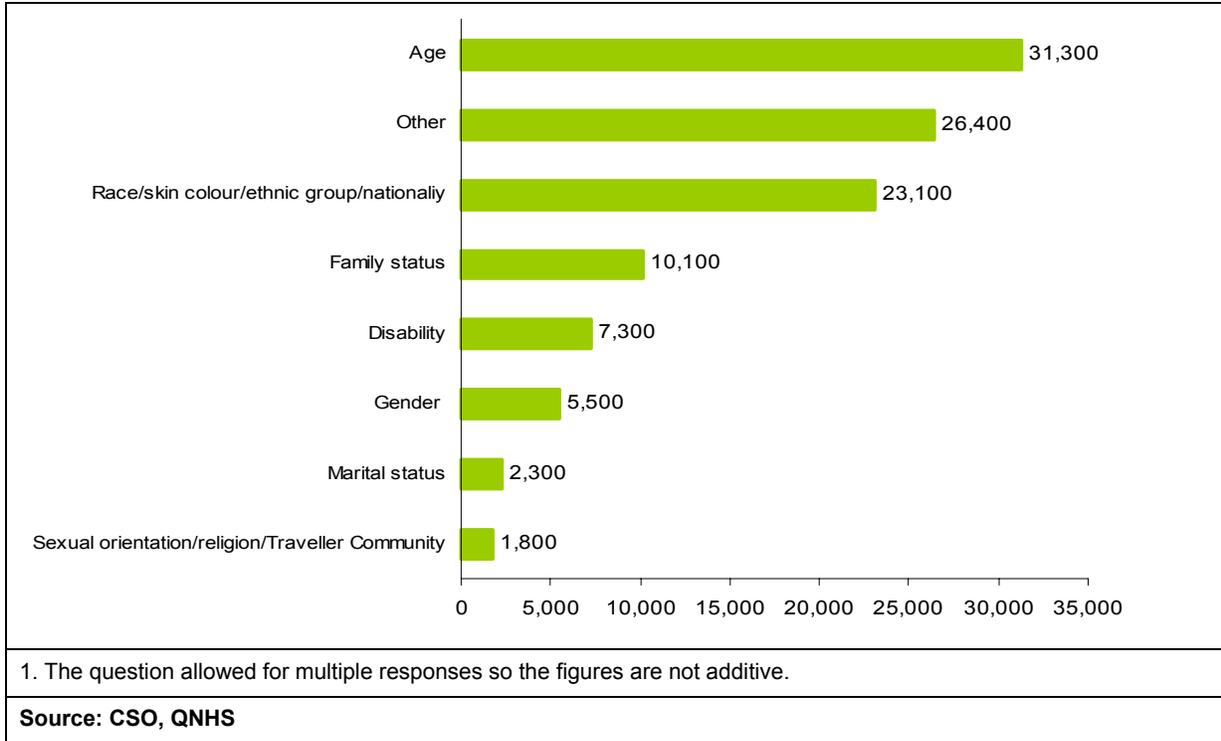
The absolute number of people reporting discrimination is even more worrying when put into context. The number of people reporting discrimination when looking for work is *nearly the same* as the number of people who reported discrimination ‘in shops, pubs or restaurants’ (73,900 versus 80,700) and it is *more than twice* the number reporting discrimination ‘accessing public services and it is *three times* the level reporting discrimination ‘using transport services’.

This is despite the fact that the number of people who actually look for work (and so who could in theory experience discrimination) is much lower than the number who use shops, pubs or restaurants, it is much lower than the number who access public services and it is much lower than the number who use transport services. These figures demonstrate a very high level of discrimination of people when looking for work. Indeed, statistics from the CSO show that unemployed people reported the highest incidence of labour market related discrimination, at 23%. This shows that discrimination as well as lack of appropriate skills is a major reason why certain people find it difficult to get a job.

The grounds on which unemployed people reported experiencing discrimination when looking for work are shown in Figure 2.5 below. It shows that age and ‘race/ethnic group/nationality’ are the grounds covered by

the equality legislation most frequently cited. It also shows that a large number of people, 26,400, felt they experienced discrimination on a basis not covered by the equality legislation.

**Figure 2-5: Perceived Grounds for Discrimination Experienced When Looking For Work**



## 3 EXPERIENCE OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

### 3.1 Introduction

This Chapter is based on relevant reports and papers listed in Figure 1.1 and summarised in Annexes A and B. This Chapter discusses the barriers hindering people from disadvantaged groups from gaining employment and discusses recommendations from relevant reports on how to improve the employment prospects of people from disadvantaged groups.

Section 3.2 presents a typology of the types of barriers (institutional, informational etc) that people from disadvantaged groups can experience when trying to gain employment. Section 3.3 summarises evidence on the barriers actually experienced by people from disadvantaged groups in entering employment, drawing on available research and reports. Finally, Section 3.4 discusses some of the recommendations that have been made in relevant reports on how to enhance the employment chances of people experiencing labour market disadvantage.

### 3.2 A Typology of Barriers

Before discussing the specific barriers that can hinder people from disadvantaged groups entering employment it is useful to discuss the broad types of barriers that people can face. The Integra Working Group on Barriers to Access to Participation in Education and Training identified a typology of four types of barriers namely, dispositional, informational, institutional and situational. In the paper *'Reaching the Excluded'* Ronayne added a fifth type of barrier called contextual barriers. This typology of barriers is as follows:<sup>1</sup>

- **Personal or Dispositional Barriers:** Personal or dispositional factors include demographic factors such as gender and age, educational attainment levels, and a range of experiential, attitudinal and motivational factors. Other factors include a fear of failure and the negative effect of community, family and peer reference groups placing a low value on education and training;
- **Informational Barriers:** A lack of information (and indeed actual mis-information) can also act as a barrier to people gaining employment. This includes a lack of information in relation to job opportunities and job search practices. It also includes a lack of information about education and training opportunities and the relationship between education and training and potential income can also act as a barrier to participation in education and training and hence limit employment prospects;
- **Situational Barriers:** These are barriers to participation in education and training that limit employment prospect and include participation costs or the cost associated with taking part in education and training such as transport costs, the costs of books and course material etc. They also include the opportunity cost associated with education and training such as income from casual work;
- **Institutional Barriers:** Barriers can also arise from institutional practices regarding access and eligibility criteria, recruitment procedures, and an institutional culture and associated processes. This includes timing and organisation of classes, mode of learning, location, adopting the academic year as the time frame for programmes, holding recruitment to a short period of the year, the need for continuity of attendance, and lack of childcare;

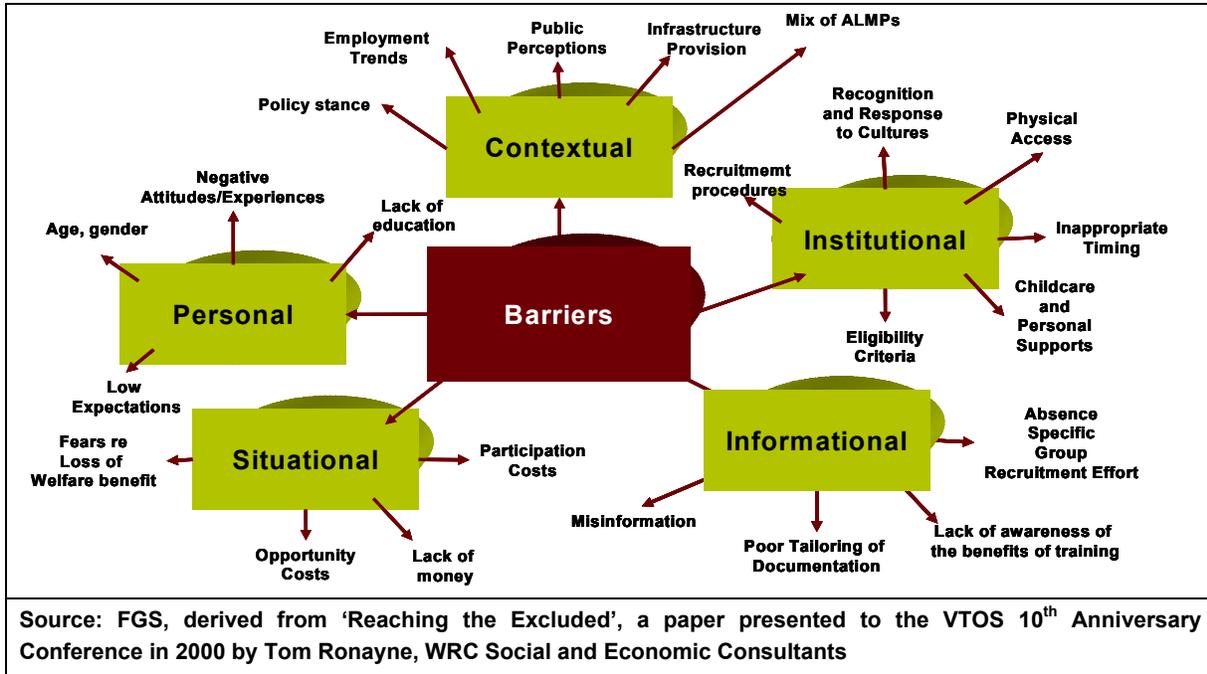
---

<sup>1</sup> This section draws on the paper *'Reaching the Excluded'* a paper presented to the VTOS 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in 2000 by Tom Ronayne, WRC Social and Economic Consultants.

- **Contextual Barriers:** Contextual barriers relate to prevailing socio-economic conditions, the policy stance towards issues such social exclusion and educational disadvantage, and the mix of active labour market programmes targeted toward people in disadvantaged groups.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the different types of barriers graphically. In the next Section we discuss evidence on the actual barriers reported by people experiencing labour market disadvantage.

**Figure 3-1: A Typology of Barriers that Limit the Employment Chances of People from Disadvantaged Groups**



### 3.3 Barriers Reported by Disadvantaged Groups

#### 3.3.1 Overview

This Section summarises findings from literature on barriers reported by people experiencing labour market inequality hindering them from gaining employment, and their views on barriers to accessing education and training programmes aimed at preparing them for employment.

Figure 3.2 presents findings from reports on barriers experienced by women, older people, minority ethnic groups, migrant workers, members of the Traveller Community and lone parents. Annex B presents the findings from these reports in more detail. In the following sub-sections we discuss key barriers using the typology of barriers explained in Section 3.2.

#### 3.3.2 Personal/ Dispositional Barriers

A number of dispositional barriers hindering people from gaining employment are reported in the literature. These include low levels of self-esteem and low levels of confidence. Added to this are negative perceptions of the education and training system. Compounding these factors are low levels of literacy, low levels of educational attainment and a lack of work experience and employer references.

### **3.3.3 Informational Barriers**

The perception that jobs were not available for people with low skills and low qualifications was held by a number of groups, especially older people. In addition, most groups report a range of informational barriers in relation to education and training programmes that aim to assist people gain employment.

Such informational barriers include a lack of accessible and user friendly information on entitlements, and a lack of accessible and user friendly information on education and training. This reflects an absence of proactive strategies for recruiting and the predominant use of written material as the means for promoting education and training programmes (see below).

### **3.3.4 Situational Barriers**

The main situational barriers experienced by groups appear to be the costs associated with participating in education and training programmes to help them gain employment, and fears that participation in such courses or gaining employment will result in loss of social welfare benefits and entitlements.

### **3.3.5 Institutional Barriers**

Members of disadvantaged groups also report a range of institutional barriers. These include a lack of childcare supports, a lack of flexible delivery of education and training programmes, a lack of pre-training and taster programmes, a lack of a gradual build up of the formality of education and training programmes and a lack of outreach to promote programmes. Other factors include inappropriate selection criteria, lack of access to the built environment and lack of understanding of the unique needs of different groups among education and training professionals.

### **3.3.6 Contextual Barriers**

Negative perceptions and discrimination are reported barriers to employment by women, older people, minority ethnic groups, migrant workers, members of the Traveller Community and lone parents. The focus of employers on formal qualifications is an especially relevant issue for older people, minority ethnic groups and lone parents. Limited public transport options is also cited as a barrier in a number of studies, especially for women, people with a disability and lone parents.

Figure 3-2: Barriers to Gaining Employment for People Experiencing Labour Market Inequality

	Women	Older people	Disability	Ethnic Minority Groups/Migrant Workers	Members of the Traveller Community	Lone Parents
Dispositional	Long-term exclusion from the labour market	Literacy difficulties	Segregated schools promoting low self confidence and stigma on other eyes	Lack of language skills	Negative perceptions of training due to prior negative experience of the school system	Low educational attainment levels
	Low levels of literacy	Low educational attainment levels	Low educational attainment	Lack of work experience/ Lack of references from Irish employer	Low expectations that participation in training will lead to employment	
Informational	Lack of accessible and user friendly information on entitlements	Belief that skills mismatch between their skills and what needed	Lack of accessible information on education, training and employment opportunities	Lack of familiarity about process for job-search in Ireland	Lack of information about training programmes among Travellers	
	Lack of accessible and user friendly information on education and training	Belief that limited opportunities to engage in training		Lack of material in their own language	Predominant use of written material	

	Women	Older people	Disability	Ethnic Minority Groups/Migrant Workers	Members of the Traveller Community	Lone Parents
Situational	Lack of childcare infrastructure and provision	Concerns re loss of welfare/pension entitlements	Lack of additional supports during programmes	Lack of childcare supports	Lack of additional supports during programmes	Disincentive to work due to operation of allowance/ benefit system
	Lack of other care infrastructure		Disincentive to work due to operation of allowance and benefit system		Fear of losing welfare entitlements as a result of participating in training	Need for greater flexibility in the payment of childcare reimbursement costs
Institutional	Need for part-time provision of mainstream programmes	Most education and training providers geared toward younger clients	Architectural and physical barriers	Process for accessing training viewed as difficult	Lack of recognition of culture in planning and delivery of programmes	Need for part-time provision of mainstream programmes
	Absence of proactive strategies for recruiting		Lack of disability skills among professionals	Lack of awareness of public services	Recruitment/selection methods that exclude	Little pre-training, taster courses, personal development
			Absence of a coherent planning/ implementing services for needs	Lack of awareness of voluntary organisations	Lack of gradual build up of formality of training	Limited number of ALMPs targeted at needs of Lone Parents
			Lack of supports for people with a disability		Lack of flexible hours	Absence of proactive strategies for recruiting

	Women	Older people	Disability	Ethnic Minority Groups/Migrant Workers	Members of the Traveller Community	Lone Parents
Contextual Barriers	The structure of Ireland's social welfare model	Concerns about hostility towards older workers due to youth culture	Unfounded stereotypes regarding working capabilities	Discrimination	Discrimination	Need for WLB practices to take account of the need of lone parents
	Discrimination	Priority on formal qualifications	Lack of knowledge of disability among employers	Lack of recognition of qualifications	Negative stereotypes	Lack of childcare
	Lack of WLB policies	Deficiencies in rural public transport	Lack of supports for employers			
	Lack of flexible working arrangements		Lack of effective legislation			
	Limited public transport services		Inaccessible transport			

Source: FGS Consulting, derived from various reports listed in Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 and summarised in Annex B

### 3.4 Overcoming Barriers

Figure 3.3 presents recommendations from various reports relevant to improving the employment rates of people experiencing labour market disadvantage. At an overall level it shows that a wide range of recommendations have been made across a variety of reports.

An understanding of the labour market status and needs of most groups with low employment rates (with the exception of women) is just beginning to be systematically captured by research. In addition, comprehensive data is just becoming available on people with disabilities and members of the Traveller Community while comprehensive data is still not available for certain groups such as minority ethnic groups or migrant workers.

Recommendations on dispositional barriers highlight recognition of the need to tailor Active Labour Market Programmes to the specific needs of these groups, although the exact nature of these needs and the response required is not specified in the literature.

With regard to information barriers, there are recommendations calling for the provision of additional and more accessible information on education, training and employment opportunities for people in disadvantaged groups. A key message is the need for this information to be *tailored and specific* to the groups. Increased outreach and engagement with these groups is also considered important.

A number of recommendations also address institutional issues. These include the need to more effectively identify people likely to experience difficulties gaining employment early on; the need for training about the needs of disadvantaged groups for front line professionals in education and training organisations; the need for flexible delivery and part time provision of training and the need for more effective mainstreaming actions.

The literature also highlights the need to address contextual barriers. In particular, it emphasises the need to allow disadvantaged groups to retain social welfare entitlements for trial periods after gaining employment. It also points out the need to address the lack of affordable childcare places and for the development of greater public transport linkages.

Figure 3-3: Recommendations from various reports relevant to improving employment rates

Dispositional	<b>Aging and Labour Market Participation, Russell &amp; Fahey, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2004</b>
	Policy must pay particular attention to the problems of older unemployed workers and those who are ill/disabled
	<b>Barriers to Employment Affecting Travellers, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and People with a Disability, INOU Briefing Paper, 2003</b>
	There is a need to recognise the culturally diverse role women play
	<b>Labour Market Initiatives: A Gender Perspective, NWCi at Equal at Work &amp; WINS Seminar Series Belfast, 2005</b>
Flexible provision must target the needs and circumstances of women	
Informational	<b>Labour Participation Rates of the Over 55's in Ireland, (for EGFSC &amp; NCC) PACEC, FORFÁS, 2001</b>
	More [older] people should be made aware of the take-home pay from specified jobs.
	<b>Getting out of the House; Women returning to Employment, Education and Training, Russell, Smith, Lyons &amp; O'Connell, ESRI, The Liffey Press, 2002</b>
	A publicity campaign targeted at women in the home, to provide information on courses, schemes and training available is necessary. Local media need to target women in a rural or more geographically isolated area. Better use could be made of Citizen Information Centres
	<b>Travellers' Experiences of Labour Market Programmes, Pearn Kandola, Equality Authority, 2003</b>
	Training providers need to engage more systematically with members of the Traveller community in order to address dispositions and attitudes acting as barriers to participation
	<b>The Labour Market needs and Experiences of Minority Ethnic Groups, Particularly Refugees in Ireland, Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, WERRC, UCD, 2002</b>
	More information about legal status and associated rights is needed. Such information should be targeted at persons seeking employment and employers.
	Information is required in an accessible format and should take into account the English language skills and literacy levels of those requiring information
	<b>Migrant Workers and Their Experiences, Conroy &amp; Brennan, Equality Authority; CIF; IBEC; ICTU &amp; Know Racism, 2003</b>
There is a need for a programme of investment in migrant community associations to support their capacity to network migrant workers, to articulate their interests and to communicate employment and other rights information	

	<p><b>Barriers to Employment Affecting Travellers, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and People with a Disability, INOU Briefing Paper, 2003</b></p> <p>Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers and people with disabilities need to be informed about the options open to them and how participation in education, training or targeted supports can affect their social welfare payments, medical card, rent allowance etc.</p> <p>Organise an 'awareness week' for each of the communities of interest to highlight the services available to them and to raise awareness of the difficulties they face in accessing employment</p> <p>Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers and people with disabilities need to be informed about equality legislation</p> <p>Increase the participation of Travellers by conducting outreach services</p> <p>Invite members from the communities of interest to be representatives on managing boards and committees.</p>
Situational	<p><b>Aging and Labour Market Participation, Russell &amp; Fahey, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2004</b></p> <p>Policy must pay particular attention to the problems of older unemployed workers and those who are ill/disabled</p>
	<p><b>Labour Market Initiatives: A Gender Perspective, NWCi at Equal at Work &amp; WINS Seminar Series Belfast, 2005</b></p> <p>The location of training needs to take account of the availability and cost of public transport</p> <p>Provision of childcare supports – direct financial support or facilities to accompany all education and training provision needs to be available for all low income parents</p>
	<p><b>Getting out of the House; Women returning to Employment, Education and Training, Russell, Smith, Lyons &amp; O'Connell, ESRI, The Liffey Press, 2002</b></p> <p>The take-up of childcare allowances and the supply of childcare places by the state, employers and private providers should be monitored</p>
	<p><b>NESF Lone Parents Report (Report No. 20), NESF, 2001</b></p> <p>Greater flexibility needs to be applied in the reimbursement of childcare costs for those participating in programmes.</p>
	<p><b>Labour Participation Rates of the Over 55's in Ireland, (for EGFSC &amp; NCC) PACEC, FORFÁS, 2001</b></p> <p>Older workers in sectors and situations vulnerable to redundancy/displacement need to be identified at the earliest stage</p>
	<p><b>Labour Market Initiatives: A Gender Perspective, NWCi at Equal at Work &amp; WINS Seminar Series Belfast, 2005</b></p> <p>Training in gender related barriers to the labour market needs to be available to front line providers of labour market information</p> <p>Gender mainstreaming requires building in institutional mechanisms</p> <p>Gender and equality proofing need to be built in at each stage of design, planning delivery and evaluation of labour market initiatives</p> <p>Best practice and learning about working with women from diverse backgrounds and women experiencing domestic violence needs to be built into mainstream provision</p> <p>A broader range of mainstream education and training courses need to be available on a part-time basis</p>
Institutional Barriers	

<b>Contextual Barriers</b>	<b>Update (Final) Evaluation of the EHRDOP 2000-2006, FGS Consulting, 2005</b>
	There is a need for flexible delivery and supports to promote participation by disadvantaged groups, for example, delivery of education and training outside 'normal office hours', paying for childcare and travel allowances
	<b>Travellers' Experiences of Labour Market Programmes, Pearn Kandola, Equality Authority, 2003</b>
	Effective providers of mainstream training programmes must actively recognise members of the Traveller community as potential participants and ensure that the barriers to participation are addressed
	There is a need for greater complementarity between the actions taken by providers to secure equality for Travellers
	<b>The Labour Market needs and Experiences of Minority Ethnic Groups, Particularly Refugees in Ireland, Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, WERRC, UCD, 2002</b>
	There is a need for service providers to be aware of refugees' entitlements in relation to participation in vocational training and higher education
	<b>NESF Lone Parents Report (Report No. 20), NESF, 2001</b>
	Targeted active labour market programmes should be made available and accessible to lone parents, following an assessment of their needs
	Responsibility for identifying mainstreaming perspectives and applying the lessons learned in pilot initiatives should be assigned to a specific official in each government department.
	Support should be made available for capacity building for community groups who move from sessional childcare to both sessional and full-day care provision, thereby allowing for a greater level of choice at local level. At central level, more planning is required to link needs with service provision
	Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS) should be provided by the Department of Education and Science on a part-time basis to facilitate participation of groups such as lone parents
	Greater levels of flexibility should be introduced in the design and delivery of active labour market programmes by FÁS and other agencies for lone parents and a package of supports including pre-training, taster courses and personal development should be put in place for lone parents who participate in active labour market programmes
	<b>Disability and Labour Market Participation, Gannon &amp; Nolan, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2004</b>
A full understanding of the relationship between disability and labour market participation and its implications requires a much more comprehensive database which seeks to measure disability much more fully. This requires a dedicated large-scale survey. <i>(A pilot survey of this sort is currently being carried out for the National Disability Authority)</i>	
<b>Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland, Gannon &amp; Nolan, ESRI, Equality Authority, 2005</b>	
Specific recommendations are not indicated in this report, but the authors conclude that a national disability prevalence and impact survey following up on the next Census of Population scheduled for 2006 has the potential to produce a wealth of new data and a much more complete picture of participation and the barriers to full participation by people with disabilities in Irish society	
<b>Labour Market Initiatives: A Gender Perspective, NWCI at Equal at Work &amp; WINS Seminar Series Belfast, 2005</b>	

	The social welfare system needs to be modernised to take account of the reality of women's lives. This would increase women's direct access to the social welfare system through recognition of care work. The limitation rule should be abolished.
	Progression routes to high quality sustainable employment need to be developed
	There is a need for special provision for women excluded from the labour market due to care responsibilities
	<b>Getting out of the House; Women returning to Employment, Education and Training, Russell, Smith, Lyons &amp; O'Connell, ESRI, The Liffey Press, 2002</b>
	Appropriate guidance and support should be available to ensure progression from education/training into further training or employment for those women who desire it
	A wider range of employers need to be encouraged to provide more flexible working arrangements, for example term-time working to encourage more women back to employment.
	<b>NESF Lone Parents Report (Report No. 20), NESF, 2001</b>
	There is a need to bring together the main players with an interest in issues relating to welfare/work transitions to explore the development of a welfare-to-work strategy for groups such as lone parents
	Family-friendly policies which are developed for all parents should have due regard for the specific needs of lone parents
	<b>Barriers to Employment Affecting Travellers, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and People with a Disability, INOU Briefing Paper, 2003</b>
	There is a need to regularly monitor and evaluate the level and range of services and supports provided to ensure they are all poverty and equality proofed
	<b>Evaluation of the Level of Provision and Targeting of Measures under the EHRDOP 2000-2006, Fitzpatrick Associates, 2001</b>
	There is need for rationalisation of overlapping target groups; specifically the unemployed and other socially excluded groups. More detailed systematic research on the education, training and employment needs and aspirations of those in these groups is needed, along with an assessment of the ability of existing measures under the NDP (and other parts of the wider HRD system) to match these needs.

## 4 EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES & ORGANISATIONS PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the views of the employment services and organisations promoting social inclusion in the Equal at Work private sector cluster. The five organisations that completed questionnaires are Northside Partnership, Ballyfermot Local Employment Service, Ballymun Partnership, Integrating Ireland and Work 4 U (see Figure 4.1)<sup>2</sup>.

Section 4.2 discusses the views of service providers on the main barriers hindering people from disadvantaged groups from gaining employment. Section 4.3 discusses the challenges experienced by these service providers when seeking to assist people from disadvantaged groups to gain employment. Section 4.4 presents the views of these service providers on the possible lessons for private sector employers and for labour market policy.

**Figure 4-1: Employment services and organisations promoting social inclusion in the Equal at Work private sector cluster**

North Side Partnership	Finglas Cabra Partnership
Ballyfermot Local Employment Service	Ballymun Partnership
Integrating Ireland	Work 4 U
FÁS	

### 4.2 Employment Barriers

The factors that generate barriers to employment for people in disadvantaged groups are multiple and are specific to the individual. This makes it difficult to list the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups in order of importance. Listed below are the more common factors that generate barriers to employment, based on the experience of the employment service providers

- **Very low educational and literacy levels:** A key factor is that a large number of people have no formal educational qualifications, have very low levels of literacy and have low skills levels;
- **Lack of employment references:** A significant number of people from disadvantaged groups do not have positive employment references. This is because of a lack of employment experience or because where they do not have work experience it was in unskilled jobs and cannot provide a positive reference from a previous employer;
- **Demoralisation and low levels of self-esteem/confidence:** Another barrier is the fact that many people from disadvantaged groups can become demoralised, have low levels of self-esteem and lack

<sup>2</sup> This section also incorporates the views of the Equal at Work Project Manager and the Advisor to the private sector cluster.

confidence. As a result they can become inactive within the labour market, e.g. have made no job applications for at least three months;

- **Personal characteristics:** A wide range of personal characteristics can also provide barriers. For example, individuals experiencing a disability that curtails the amount/type of work they could do, the effects of prescribed medication or problems arising from an addiction;
- **Lack of awareness of the benefits of training:** A number of service providers reported that the lack of awareness of the benefit of training among people from disadvantaged groups acts as a barrier when assisting them. Contributing factors are lack of previous training experience or a negative experience of the education system. Many individuals have only worked in unskilled jobs and so do not see the value in participating in training or education;
- **The life sentence of a criminal record:** There is a growing number of young people with criminal records who have resigned themselves to a life of crime because they have a permanent criminal record;
- **Negative perceptions among employers:** Employers often have negative perceptions about people who have been out of employment for some time and who are from disadvantaged groups;
- **Discrimination by employers:** Also reported was the experience of discrimination against people from disadvantaged groups by employers;
- **Unnecessary job entry criteria:** Unnecessarily high job entry criteria for some jobs can automatically exclude a large number of people from disadvantaged groups - even where they have the capability to do the work;
- **The lack of affordable and quality childcare:** The lack of affordable and quality childcare was reported by a number of service providers as a barrier – this is reported to be especially problematic for lone parents;
- **Loss of benefits:** The loss of benefits such as medical cards and rent allowance combined with low wages available to people from disadvantaged groups means that for many it is questionable if employment is financially worthwhile. This is exacerbated where family members may have health and other problems.
- **Lack of transport:** The lack of adequate and accessible public transport is also a barrier cited by service providers.

### 4.3 Challenges Experienced by Service Providers

An inter-relationship between the various challenges makes it difficult to list the challenges in order of importance, but the main ones are:

- **Convincing clients about the benefits of education and training:** Trying to get clients to invest in their own skills prior to and subsequent to taking up employment;
- **Encouraging employers to recruit from disadvantaged groups:** Trying to get employers interested in employing people from disadvantaged groups;
- **Lack of flexibility in the delivery of training programmes:** A number of service providers noted that placing people from disadvantaged groups into training programmes can be like *'trying to fit round holes into square pegs'*. This is due to the restrictive nature and structure of various state funded programmes. In particular it was felt that there is little or no flexibility in how the programme can be delivered or adapted to meet the needs of disadvantaged individuals;
- **Lack of appropriate referral options and progression pathways:** The services provided by employment services are dependent on other services to respond to the needs of clients at a particular

point in time. A number of providers noted that the progression paths are not always available at the time and in the format required;<sup>3</sup>

- **Complexity of the welfare system:** Another challenge comes from the welfare system and keeping updated with changes to the system,
- **Bureaucracy:** Overcoming the high level of unnecessary bureaucracy attached to programmes or funding is a big challenge. The time spent in doing this is disproportionate in relation to the time spent on actions to address unemployment;
- **Lack of local autonomy:** The lack of autonomy at a local level in determining how budgets are spent is an ongoing challenge;
- **Lack of process to support inter-agency co-operation:** A number of providers noted that among the challenges they face is the lack of a process and mechanisms to support and facilitate working and developing relationships with individuals in other relevant agencies;
- **Lack of medium-term planning:** Dealing with year-to-year budgets, as a result no long-term funding makes it more difficult to undertake proper medium to long-term planning.

## 4.4 Suggested Changes for Firms and for Policy

### 4.4.1 Suggested Changes for Firms

Based on their experiences, service providers made a number of suggestions about how private sector firms should review and change their HR practices in order to facilitate the recruitment and to support the retention of people from disadvantaged groups. These include the following:

1. **Use of trial periods for people from disadvantaged groups:** It was suggested that firms needed to be more open to giving a disadvantaged person a job. Providers acknowledged that firms are worried about taking chances by employing people from disadvantaged groups but it was suggested that a trial four-week work experience could be offered as one option. This would give both the company and the new recruit an opportunity to see if they are suited and the firm would not have to make a significant commitment for a month;
2. **Reconsider minimum qualifications criteria:** While most firms have minimum criteria for jobs, consideration needs to be given to whether the minimum qualifications and criteria for existing jobs are actually necessary. For example, if the minimum criterion for employment in a call centre is the Leaving Certificate then an adult with no Leaving Certificate but who has retrained for call centre or office work would not be eligible for that job, despite the fact that they may be more than capable of doing it;
3. **Induction of new employees:** The initial induction is very important and should last at least two days. One of the biggest mistakes a firm can make it to have a short induction period for people from disadvantaged groups.

---

<sup>3</sup> It was also noted that certain options are no longer available for clients due to changes in the rules for access. The *Back to Work Allowance*, the *Enterprise Allowance* and employment work programmes such as the *Jobs Initiative* are being phased out having undertaken no recruitment for the past two years.

#### 4.4.2 Suggested Changes for Policy

Based on the experience of service providers, the following policy changes were suggested:

1. **Positive actions are needed to tackle discrimination:** Discrimination should be tackled in more practical ways, for example, a positive media awareness campaign;
2. **Profiling:** There should be greater use of profiling to identify those most at risk of not gaining employment without specific assistance;
3. **Supporting co-operation between departments and agencies:** An excellent working relationship between support agencies at the local level is needed. To achieve this, there is a need for greater co-ordination and integration of the range of relevant services. In particular, more local agreements are needed. However, to support this, resources should be allocated to provide better linkages between programmes and services as well as to support inter-organisational planning;
4. **Expansion of flexible literacy tuition:** Many more opportunities for adults to obtain literacy tuition of a flexible nature such as part-time delivery need to be provided;
5. **More flexible training delivery:** The resources could be used to develop more flexible training. This would include changes to the timing and duration of courses, more modular options, staff training, etc. This flexibility is crucial for those unable to participate on a full time basis, e.g. lone parents.<sup>4</sup>
6. **Reduce the disincentive to work arising from loss of benefits:** People from disadvantaged groups who gain work experience should not lose benefits during the first month of working;
7. **Provide incentives for firms to recruit people from disadvantaged groups:** A number of years ago, companies were offered an incentive by government not to pay PRSI for the first year for those they employed from disadvantaged backgrounds. It proved to be a very successful incentive and would be worth re-introducing.
8. **Develop locally based training:** There is a need to develop locally based training and education facilities. CTCs and Youthreach could be reformed and resourced to undertake this role, along with community based training organisations. In addition, local training/education resources should link with local employment services in the planning and delivery of specific programmes.
9. **Develop employment services:** Additional resources should be allocated to develop and expand the Local Employment Service Network (LESN);
10. **Harmonisation of eligibility criteria:** Moves should be undertaken to harmonise eligibility criteria for labour market measures;
11. **Financial supports for people on training and education programmes:** Resources should be allocated to ensure better financial benefits for participants on training and educational programmes from disadvantaged groups, for example, payments to lone parents, people with a disability and members of the Traveller community.
12. **Additional resources for people with particular needs:** Resources should be allocated to provide additional supports to individuals with particular needs to increase their likelihood of successfully completing education and training courses;
13. **Increase availability of basic courses:** There was a need to increase the number of pre-training courses, literacy services and basic education and skills;

---

<sup>4</sup> A number of providers suggested the need to re-instate the *Back to Work* Initiative, the *Enterprise Allowance* and the *Back to Work Allowance*.

- 14. Additional supports for disadvantaged groups at third level:** There is a need to provide additional supports to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to participate in 3<sup>rd</sup> level education. This includes additional tuition, mentoring and assistance with living costs;
- 15. Develop a Forum to Tackle Labour Market Disadvantage:** A forum should be developed to tackle disadvantage made up of representatives from relevant state agencies and local development organisations.

## 5 EXPERIENCE OF FIRMS

### 5.1 Chapter Introduction

This Chapter discusses the experience of firms in the Equal at Work private sector cluster. The five firms are the EBS Building Society, Irish Life & Permanent plc, Jurys Doyle Hotel Group plc, Meteor Mobile Communications plc and eircom plc (hereafter referred to as ‘the firms’).<sup>5</sup>

Section 5.2 discusses the challenges faced by these firms in actively recruiting people from disadvantaged groups. Section 5.3 presents the views of the firms on the lessons for state supports and for other firms based on their experiences to date.

**Figure 5-1: Private Sector Firms in the Equal at Work Private Sector Cluster**

EBS Building Society	Meteor Mobile Communications plc
Irish Life & Permanent plc	Jurys Doyle Hotel Group
eircom plc	

### 5.2 Challenges Experienced by Employers

#### 5.2.1 *Deciding to recruit people from disadvantaged groups*

The response from the companies in the private sector firms revealed a range of initial challenges faced in their companies when deciding whether or not to actively try to recruit people from disadvantaged groups. Examining these responses shows that the first set of challenges stems from lack of understanding about the abilities and needs of people from disadvantaged groups.

The lack of experience of recruiting and working with people from disadvantaged groups can result in a wide range of questions being posed. For instance, will candidates have the knowledge, skills and attitude required for a position within our organisation and sector? How well would they interact and deal with customers and key contacts? Would they present a positive image of the company?

The lack of direct experience of working with people from disadvantaged groups also leads to a lack of understanding and hence questioning of the needs of these potential co-workers. Would they be reliable? Would they turn up for work and on time? Would personal issues constantly interfere with work? Would they be flexible? Would they only be able to work certain hours on certain days?

Following on from the above comes the challenge of making the business case for direct recruitment of people from disadvantaged groups. This involves convincing the board or management group that direct recruitment of people from disadvantaged groups makes business sense.

<sup>5</sup> This section also incorporates the views of the Equal at Work Project Manager and the Advisor to the private sector cluster.

In addition to convincing the board that such a recruitment drive is good for business, there is also the need to obtain effective buy-in from management and to convince management that for such a recruitment drive to be effective, certain aspects of current practice need to change.

**Table 5-1: Addressing Initial Challenges – Typical Questions Posed**

<b>ABILITY</b>
<p>Will candidates have the knowledge, skills and attitude required for a position within our organisation and sector?</p> <p>How well would they interact and deal with customers and key contacts?</p> <p>Would they present a positive image of the company?</p>
<b>NEEDS</b>
<p>Would they be reliable?</p> <p>Would they turn up for work and on time?</p> <p>Would personal issues constantly interfere with work?</p> <p>Would they be flexible?</p> <p>Would they only be able to work certain hours on certain days?</p>
<b>THE BENEFIT FOR BUSINESS</b>
<p>Why should we actively recruit from disadvantaged groups?</p> <p>What will be the benefit for the business?</p> <p>People from disadvantaged groups are free to apply for and get jobs in this firm, already, so why do we need to change our processes and procedures?</p>
<i>Source: FGS, Derived from Survey of Firms in the Equal at Work private sector cluster</i>

### 5.2.2 Developing policies to support recruitment from disadvantaged groups

The firms also noted that having decided to actively recruit people from disadvantaged groups; a number of challenges were faced in the development of policies to support such recruitment. The main challenges were the following:

- **Lack of precedence:** The first challenge facing a firm which has decided to actively recruit people from disadvantaged groups is the lack of precedence. In effect, staff in a firm can feel they are starting from scratch and raises a number of issues such as: ‘*What should be included in the policy?*’ and ‘*Are we following good practice in what we are doing?*’
- **Lack of focused information:** A number of firms felt that there was a lack of focused, clear and accessible information on the issues affecting them. These include issues such as the availability of grants to companies, social welfare information, information on employment services and community and voluntary organisations. In particular it was felt that while there was a lot of information ‘*out there*’ there was no one-stop-shop to give information on the specific issues and challenges facing firms attempting to recruit people from disadvantaged groups;
- **Lack of guidance:** Related to the above point is the view that there is a lack of guidance available from employer groups and government bodies. Some of the firms noted that their participation in Equal at Work provided them with access to a lot of information and the feeling that that if they were not a member of Equal at Work, they would not be in a position to access the information and advice;

- **Bureaucracy:** A number of the firms noted that dealing with government bodies presented a number of challenges. In particular, access to grants was felt to be an overly cumbersome and time-consuming process.

**Figure 5-2: Challenges in Developing Policies to Recruit from Disadvantaged Groups**

<b>LACK OF PRECEDENCE</b>
What should be included in a policy? Are good practice guidelines available on how to develop a policy? How does the policy fit or interact with other policies in the firm?
<b>LACK OF FOCUSED INFORMATION</b>
What grants are available? How can we access these grants? How are social welfare entitlements affected? To whom do you speak about recruitment?
<b>LACK OF GUIDANCE</b>
Why isn't there a one-stop shop that can provide us with all the information we need? Is there a single organisation that can give us general advice and guidance? Is there a list of recommended providers that can assist in developing a policy for our firm?
<b>PERCEIVED BUREAUCRACY</b>
Why are government bodies so bureaucratic? Why is the process of applying for a grant so cumbersome? Why does it take so long to get a decision on a grant application?
<i>Source: FGS, Derived from Survey of Firms in the Equal at Work private sector cluster</i>

### 5.2.3 Implementing policies to recruit people from disadvantaged groups

In relation to the implementation of policies to encourage the recruitment and retention of people from disadvantaged groups, the firms faced a number of challenges as follows:

- **Lack of experience and good practice guidance:** Experience of best practice in implementation is limited as the area is relatively new;
- **Cost of driving cultural change:** This is a key aspect of the success or otherwise of active recruitment and retention of people from disadvantaged groups. Financing the cost associated with a change agenda (e.g. training and communication plans) can be an ongoing challenge.
- **Cost of implementing tailored changes:** Another challenge is the cost associated with making specific changes to address the needs of certain groups. For example, in the case of people with physical disabilities, this can include the costs involved in making websites and on-line recruitment database accessible to people with disabilities, costs associated with changing the physical office layouts etc;
- **The narrow focus of state support:** A number of firms expressed the view that the focus of state supports was overly narrow. For instance, while grants are available for changing the physical layout of

office space for people with a disability, people with disabilities lose their benefits when employed. For instance, one employer had a case where a staff member needed a hearing aid replaced and because they were in employment they had lost their benefits. The firm found itself in the position where it needed to fund the replacement hearing aid at a cost of €1,500;

- **The need to revise wider company policies in response to individual's needs:** Challenges lie in striving to implement one policy that suits all - policies may have to be formulated for each person. This applies particularly to fire evacuation procedures where each person with a disability will require their own procedure.

## 5.3 Lessons for State support and other firms

### 5.3.1 Overview

The five firms were asked to identify the main lessons for policy and/or firms when it comes to assisting people from disadvantaged groups in accessing employment based on their experience. In Section 5.3.2 we present the firms views on the key lessons for state supports and in Section 5.3.3 we present their views on the key lessons for other firms.

### 5.3.2 Lessons for State supports

The experience and views of the private sector firms point to three core lessons for state supports as follows:

1. **The services provided need to be more business orientated and customer friendly:** Some of the firms expressed the view that the administration of grants available from FÁS can be bureaucratic, time consuming and difficult. The view was expressed that FÁS needed to be more business oriented and customer friendly;
2. **The level and range of state supports should be expanded:** The firms expressed the view that little support is available from the state. In particular, there is a need for more easily accessible information, more assistance with the provision of training and greater availability of financial supports;
3. **There is a need for 'greater ownership' of the person and ongoing supports:** A number of firms noted that there is lack of ownership of the person by the state and that once their firm recruited someone from a disadvantaged group the firm was effectively on their own. There is very little follow-up support, guidance etc. It was suggested that ideally there should be an on-boarding process where the state agency/voluntary sector played an active part in the first three to six months to support both the employee and employer in the early stages.

### 5.3.3 Lessons for other firms

The experience of the private firms also point to lessons for other firms that are going to actively recruit people from disadvantaged groups. These are as follows:

1. **Be prepared:** It is important to be as prepared as possible and to 'do your homework'. This involves knowing what supports are available and using them. It also requires having very definite job and person specifications for the position being filled. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that the policy is fully thought out and put in place. But there is also a need to be practical, anticipate what may go awry and have a plan in place to deal with difficult circumstances;

2. **Be flexible and learn from experiences:** While it is important to be as prepared as possible, it is also important to recognise that the process will also involve learning from the actual experience and making changes as the process evolves. Central to this is learning from difficult experiences, moving on and not allowing unexpected developments to hinder future opportunities;
3. **Provide support and back up:** It is important to have realistic expectations and allocate resources for mentoring, coaching and training and development. This is necessary to support the integration of new employees from disadvantaged groups;
4. **Involve recruits early on:** The involvement of the new recruit in arrangements and adaptations for their post from the earliest stages is very helpful;
5. **Ensure open communications and equal treatment:** Open and honest communication is vital and it is important to ensure that all employees are treated equally from the start.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

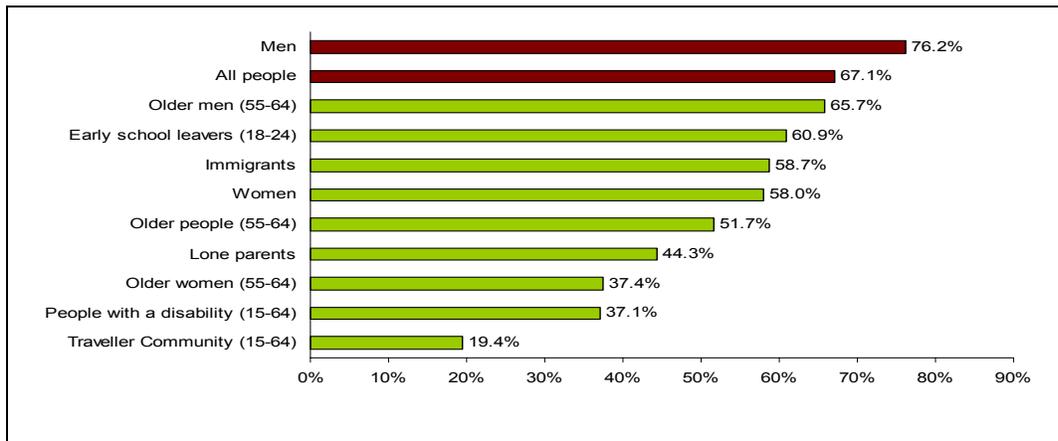
### 6.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the report's key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The report's key findings are summarised in Section 6.2 and its overall conclusions are presented in Section 6.3. Finally, the report's recommendations are detailed in Section 6.4

### 6.2 Key findings – The problem

1. There has been an exceptionally rapid increase in employment and an exceptionally rapid decline in unemployment in Ireland over the last decade. The rate of increase in employment has been the highest in Ireland's economic history and the highest in the EU.
2. Since the mid-1990s, the country's tradition of net outward migration has been replaced by net inward migration. The demand for employees in Ireland is currently at its highest in Ireland's economic history and total employment in the second quarter of 2005 was 1.93m.
3. Expenditure on ALMPs has increased considerably over the last decade. Planned expenditure under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme 1994-1999 was €3.9bn while planned expenditure under the current Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 is has increased<sup>6</sup> threefold to €14.2bn.
4. Despite this, certain people continue to experience significant problems gaining employment. For many 'identifiable groups' in society, employment rates are less than half the rate of the overall working population. This reflects considerable inequality in labour market outcomes – see Figure 6.1.

Figure 6-1: Employment Rates by Group



<sup>6</sup> Some of this increase involves HRD investment that took place outside the NDP framework during the 1994-99 period.

### 6.3 Conclusions – The causes of the problem

1. The fact that employment rates remain so low for certain groups, in such a buoyant labour market, demonstrates that the interaction of labour supply and labour demand for these groups is not operating in the same way as for the wider population.
2. There appears to be two fundamental factors influencing the interaction of labour supply and labour demand for these groups. These are as follows:
  - i. *Labour market disadvantage*: People with low employment rates typically have very low levels of educational attainment and little employment experience. Consequently, they find it difficult to signal their underlying potential or capacity of supply (i.e. what it is they have to 'supply') to potential employers;
  - ii. *Negative perceptions and discrimination*: People with low employment rates typically have clearly 'identifiable characteristics' which can be associated with negative perceptions and which can result in discrimination. The implications of this is that the demand side of the labour market often 'fails' to see the underlying capabilities that such people have to offer (i.e. employers can fail to recognise that people with these characteristics can meet their demands).
3. In order to significantly increase employment rates of these groups and to thereby reduce inequality of labour market outcomes, it is necessary to systematically focus on both labour supply (in particular enhancing education, skill levels and employment experience) and labour demand issues (in particular negative perceptions and discrimination).

Addressing, systematically, these labour supply and demand side issues will require removing the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups and also overcoming the challenges faced by employers. These issues were discussed in detail in Chapters 3 to 5. Figure 6.2 illustrates the challenges that need to be overcome.

On the supply side of the labour market, policy needs to focus on overcoming personal, informational, situational, institutional and contextual barriers faced by people experiencing low employment rates.

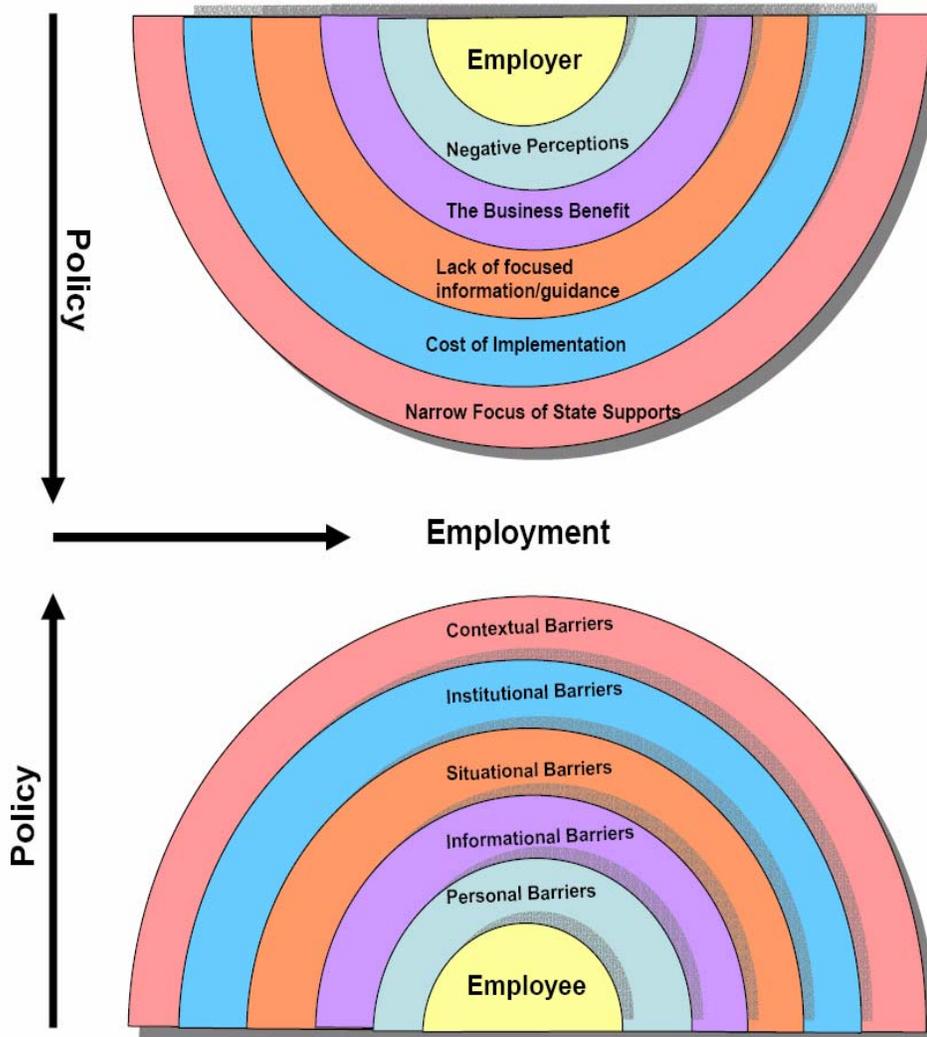
On the demand side of the labour market, policy needs to address negative perceptions among employers and the general public, provide clear information on the business case for employing people from disadvantaged groups and to provide focused information and clear guidance on supports available to employers seeking to recruit and employ people from disadvantaged groups. In addition, there is a need to assist firms with the cost of implementing policies and changes for employing disadvantaged people and to adopt a wider focus on State supports.

4. Achieving the changes required to significantly increase employment rates of people experiencing labour market inequality will require changes across a wide range of stakeholders. These include government departments, state agencies, the community and voluntary sectors, and the private sector.

The types of changes required are also wide-ranging. This will include changes to existing policies and the development of new policies, changes to the delivery of existing ALMPs and the development of new ALMPs aimed specifically at the needs of people experiencing labour market disadvantage and discrimination. It will also require the effective co-ordination of HRD policies and wider social welfare and transport policies.

Given the diverse nature and range of the changes required there is a need for an organisational structure to drive the discussion, the development, the implementation and the monitoring of actions now required to improve the employment rates of people experiencing labour market inequality.

Figure 6-2: Removing Barriers and Overcoming Challenges to Increase Employment Rates



## **6.4 Recommendations – The Solutions**

### **6.4.1 Overview**

This Section presents the report's recommendations. These recommendations are based on the key findings, conclusions and recommendations from the various reports examined as part of this study and on the views, captured as part of our survey, of the members of the Equal at Work private sector cluster.

In presenting our recommendations we have grouped them into five broad sets or groups of recommendations as follows:

- Empowering the individual to gain employment (see Section 6.4.2);
- Driving institutional change to respond to the needs of individuals (see Section 6.4.3);
- Engaging employers to employ disadvantaged people (see Section 6.4.4);
- Developing and co-ordinating policies to increase the employment rates of disadvantaged people (see Section 6.4.5);
- Providing a forum to ensure policy reduces inequality of labour market outcomes (see Section 6.4.6).

The grouping of recommendations reflects the fact that a wide range of changes are needed. These include changes required from the individual person who does not have employment to those required of the institutions that provide education and training programmes. It also includes a spectrum of changes by employers and by national policy makers.

Our recommendations are presented in tabular format and address three core factors as follows:

- The first column of each table presents the underlying HRD issues that need to be addressed;
- The second column recommends a HRD policy objective for each HRD issue;
- The third column recommends actions that should be taken to overcome each HRD issue and to achieve each policy objective.

### 6.4.2 Empowering the individual to gain employment

Aim A: Empowering the individual to gain employment - HRD Issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Supply-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
Lack of awareness of the benefits of training.	To increase awareness of the benefits from education and training in terms of employment prospects and future earnings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Instigate media campaigns on the benefits of training and education and the options available. This should use the direct experience of people from disadvantaged groups;</li> <li>b. Develop tailored promotional material for use through employment services, FÁS Employment Services and the Local Employment Services, to support interactions with people experiencing (or likely to experience) labour market inequality.</li> </ul>
Demoralisation/low levels of self-esteem/confidence.	To ensure there is adequate provision of motivational and self development programmes/interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase time spent with relevant groups as part of the delivery of employment services;</li> <li>b. Increase the incidence of relevant groups participating on relatively short confidence building, motivational courses and pre-training courses.</li> </ul>
Lack of education, training and skills.	To develop ALMPs specifically designed to meet the needs of people experiencing labour market inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop a set of ALMPs aimed at providing people experiencing labour market inequality with the education, training and supports needed to gain employment.</li> </ul>
Lack of employment experience and references.	To help people experiencing labour market disadvantage to gain employment experience and suitable referees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop additional ALMPs with direct work placements with private sector employers. We recommend drawing on the experience of innovative approaches undertaken through the Local Employment Service, Partnerships, Equal at Work and other EQUAL projects</li> </ul>
Lack of clear progression pathways.	To develop clear progression pathways through the education and training system to employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Many people experiencing labour market inequality are a step or two back from direct employment so there is a need to establish clear pathways to eventual employment from education and training programmes. The development of pathways could be supported by providers of existing education and training programmes through:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Listing courses and opportunities available for before or after participating on their programmes;</li> <li>Listing employers who are interested in recruiting from people who have completed their programmes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 6.4.3 Driving institutional change to respond to the needs of the individuals

Aim B: Driving institutional change to respond to the needs of individuals - HRD Issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Supply-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
Lack of 'engagement' with disadvantaged people and their needs.	To increase the number of mainstream education and training programmes that undertake direct promotion to members of disadvantaged groups and to increase the number of programmes with recruitment and selection methods that are sensitive to the characteristics of disadvantaged groups.	<p><b>a.</b> Select a number of key delivery agencies and a number of geographic areas as pilots to develop and implement process change plans. These plans need to develop a coherent approach for recognising the needs of specific groups and address these in the promotion, planning and delivery of mainstream programmes. They should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i.</b> Proactive actions to recruit people, such as outreach, greater use of non-written material to promote courses, and the availability of written promotional material in the required languages;</li> <li><b>ii.</b> Changes to recruitment/selection methods that currently exclude members of certain groups;</li> <li><b>iii.</b> Information and training sessions for frontline delivery staff on the cultures, needs and potential of groups experiencing labour market inequality and discrimination.</li> </ul>
Lack of flexibility in the delivery of programmes.	To increase the flexible delivery of mainstream education and training programmes.	<p><b>a.</b> Identify a number of priority mainstream programmes for specific efforts to ensure the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i.</b> Provision of mainstream programmes, or elements of these, on a part-time basis;</li> <li><b>ii.</b> Gradual build up of formality of training on courses;</li> <li><b>iii.</b> Scheduling of training over non-standard terms.</li> </ul>
Lack of supports to facilitate participation in education and training programmes.	To increase the number of education and training programmes providing supports to help disadvantaged people participate in education and training programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> Increase provision of supports for childcare and other caring responsibilities;</li> <li><b>b.</b> Increase provision of additional mentoring, coaching and assistance where required to individuals with particular needs to increase their likelihood of successfully completing education and training courses;</li> <li><b>c.</b> Increase availability of financial supports for disadvantaged people on training and educational programmes, e.g. entitlements to retain welfare payments and entitlements for a specific period following return to work.</li> </ul>
Perception that State service provision is not meeting client expectations.	To ensure that the delivery of State supports meet the expectations of employers.	<p><b>a.</b> Examine the processes and procedures of providing State financial supports to firms employing people from disadvantaged groups to see if provisions can meet changing client expectations, i.e. reduced time spent during the application process and shortened waiting time.</p>

#### 6.4.4 Engaging employers to employ disadvantaged people

Aim C: Engaging employers to employ disadvantaged people – HRD issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Demand-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
Negative perceptions among employers.	To reduce negative attitudes and unfounded stereotypes about the capabilities of disadvantaged people.	<p><b>a.</b> Launch enhanced media campaigns highlighting the potential of people in disadvantaged groups and the benefits to employers of employing people from these groups. This media campaign should use the actual experience of private sector employers who have directly recruited disadvantaged people;</p> <p><b>b.</b> Produce written and online publications addressing the questions that employers face when they consider recruiting disadvantaged people. This should address the questions presented in Table 5.1 of this report and should include short case studies and testimonials from private sector employers.</p>
Lack of precedence and guidance on how to recruit people.	To provide information on good practice in recruiting disadvantaged people and on organisations available to provide advice in this area.	<p><b>a.</b> Develop good practice guidelines on the recruitment of disadvantaged people. This should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i.</b> A list of issues that firms should consider and address as part of the development of their recruitment policy and strategy;</li> <li><b>ii.</b> Tips on how to effectively recruit people from disadvantaged groups. Tips on how to ensure that new recruits settle into their work and integrate with their colleagues.</li> <li><b>iii.</b> The possible implications of such policies for a firm's wider policies and procedures, and areas where supporting changes could be required;</li> <li><b>iv.</b> The lessons from the experience of other firms. This should include issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The need to be prepared and to do your homework;</li> <li>● The need to be flexible, learn from experiences and to move on and not allowing unexpected or unplanned developments to hinder future opportunities;</li> <li>● The need to develop realistic expectations and allocate resources to be spent on mentoring coaching training and development etc. to support the integration of new employees from disadvantaged groups;</li> <li>● The need to involve recruits early on and to get the recruited person really involved in any adaptations is crucial;</li> <li>● To ensure open communications and equal treatment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>b.</b> There is a need for an online list of organisations that are available to provide assistance to firms seeking to recruit and employ disadvantaged people.</p>

Aim C: Engaging employers to employ disadvantaged people – HRD issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Demand-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
Costs associated with recruiting and employing disadvantaged people.	To provide an appropriate level of financial assist to encourage firms to recruit and to employment people from disadvantaged groups.	a. To investigate options available to provide additional financial support to firms for recruiting and employing people from disadvantaged groups. Provision of financial assistance as an incentive for firms to recruit people from disadvantaged groups. The specifics of this would need to be considered carefully but it could possibly involve firm's who recruit people who have been in receipt of welfare payments not having to pay PRSI for that person for a specified period.
Lack of flexible working arrangements.	To undertaken practical steps to increase the provision of flexible working arrangements by employers.	a. To discuss, in association with the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, practical steps that can be taken to support the expansion of flexible working arrangements by employers.

### 6.4.5 Delivering effective and co-ordinated policies to increase employment rates

Aim D: Delivering effective and co-ordinated policies to increase employment rates - HRD Issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Supply-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
The disincentive to work arising from loss of social welfare payments and wider benefits.	To ensure that the provision of welfare payments and wider benefits do not act as a disincentive to work.	<p>a. To examine ways to reduce the disincentive to work arising from the potential loss of social welfare payments and medical benefits upon gaining employment. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A process whereby people from disadvantaged groups who gain employment could retain social welfare benefit and medical benefits for the first number of months after gaining work;</li> <li>ii. A process through which people from disadvantaged groups who gain employment, and who have significant medical costs or whose dependants have significant medical costs, could retain their medical benefits up until their average earning have reached a specified value relative to their medical costs.</li> </ul>
Lack of 'ownership of the person' and a lack of ongoing support.	To provide a single point of contact for disadvantaged people and to take a long-term view in supporting their employability.	<p>a. To introduce a 'holistic case management' approach to employment services to support people from disadvantaged groups gain employment and to stay in employment. This could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. An assessment of the person's needs leading to the development of individual action plans. These plans should set out appropriate HRD interventions supported by other measures to aid people overcome wider barriers to employment and to signpost progression pathways through the HRD system to eventual employment;</li> <li>ii. Follow up support and guidance after the person has found work. To include an on-boarding process where employment services take an active part in the first three to six months of the new employees work to continue to support them and the employer in any 'settling in' requirements.</li> </ul>
Lack of focus on the impact of interventions on people.	To regularly monitor and evaluation ALMPs, with a focus on the impact of interventions on increasing participants employability.	<p>a. All HRD providers should make a commitment to undertaking ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that interventions increase the employment prospects of participants. Central to effective monitoring and evaluation is the definition and provision of data on monitoring (performance) indicators and three types of indicators should be defined, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Output indicators that represent the product of the operators' activity or more precisely that which is obtained in exchange for public expenditure. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of people partaking in a training course;</li> <li>ii. Result indicators that represent the immediate advantage of an intervention for the</li> </ul>

Aim D: Delivering effective and co-ordinated policies to increase employment rates - HRD Issues, Policy Objectives and Areas for Action (Supply-side)		
HRD Issues	Recommended Policy Objectives	Recommended Areas for Action
		<p>direct addresses. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of participants who achieve certification;</p> <p>iii. Impact indicators that represent the consequences of an intervention beyond its direct and immediate interaction with addresses. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of graduates from a programme who are in employment one year following completion of the course, and this data can be collected through follow-up surveys.</p>

#### 6.4.6 Ensuring policy reduces inequality of labour market outcomes

There is a need for additional structures and organisations to ensure that policy increases employment rates for disadvantaged groups. This is because of three key principles: looking at the programmes and interventions required to effectively impact on the employment rates of disadvantaged groups shows that they are cross-departmental and multi-agency; while many of the barriers and actions required to address them may seem generic in nature, in order to effectively impact on employment rates, there is a need to focus on the specific needs of each target group, the key barriers they face and the specific actions that need to be taken to overcome these; there is no lead department or agency with responsibility for increasing the employment rates of disadvantaged groups and there is no ownership with regard to identifying and driving policies and interventions likely to be most effective. The precise nature of structures and organisational arrangements necessary to put these principles into practice could take a variety of forms and this requires further study.

**1. There is a need for a National Co-ordinating Body, which may or may not be statutory in nature.**

There is a need for cross-department and multi-agency co-ordination to increase employment rates of disadvantaged groups. Looking at the programmes and interventions required to effectively impact on the employment rates of disadvantaged groups shows that they are cross-departmental and multi-agency. This suggests there is a need for a National Co-ordinating Body, which may or may not be statutory in nature.

**2. The National Co-ordinating Body should establish Working Groups or Forums for each target group to establish the needs of each group, the barriers they experience and the programmes and interventions needed to increase employment rates.**

There is a need to focus on the specific needs of groups to increase the employment rates of each disadvantaged group. While many of the barriers and actions required to address them may seem generic in nature, in order to effectively impact on employment rates, there is a need to focus on the specific needs of each target group, the key barriers they face and the specific actions that need to be taken to overcome these. This suggests there is a need to establish Working Groups or Forums for each target group to establish the needs of each group, the barriers they experience and the programmes and interventions needed to increase employment rates.

**3. The National Co-ordinating Body and/or Working Groups should set specific targets for increasing employment rates of each group, identify lead agencies for the implementation of actions, and monitor the effectiveness of actions in increasing employment rates.**

There is no lead department or agency with responsibility for increasing the employment rates of disadvantaged groups. There is no ownership with regard to identifying and driving policies and interventions likely to be most effective. This suggests that the National Co-ordinating Body and/or Working Groups should set specific targets for increasing employment rates of each group, identify lead agencies for the implementation of actions, and monitor the effectiveness of actions in increasing employment rates.

**Equal at Work**

---

**Annex A**

**Summary of Reports  
(since 2001) on the  
Labour Market  
Position of  
Disadvantaged  
Groups**

---

---

# A ANNEXES

## A.1 Women

**Title: WOMEN AND MEN IN IRELAND: FACTS AND FIGURES,**

**Authors: NDP GENDER EQUALITY UNIT, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The report by the NDP Gender Equality Unit, Women and Men in Ireland: Facts and Figures; and the NWCI paper discuss women's participation in the labour market. These studies highlight specific features of women's participation in labour market and the key findings are as follows:

- Women's participation is growing at a considerable pace and faster than that of men. In 1994, 40.1% of women participated in the labour force in 2004 this had increased to 55.8%. The Government's target is to reach 60% by 2010.
- Women's increased employment has taken place in low wage sectors of the economy – retail, hotel, restaurant, and catering and personal services. By 2002, 9% of these women returning entered professional positions, 56% entered the services sector, 14% entered manufacturing sector, 11% entered clerical positions.
- There is considerable movement in and out of the workforce for women depending on the age of their children
- There is a greater demand from women for part-time employment
- Attachment to the social welfare system influences the level of labour market activity for women
- The National Anti- Poverty Strategy (NAPS) established that the route out of poverty in Ireland is gaining employment. There are also clear overlaps with the NAPS and the National Employment Action Plans.
- 23% of women are at risk of poverty
- Between 1994 and 2000 the risk of poverty for households headed by a person over 65 rose significantly from 6% in 1994 to 43% in 2000 and 36.4% in 2005. This group is predominately made up of women.
- Lone parents are consistently at high risk of poverty. The risk of poverty has increased from 32% in 1994 to 42.3% in 2005.
- More than half those earning below the minimum wage are women
- The gender pay gap persists with women currently earning 17.5% less than men

---

## A.2 Older People

**Title: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSITY IN LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES**

**Authors: WRC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

- Population: Based on Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures for 2000 (CSO, 2003b) approximately 26% of the population (989,600) is in the 50 plus age group. Over half (56.8%) of this section of the population is in the 50 to 64 year age group. Current projections indicate that the older population will increase to 1,490,000 by 2020;
- Educational Attainment: Levels of educational attainment decline substantially with increasing age. This is reflected in the high proportion of older people who have no formal educational qualifications beyond basic schooling. In 2000, 63% of older people in Ireland (in this case defined as 55 to 64 year olds) held less than upper second level qualifications, compared to 45% among 15 to 64 year olds. Older women are better educated than older men;
- Literacy Issues: Based on the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1997) literacy levels decline with increasing age;
- Labour Force Participation: The period since the mid 1990s has seen a reversal of the earlier long-term trend toward a decline in the labour force participation and employment rates of older people. In 2000, the employment rate for the 50 to 64 year old age cohort stood at 53%, an increase of eight percent from 1995. The employment rates of both older women and men increased over the five-year period: from 24.8% to 34% in the case of women and from 66.3% to 71% in the case of men. The labour force participation rates for the relevant five-year age bands are shown in Figure 3.1. Among both men and women there is a substantial decrease in participation rates across the age bands with increasing age. Substantial gender differentials are present in relation to labour force participation;
- Employment Issues: Older people are more likely to be self-employed than the working population as a whole. In 2001, 33% of older people were self-employed with the comparable figure for the working population being 17%. The sectoral profile of older workers shows that they are over-represented in the agricultural sector and the educational and health sector. Compared to the working population a higher percentage of older people are employed in the positions of managers and administrators. More older men than women are employed as managers and administrators;
- Unemployment: The unemployment rate among older people has remained lower than the unemployment rate of the working age population between 1999 and 2001. In 2002, the national unemployment rate was 4%. This compares with a rate of 3.7% among 50 to 54 year olds, 2.4% among 55 to 59 year olds, and 1.9% among 60 to 64 year olds. Unemployment rates are slightly higher among older men than women (3.7% and 3.5% respectively among 50 to 54 year olds).
- In terms of employment, older people are over-represented in declining sectors (such as agriculture) and under-represented in growth sectors of the economy (such as financial and business services). The occupational profile of older workers is bi-polar as older people are over-represented at the top of the occupational hierarchy (in managerial and administrative positions) and at the bottom (in unskilled work). This pattern is more evident among women than men.
- Despite their lower unemployment rate, older people are more vulnerable than their young counterparts to remaining unemployed once they become unemployed. This is reflected in the higher rate of long-term unemployment found among the older unemployed compared to their younger counterparts.

---

**Title: LABOUR PARTICIPATION RATES OF THE OVER-55'S IN IRELAND, (FOR EGFSN & NCC)**

**Author: PACEC, FORFÁS, 2001**

**Key Findings/Recommendations**

The aim of this report is to recommend, to the Irish government and its social partners, ways of increasing the participation of older workers in the workforce without compromising other social and economic objectives. It also examines the factors affecting participation of older workers. The participation rate in Ireland for women aged 55 and over is still low despite a significant increase in the rate in recent years. For men in this age group the participation rate is reasonably high in a European context but there is a steep decline in participation that occurs between the 45-54 and the 55-59 age groups. The key findings are set out below:

■ *Displacement/involuntary early retirement and discouragement:*

- Various industry and company re-structuring over the last 25 years have led to increased redundancies and worker displacement. Older workers have been affected most, partly because they have been expected to make way for younger people and partly because they are far less likely than younger displaced workers to find another job;
- There has been a widespread problem among displaced older workers of a drift from redundancy or semi-voluntary early retirement to long-term unemployment, benefit dependency and discouragement.

■ **Low pay** - A large proportion of over-55s who are not employed would be earning fairly low pay if they were to find a job because their skills and level of education are relatively low and even those with skills are often considered as having little more than 'reliability' to offer to an employer. Irish studies identified in this report have shown that for significant proportions of older job seekers low wages are an impediment to moving into work;

■ **Education and adult literacy** – there is a stark contrast between the educational levels of younger and of older people in Ireland and of the educational disadvantages which affect the job levels and participation rates of older workers in Ireland. Older men are far more likely to be employed if they have at least a degree and with each increase in level of education women become significantly more likely to be in paid employment;

■ *Age discrimination:*

- for older job-seekers, especially those over the age of 50, this is the main demand-side barrier to obtaining a job. Positive stereotypes ('reliability', 'responsibility') usually qualify people in this age group for routine jobs. Sometimes the discrimination is embedded in structures rather than in the attitudes of individuals;
- most of the policies and initiatives which assist older workers are not targeted specifically at them. Thus older workers or job-seekers may need to seek to benefit from programmes aimed at the long-term unemployed, the poorly educated, the displaced and marginalised.

■ **Fears over pensions and social security provisions** if there is a return to work.

From these findings, some key recommendations are also identified as follows:

1. A rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of organisational structures and pilot programmes put in place by Irish government departments to address the problems involved in assisting older workers to adjust to the workplace by training, job seeking, and on the job training; finding ways of mainstreaming the pilot programmes which are seen to be effective and transferable;
2. Identifying at the earliest stage older workers in industry sectors and work situations in which they are vulnerable to redundancy/displacement;
3. More people should be made aware of what the take-home pay would be if they took specified jobs. This would be a calculation involving pay, interventions such as the Back-To-Work Allowance and tax and pension implications. Also a Scheme like 'Workplace', allowing claimants to start

---

work and retain benefits for a trial period, so that a claimant does not have to re-establish his or her benefits claim if the job turns out to be temporary or unsuitable;

4. The National Minimum Wage should be more comprehensively enforced;
5. The government could set out a vision of the role and value of older workers and appoint a minister to chair an inter-ministerial group, with a secretariat and cross-departmental resources, which deals with the problems, faced by older workers and older job seekers;
6. Early retirement provisions should be reviewed;
7. Changes in pension and benefits which aim to encourage increased participation by older workers should be integrated with other policies which enable such workers to retain and obtain jobs and should be accompanied by effective information dissemination which ensures that potential workers can calculate their take-home pay.

**Title: AGING AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION**

**Authors: RUSSELL & FAHEY, ESRI, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2004**

**Key Findings/Recommendations**

- The rise in older people's employment rates during the 1990s was driven less by a delay in retirement than by an increase in the movement of the formerly non-employed into jobs. This increase was mostly due to women entering jobs from home duties but men entering from unemployment also played a substantial role. Even though older men's employment rates rose slightly in the second half of the 1990s, the proportion that were retired also rose slightly, so that in their case it was possible for employment rates and retirement rates to rise at the same time;
- It was only among the self-employed, and especially among farmers, that there was a notable tendency to work beyond age 65;
- Ill-health played an important role as a cause of non-employment among older people, not only among those who reported their main economic status as 'unable to work due to sickness or disability' but also among the unemployed and those who retired early. Those who classify themselves as unemployed or ill/disabled have much lower levels of psychological well-being and are much more dissatisfied with their situation than the retired and those in home duties. This strongly suggests that unemployment and being unable to work due to sickness or disability are not functional equivalents of early retirement. These are qualitatively different situations and represent much more negative exits from the labour market for older workers;
- While overall rates of exit from employment do not differ greatly by social class, the destination of exit does, as those in higher level occupations are more likely to exit to retirement or, in the case of women, home duties, while those in manual occupations have a higher risk of exiting to unemployment than other social classes;
- The likelihood of entering jobs for older people is highest among those with third-level education, yet because few older people have third-level education, most of those entering jobs have only primary or lower second-level education (71%). The likelihood of entering employment is also strongly influenced by length of time out of employment, particularly in that those who have been out for less than two years have a stronger chance of going back to employment than those who have been out for longer periods. Having good health and having a partner in a job are also positive influences;
- The most general benefit experienced by people who entered jobs from non-employment was a rise in income and a consequent decline in risk of poverty. Men also gained a boost to psychological well-being, as they typically exited unemployment when they entered jobs. Women, by contrast, generally suffered some psychological stress from entering jobs, despite the income boost they obtained, indicating that the transition to employment is of a qualitatively different kind in their case.

---

No specific recommendations are given in the report, however the section on 'policy Implications' makes a number of key points:

1. The key problematic aspects of labour market patterns occur in connection with unemployment and being unable to work due to sickness or disability rather than with retirement or being in home duties. To improve the circumstances of older people, therefore, it is necessary for policy to pay particular attention to the problems of older unemployed workers and those who are ill/disabled;
2. Health policy has a major role to play in this area alongside labour market policy. Ill health or physical impairment are not only central to the problems of those who report their economic status as unable to work due to illness or disability but are also a common problem among the older unemployed.
3. Equality policy can also play a role here, since discrimination related to disability and gender may amount to a significant influence both on exits from employment and inability to re-enter employment among some categories of older workers;
4. Older people enter work as well as leave it, and while entry into jobs has many important positive effects, it can be a stressful transition for older women who take up jobs. Such stress needs to be taken account of in active labour market policies for older people;
5. As older people are now being encouraged to remain in or return to the workforce, largely due to economic factors, public policy needs to promote flexible pension arrangements, enhanced employer practices and arrangements and an emphasis on work-life balance that takes into account social and human factors. Promoting the option to retire in a phased way and ensuring older people have access to the labour market on the same basis as other adults are significant policy issues.

---

## A.3 People with a Disability

**Title: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSITY IN LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES,**

**Authors: WRC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

- The number and associated proportion of people in the population identified as having a disability varies depending on the manner in which disability is defined and the selected reference age range for the population. Recent figures from the CSO are based on the following definition of disability, “a longstanding health problem or disability refers to anything that has affected respondent over the past 6 months, or that is likely to affect respondent for at least six months” (CSO, 2002b: 17). Based on this definition an estimated 271,000 persons corresponding to almost 11% of the population aged 15 to 64 years have a disability. The proportion of people with disabilities in the population increases steadily with increasing age reaching 15% among persons aged 45 to 54 years and 25.7% among persons aged 55 to 64 years. Almost half (46%) of people with disabilities reported that they were either born with a disability (15%) or were living with a disability for at least 10 years (31%);
- Population: The number of people with a disability aged 15 to 64 years is estimated to be 271,000 corresponding to 10.8% of the population in this age range. Slightly more men (142,700) report the presence of a disability than women (128,300);
- Educational Attainment : No reliable source of data at present. Bruce (2003) reports that adequate initial education is a critical factor in effective labour market participation for people with disabilities and notes that this was a particular issue for people with disabilities who had been through the special education system.

**Title: DISABILITY AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION**

**Author: GANNON & NOLAN, ESRI, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2004**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

This study set out to provide a detailed description of the labour market situation of people with disabilities in Ireland and analyse the factors associated with participation or non-participation in the labour market. It has been based on analysis of information from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), the special module on disability attached to the QNHS in 2002, the Living in Ireland Survey and the European Community Household Panel Survey of which it forms part.

- Incidence of Disability: In the QNHS special disability module about 10.8% of working-age respondents said they had a longstanding illness or disability. This rose from only one in 20 for those aged between 15 and 24 to one in 4 for those aged between 55 and 64. About half these persons, or almost 5% of all working-age adults, said that this condition meant that they were considerably restricted in the kind or amount of work they could do, while 2.3% said they were restricted to some extent. In the 2000 Living in Ireland Survey, a higher number, 16.6% of the working-age sample, reported the presence of a chronic illness or disability. Of these 17% said they were severely restricted in terms of daily activities as a result, and 55% said they were restricted to some extent;
- Labour Market Status: The labour market status of those reporting a longstanding or chronic illness or disability in these surveys differs systematically from the rest of the population sample in both the QNHS special module on disability and the Living in Ireland Survey. About 40% of those reporting a

---

longstanding/chronic illness or disability were in employment, with the remainder mostly counted as inactive rather than unemployed, compared with an employment rate of close to 70% for those not reporting such a condition. Among those reporting such a condition, as among the general population, labour force participation varies substantially by gender, age, and educational attainment. It also varies strikingly with the extent of restrictions in work or in daily activities associated with the illness or disability;

- The results showed that those reporting a longstanding/chronic illness or disability that hampers them in their daily activities or restricts the kind of work they can do have a significantly reduced probability of labour force participation. For men who report being severely hampered or restricted that reduction is as much as 60 percentage points or more while, for women, it is about 50 percentage points. For those who report being hampered or restricted to some extent rather than severely the effect is much smaller but still substantial.

The report does not provide specific recommendations but identifies the key message of this study, over and above its specific findings about the significant and substantial impact of measured disability on labour force participation, is that a full understanding of this relationship and its implications requires a much more comprehensive data base which seeks to measure disability much more fully. This would require a dedicated large-scale survey, and experience elsewhere has amply demonstrated both the feasibility and value of such data collection exercises. A pilot survey of this sort is currently being carried out for the National Disability Authority, which should contribute towards its evolution in Ireland.

**Title: DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN IRELAND**

**Authors: GANNON & NOLAN, ESRI, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2005**

**Key Findings/Recommendations**

- Disability and Education: Comparing levels of educational attainment for adults reporting chronic illness or disability in the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey with other adults. Half those who were ill or disabled had no formal educational qualification, compared with one-fifth of other adults. This partly reflected age, since those with a chronic illness or disability are more concentrated in older ages where educational levels are lowest. Having taken age and gender into account, those reporting a chronic illness or disability that hampered them severely or to some extent were much more likely to have no educational qualifications than those with no illness or disability;
- *Disability and Poverty:*
  - About 38% of adults reporting chronic illness or disability in the 2001 Living in Ireland Survey were found to be at risk of poverty; this was more than twice the rate for other adults. Their consistent poverty rate was over 7%, again about twice the figure for those not reporting a chronic illness or disability;
  - There was a pronounced relationship between degree of reported hampering in daily activities and poverty. Almost half those reporting a chronic illness or disability that severely hampered them in their daily activities were at risk of poverty, and about 16% were in consistent poverty. Where the chronic illness or disability hampered the person to some extent, their consistent poverty rate was a good deal lower, but still about twice that for those with no chronic illness or disability;
  - Over the period from 1994 to 2001, the percentage of adults with a chronic illness or disability at risk of poverty rose sharply, from 21% to 38%, at a time when the incidence of poverty risk for other adults was stable at about 17%. There was a marginal decline in consistent poverty for those with a chronic illness or disability, whereas other adults saw their consistent poverty rate fall by half;

- 
- More formal statistical analysis of the relationship between chronic illness or disability and poverty, controlling for other characteristics, suggested that the predicted risk of poverty was between 11 and 22 percentage points higher where the individual had a severely hampering chronic illness or disability, and between 5 and 12 percentage points higher where he or she was hampered to some extent. In terms of consistent poverty, a severely hampering illness or disability was associated with a poverty incidence between 6 and 13 percentage points higher, while an illness or disability that hampered to some extent had a predicted rate 2-4 percentage points higher;
  - Overall, when other influences such as age were accounted for, people hampered severely by their illness or disability had a consistent poverty rate which was five times that of people with no illness or disability.
  - *Disability and Social Participation:*
    - For those with a chronic illness or disability that hampered them only “to some extent” the picture was more mixed: they had a below-average percentage in clubs/associations and were also less likely than average to have had an afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, but in terms of frequency of contact with neighbours, relatives or friends and voting intentions looked little different to those with no illness or disability;
    - Those with chronic illness or disability that did not hamper them at all were indistinguishable from those with no chronic illness or disability on these indicators.

Specific recommendations are not indicated in this report, but the authors conclude that a national disability prevalence and impact survey following up on the next Census of Population scheduled for 2006 has the potential to produce a wealth of new data and a much more complete picture of levels of participation and the barriers to full participation by people with disabilities in Irish society.

## A.4 Members of the Traveller Community

**Title: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSITY IN LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES,**

**Authors: WRC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The labour market inequality experienced by Travellers and the actions required to address this were set out in detail in a report by the Task Force on the Traveller Community (Department of Justice, 1995). While progress must be acknowledged since the publication of the report, the current situation regarding the implementation of the specific recommendations contained in the report has been summarized by Crowley as follows:

*“Significant challenges remain, however, to secure their realisation. An institutional infrastructure has been developed, based on the participation of Travellers and Traveller organisations, to drive the implementation of the recommendations. However, progress has been slow.”* (2001: 181).

Among the consequences of the lack of full implementation is that, almost 10 years later and following on the heels of a period of unprecedented economic and employment growth, the labour market situation of Travellers has changed little. When seen in the broader context of the pattern of occupational change and labour market developments (for example the decline in unskilled work and the increase in average levels of educational

---

attainment among new entrants to the labour force) it is arguable that the labour market situation of Travellers has deteriorated relative to that prevailing at the time the Task Force issued its report.

The overall picture presented by available context indicators on the situation of Travellers in the labour force is of a very marginalised group: levels of formal educational qualifications are low with consequent limiting effects on both access to employment and skills training; only a small minority of Travellers are in employment; and the unemployment rate is extremely high.

- Population: A question relating to membership of the Irish Traveller community was included for the first time in the 2002 Census, and 23,681 Travellers representing 0.6% of the total population were enumerated. Overall almost two thirds (62.7%) of the Traveller population was under 25 years of age;
- Educational Attainment: In the 1996 Census of Population (CSO, 1998) enumerators identified a total of 10,831 Travellers living in 'halting sites, encampments, mobile homes and caravans'. Just 8% of Travellers so identified aged 15 years and over had completed the junior cycle of second level. This compares with a national figure of 63%. As these figures exclude Travellers in other accommodation they may over-estimate the low level of educational attainment among Travellers nationally. The Education Working Group of the Irish Traveller Movement estimate that just one in 10 Travellers entering second level complete the senior cycle (Irish Travellers Movement, 2002);
- Literacy Issues: No formal study of literacy levels among Travellers has been undertaken. The profile of educational attainment of Travellers points to literacy being an issue for a substantial number of adults;
- Labour Force Participation: Based on an analysis of the limited 1996 Census data, 60% of Travellers living in 'halting sites, encampments, mobile homes and caravans' are defined as participating in the labour force. However, only 9% are in employment. The economic status of Traveller men and women is markedly different: over half of Traveller men describe themselves as unemployed while 60% of Traveller women describe themselves as being on 'home duties';
- Employment Issues: The data available concerning employment related issues among Travellers are very limited. What there is suggests that among Traveller men there is a strong attachment to self-employment and work organised in the Traveller economy;
- Unemployment: According to CSO figures from the 1996 Census 51% of the subset of Travellers identified by enumerators are unemployed. On that basis the unemployment rate among these Travellers is approximately 85% to 90%;

Since the publication of the above report more systematic data on the labour market status of members of the Traveller Community has been published from the Census of Population 2002. The Equality Authority has commissioned an analysis of this report and it is expected to be available in the first quarter of 2006.

## **A.5 Ethnic Minority Groups**

**Title: ACCOMMODATING DIVERSITY IN LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES,**

**Authors: WRC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

**Key Findings/Recommendations**

---

Data on nationality collected for the first time in the 2002 Census of Population show that, of a total population of 3,858,495, some 224,261(5.8%) people were of non-Irish nationality (CSO, 2003b). For a further 1.3% of the population nationality was not stated. Based on the results of the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) concerning nationality presented in Goodbody Economic Consultants (2003), the number of persons aged 15 years and over defining their nationality as other than Irish is 161,200 (corresponding to 5.2% of the population aged 15 years and over).The largest sub-group within this is persons whose nationality is other than EU national or US national. Numbering 68,700 this group of non-nationals accounts for 2.2% of the population aged 15 years and over. At 60.6%, the labour force participation rate of this group of non nationals is similar to that of Irish nationals (60.9%).

- Population: Accurate estimates of the adult membership of minority ethnic groups are difficult to make. Based on the figures reported by Goodbody Economic Consultants (2002), it is between 69,000 and 90,000 people. Of these, approximately 9,500 hold Refugee status or Leave to Remain;
- Educational Attainment: Studies of the educational attainment of refugees in Ireland indicate that refugees as a group have a high level of educational attainment, particularly men. The lower educational attainment of women refugees derives from gender based inequalities in their home countries, particularly where refugees are from a 'developing' country (Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, 2003);
- Literacy Issues: The literacy issues arising mainly relate to language competency in the language of the host country;
- Labour Force Participation: Recent research published by the Refugee Council in the UK notes that the labour force experiences of refugees vary according to the level and nature of their educational and professional qualifications and experience. In this regard the research identified four groups. Young people with no paid employment experience in the country of origin, unqualified adults (i.e., those with little formal education); professionals who need to be registered or licensed to practice their professions; Qualified individuals with managerial, administrative and other professional backgrounds (cited in Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, 2003);
- Employment Issues: Underemployment, employment in low skill areas, and employment in sectors where host country language is not a barrier characterized the employment experience of refugees. Refugees possessing professional and technical skills that may not be formally recognised in host countries are at risk of downward occupational mobility in the labour market of host countries. Women refugees are more likely to be in employment than their male counterparts;
- Unemployment: The experience of refugees in other countries indicates that refugees have higher levels of unemployment than the general population in host countries (Conlon, O'Connor and Parsons, 2003). Data from administrative sources analysed by Goodbody Economic Consultants (2003) provide a more detailed picture of the status of non-EEA immigrants with the right to work in Ireland. Two broad groups are identified (i) persons holding work permits, visas and work authorizations and business permits and (ii) refugees. The numbers of people in these two groups are estimated to be 38,275 and 9,511 respectively in 2001.While data from administrative sources on the number of asylum seekers in the country is considered unreliable, the number is estimated to be, at most, in the region of 32,000.The main countries of origin of recent applicants for refugee status are Nigeria, Romania, Moldova, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Czech Republic, Poland, the Ukraine and Russia.

The report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Integration of Refugees in Ireland (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1999) outlined the relevance of vocational training in enhancing the employment prospects of refugees. Three roles were identified for vocational training as follows: (i) training to develop skills to enable the transition from unemployment to employment; (ii) training to upgrade the existing skills of refugees; and (iii) training to enter to a trade or profession.

Provided they meet the specified eligibility criteria for labour market programmes, refugees and asylum seekers covered by the decision regarding entitlement to work can also access labour market programmes. The report of the Interdepartmental Working Group also stated that measures to assist

---

refugees to access employment should include pre-vocational training encompassing language training and orientation and guidance in respect of the vocational training system.

**Equal at Work**

---

**Annex B**

**Summary of Reports  
(since 2001) on the  
Labour Market  
Position of  
Disadvantaged  
Groups**

---

---

## B.1 Women

**Title: LABOUR MARKET INITIATIVES: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**Author: NWCi, AT EQUAL AT WORK & WINS SEMINAR SERIES, BELFAST, 2005**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

Access to the labour market for women remains a critical issue for women's equality in Ireland. While Ireland's recent period of economic growth has been characterised by a significant increase in women's employment, there remain critical barriers which prevent women's access to the labour market and progression within employment.

- The Social Welfare System: The Irish social welfare system is based on a male breadwinner model, which means that traditionally women have derived rights through their husband's social insurance records. This extends to women being defined and named in relation to their husband's even when the husband is not present. Where women have individual rights to social welfare it is often in the context of their role of carers or mothers. Structured in this manner the system discriminates against women in a variety of ways, one of which is gaining access to labour market initiatives and training opportunities;
- The Limitation Rule: There is limited financial incentive for both adults to prove eligibility for a social assistance payment;
- Live Register Criteria: Women returning to employment may not be eligible for programmes that are based on live register requirements or on household income. By not having direct access to the social welfare system in their own right, these women are in turn not recognised as part of the labour force and are excluded from labour market initiatives that are dependent on the live register criteria;
- Long term exclusion from labour market opportunities;
- Care work and care responsibilities impact significantly on women's participation both in labour market programmes and in employment. The lack of a care infrastructure for both childcare and elder care continues to indirectly discriminate against and exclude women from participating equally to men in every aspect of society;
- Women from rural areas continually cite transport issues as a key barrier to accessing services. In rural areas women have limited access to transport and are more reliant on a minimal public transport system to access services, supports or programmes;
- Lack of accessible and user-friendly information about women's entitlements and opportunities available to them currently acts as a significant barrier to women access. This is compounded by low levels of literacy;
- Women are not a homogenous group, women Travellers, lone parents, older women, women with disabilities will all have different needs with regard to accessing and progressing through labour market initiatives. The multiple discrimination that women experience impacts in different ways on the potential outcomes of labour market initiatives. Women can find themselves cumulatively disadvantaged;
- Lack of Flexibility - currently mainstream provision is not recognising the reality of many women lives.

---

The paper suggests a number of areas for reform:

1. Modernise social welfare system so as to take account of the reality of women's lives. Increasing women's direct access to the social welfare system, through recognition of care work through the social insurance system;
2. Abolish limitation rule;
3. Flexible provision targeting the needs and circumstances of women;
4. Training in gender related barriers to the labour market for front line providers of labour market information;
5. Institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming;
6. Gender Proofing and Equality proofing of labour market initiatives at each stage of design, planning delivery and evaluations;
7. Development of a broader range of mainstream education and training courses available on a part-time basis;
8. Mainstream learning and practice of working with women of diverse backgrounds and women experiencing domestic violence into mainstream provision;
9. The location of training to take account of availability and cost of transport;
10. Provision of childcare supports – direct financial support or facilities to accompany all education and training provision available for all low income parents;
11. Targeting of women excluded from the labour market due to care responsibilities;
12. Progression routes to high quality sustainable employment.

**Title: GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE; WOMEN RETURNING TO EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Authors: RUSSELL, SMITH, LYONS & O'CONNELL, ESRI, THE LIFFEY PRESS, 2002**

**Key Findings/Recommendations:**

The focus of this study is to explore the experiences of women in full-time home duties wishing to return to the workplace, training or education. The authors identify several barriers in their key findings are these are presented below:

- The lack of adequate childcare provision was identified by both women and service providers as one of the most significant barriers facing women trying to return to work, education or training. Also an absence of after school care meant that many women, where working were confined to part time roles, which often had implications for the quality of their employment;
- Women outside the labour market lack information on the types of courses and schemes available, the eligibility requirements for these courses, the application process and the course content. There is also a lack of knowledge about the types of jobs available;
- The lack of a coherent qualification framework acts as an obstacle to further progression from these courses and schemes to employment
- Skills developed by women who have been working full-time in the home are inadequately recognised in terms of access to employment;
- The study found that women often have quite low aspirations on the return to the labour force, and often returners find themselves in low-skilled low-status jobs offering little opportunity for advancement;
- The study showed that women in rural areas felt their employment opportunities were particularly constrained, and those outside the main cities were significantly less likely to return to work;
- The lack of part-time provision of courses etc acts as an obstacle to participation, and often specific skills training and schemes are full-time in nature and thus inaccessible.

---

While there is no specific section on Recommendations, the paper suggests a number of areas for reform:

1. The take-up of childcare allowances and the supply of childcare places by the state, employers and private providers should be monitored;
2. A wider publicity campaign targeted at women in the home, providing information on the courses, schemes and training available. The authors also suggest using local media to target women that are in a rural or more geographically isolated area, as well as maximising the use of Citizen Information Centres;
3. Adopting a life-long learning perspective, means that access to courses are not distinguished on the basis of age, family status, benefit status;
4. The provision of education and training by statutory agencies should be more flexible as regards times and hours that courses are ran. Further to this, it is recommended that specific measures for training etc are introduced for those in more geographically isolated areas;
5. Appropriate guidance and support should be available to ensure progression from education/training into either further training or employment for those women who desire it;
6. Encouraging a wider range of employers to prove more flexible working arrangements, for example term-time working to encourage more women back to employment.

## **B.2 Older People**

**Title: LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN IRELAND**

**Authors: BASTEN, IRWIN AND HEANEY, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

In this report a number of barriers are identified as specifically affecting older people in the labour market:

1. The priority placed on formal qualifications was identified as the most important barrier experienced by older people in accessing employment and moving between jobs;
2. The presence of a skills mismatch between skills of older people and the skill Requirements of the contemporary labour market;
3. Opportunities to engage in training were perceived to be limited. This limited access was seen as compounding disadvantages arising from the emphasis on formal qualifications and skills mismatch;
4. Limited 'suitable jobs' available, and also a concern that working conditions were poor in those jobs available to them. Accessing employment following loss of employment was seen as a major problem. Older people living in rural areas experienced particular difficulties in accessing employment due to the absence of employment opportunities and deficiencies in rural transport systems;
5. There were concerns, that returning to work would be associated with a loss of welfare entitlements. Concerns were also voiced regarding pension arrangements;
6. The strong influence of young people in shaping workplace culture was also seen as representing hostility to older workers.

---

## B.3 People with a Disability

**Title: LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**Author: BRUCE, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

This report identifies a number of particular concerns and barriers facing those with disability in the labour market as follows:

1. The prevalence of negative attitudes toward disability is a central concern of disabled people; and negative social attitudes are unfounded assumptions and stereotypes regarding the work capabilities of disabled people;
2. The widespread presence of architectural and physical barriers allied to inaccessible transport is a central concern of people with disabilities;
3. The experience of attending segregated special schools was seen as contributing to low self confidence and stigma in the eyes of others;
4. Rigid recruitment procedures, the stipulation of minimum educational standards and a lack of flexibility in working conditions were all identified as barriers to employment. Allied to and underlying these barriers were adverse employer attitudes toward disability and lack of knowledge regarding disability among employers;
5. The process of accessing employment is hampered by a lack of supports to both employers and people with disabilities;
6. Many professionals working in both the statutory and private sectors were considered to lack disability specific skills;
7. The absence of a coherent approach to planning for and implementing services relevant to assisting people with disabilities enter employment;
8. The lack of effective legislation is a major impediment to obtaining and retaining work;
9. The allowance and benefit system in operation can be a significant disincentive to work;
10. The lack of clear guidelines or procedures regarding disclosure of mental health or other disabilities in the context of seeking employment.

## B.4 Ethnic Minority Groups

**Title: THE LABOUR MARKET NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES OF MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS, PARTICULARLY REFUGEES IN IRELAND**

**Authors: CONLON, O'CONNOR AND PARSONS, WERRC, UCD, 2002**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The authors identify a number of barriers facing minority ethnic groups when entering or accessing the labour market, and these are set out below:

- The lack of language skills in English was identified as the principal barrier to effective participation in the labour market. Allied to this is the issue of being able to access language training relevant to a person's initial levels of language competence and their language needs as arising from the context of language usage;
- Ethnicity based discrimination was the second principal barrier to effective participation in the labour market. The experience of discrimination and consequent identification of this as an issue varied by gender, nationality, ethnicity, colour and legal status;

- 
- Lack of familiarity and knowledge about the processes and procedures associated with job-search in Ireland were considered to constitute a barrier to securing employment;
  - Issues related to the non-recognition of qualifications and the lack of work experience in Ireland were widely experienced as important barriers to accessing employment. In particular not having an Irish employer to act as a referee on a CV was seen as a difficulty;
  - Access to appropriate childcare was identified as a barrier to participating in educational and training provision and employment;
  - In accessing education, two particular concerns are highlighted:
    - Difficulties associated with the non-recognition of qualifications many refugees consider returning to third level education. Pursuing this interest is perceived as problematic due to difficulties in actually securing places and the financial constraints of their circumstances;
    - Accessing vocational training is seen as difficult due to long waiting lists.

The report also highlights some specific recommendations:

1. The need for more information about legal status and associated rights (this related to both information for persons seeking employment and for employers);
2. The need for access to information in an appropriate format taking into account the English language skills and literacy levels of persons requiring information;
3. The need for service providers to be aware of refugees' entitlements in relation to participation in vocational training and higher education.

## **B.5 Members of the Traveller Community**

**Title: TRAVELLERS' EXPERIENCES OF LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES**

**Author: PEARN KANDOLA, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The report concluded that the barriers responsible for the low level of participation and outcomes secured by Travellers, particularly in programmes not targeted toward Travellers or so called 'mainstream programmes', fall into three categories:

1. Lack of recognition of the Traveller culture in the planning and delivery of programmes. These include the use of recruitment methods and selection criteria that may exclude Travellers, the use of predominantly written materials to provide information on programme content, and the absence of proactive strategies aimed at recruiting Travellers;
2. Lack of additional support during programmes - because of the high poverty levels among Travellers they may require additional supports to attend programmes. These supports may include a gradual build-up of the formality of training, the provision of a comfortable training environment, flexible hours, and childcare support;
3. Lack of follow up and development following programmes.

The authors also identify other specific barriers:

- The lack of information about training programmes among Travellers;
- Fears of losing welfare entitlements as a result of participating in training;

- 
- The perception that participation in training will by necessity inhibit traveling;
  - Negative perceptions of training resulting from prior negative experiences in the school system;
  - Low expectations that participating in training will actually lead to employment.

Arising from these key findings, a set of specific recommendations are made:

1. The need for the providers of training to engage more systematically with members of the Traveller community in order to address dispositions and attitudes acting as barriers to participation;
2. Effective providers of mainstream training programmes must actively recognized members of the Traveller community as potential participants and ensure that the barriers to participation are addressed;
3. Complementarity between the actions taken by providers to secure equality for Travellers and changes in attitudes toward participation on the part of Travellers.

## **B.6 Lone Parents**

**Title: NESF LONE PARENTS REPORT (REPORT NO. 20)**

**Author: NESF, 2001**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The Report is for the most part based on the findings of a number of local hearings that the Team held at different locations (both urban and rural areas) with community groups, statutory providers as well as with lone parents themselves. Factors which influence the risk of poverty include reliance on welfare payments, educational disadvantage, access to employment and availability of childcare. All of these in turn have a significant bearing on a lone parent's decision to participate in the labour market.

The main recommendations in relation to addressing barriers for lone parents to participate in education, training and work are set out below:

1. Greater flexibility needs to be applied in the reimbursement of childcare costs for those participating in programmes; in particular, community projects rather than individual participants should be given responsibility by the main delivery agencies to vouch for programme participants' childcare costs;
2. Within each Government Department, an official should be designated responsibility for identifying mainstreaming perspectives and the lessons learned in pilot initiatives;
3. Support should be made available for capacity-building for community groups who move from provision of sessional childcare to both sessional and full-day care provision, thereby allowing for a greater level of choice at local level. At central level, more planning is required to link needs with service provision;
4. Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS) should be provided by the Department of Education and Science on a part-time basis to facilitate participation of groups such as lone parents;
5. Greater levels of flexibility should be introduced in the design and delivery of active labour market programmes by FÁS and other agencies for lone parents and a package of supports including pre-training, taster courses and personal development should be put in place for lone parents who participate in active labour market programmes;

- 
6. Targeted active labour market programmes should be made available and accessible to lone parents, following an assessment of their needs;
  7. Bringing together the main players with an interest in issues relating to welfare/work transitions to explore the development of a welfare to work strategy for groups like lone parents;
  8. Family-friendly policies which are developed for all parents should have due regard for the specific needs of lone parents.

## **B.7 Early School Leavers**

**Title: ISSUES IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS**

**Author: O'SHEA & WILLIAMS, ESRI, 2001**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

This survey and report looks at the issue of employment of early school leavers from the perspective of the employer. A number of key barriers to employment are identified:

1. Early school leavers rely on informal job-search methods to a much greater degree than their more highly qualified counterparts;
2. Firms may require some minimum level of educational attainment which deters early school-leavers from working or even applying for work there;
3. A perception among employers of the lack of maturity for the job in question;
4. A perception that there is a lack of ability to undertake the work in a satisfactory manner;
5. A "catch 22" situation, where early school leavers need experience or specific training for a job, but being unable to get the job, due to lack of training and experience.

While the report doesn't give any specific recommendations per se, Chapter 3 outlines a number suggestions made by the firms surveyed on how to increase the employability of early school leavers:

1. Grant aid should be available to small companies;
2. Provision of state aided in-house training;
3. More grant aid;
4. Job placements partly funded by state agencies and other bodies;
5. Initiate a recognised placement scheme;
6. Develop an agency geared towards the placement of Junior Cert candidates;
7. Establishing a vocational training scheme in the sector.

---

## B.8 Migrant Workers

**Title: MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES**

**Authors: CONROY & BRENNAN, EQUALITY AUTHORITY; CIF; IBEC; ICTU & KNOW RACISM, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

This short study presents some of the different experiences of migrant workers during the recruitment process, in their workplaces and in settling down in Ireland. The key findings are set out below.

- The study found that migrant workers at both ends of the occupational hierarchy were relatively satisfied with their circumstances. Computer professionals considered themselves treated equally to others at work. At the lower end of the hierarchy, the study found rural agricultural workers, located in isolated areas in single nationality teams. Their pay was below minimum standards of pay, their English poor to non-existent and their working day very long. They did not complain.
- The study found workers in employment with and without work permits, workers who had tried to switch employers, and migrant workers experiencing loneliness and who wanted their spouses and children to join them.
- Migrant workers in the study reported using very few public services or Irish voluntary organisations. A surprising number of those favoured seeking help from their diplomatic missions in Dublin or London. A number had re-contacted their recruitment agencies for advice. A number of those without recruitment agency support or of uncertain legal status approached Irish Congress of Trade Union Centres for the Unemployed.
- The study suggests that migrant workers do not experience a strong support infrastructure. None of those interviewed had received materials in their own language. Knowledge of their rights and obligations in the Irish workforce was weak, uneven or erroneous.

The report makes recommendations for change in policies and practices that relate to migrant workers. These include:

1. Policies and practices to empower the migrant worker including the need to review the current approaches to granting work permits;
2. A programme of investment in migrant community associations to support their capacity to network migrant workers, to articulate their interests and to communicate employment and other rights information;
3. The development of effective channels of communication with migrant workers at the point of recruitment and in the workplace, concerning their rights and situations;
4. The further development of family reunification policies for migrant workers;
5. Specific initiatives to support and address the situation of migrant workers in low skills employment in particular those in the agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors;
6. Workplace initiatives to apply the Equality Authority's code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment in the Workplace, to develop policies and procedures to combat discrimination and to promote equality and to develop a capacity to address equality issues in the workplace.

---

## B.9 Minority Ethnic People with a Disability

**Title: MINORITY ETHNIC PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN IRELAND**

**Author: PIERCE, EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The report shows that minority ethnic people with disabilities are characterised by heterogeneity. Minority ethnic people with disabilities differ in terms of impairment. Minority ethnic people with disabilities also differ according to a wide range of other factors including gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, citizenship status and family status. All of these have an impact on their situation, identity and experience.

- The Situation of Minority Ethnic People with Disabilities in Ireland: This is largely an invisible group in Irish society and the situation of this multiple identity grouping is not easy to establish. This report shows how minority ethnic people with disabilities are often absent from national statistics. The lack of data makes it difficult to establish the socio-economic status of this group of people. However, data from other countries shows that minority ethnic people with disabilities often experience double discrimination and can occupy a lower socio-economic status than other groups in society;
- The Identity of Minority Ethnic People with Disabilities: The study found that minority ethnic people with disabilities perceive and understand who they are in different ways. Minority ethnic people with disabilities come from different ethnic backgrounds. They differ in terms of identification with minority ethnic groups and the extent to which they express ethnic identity. Minority ethnic people with disabilities do not always identify with the label 'disabled';
- The Experiences of Minority Ethnic People with Disabilities: The study shows that minority ethnic people with disabilities can experience complex forms of discrimination. They can face discrimination on the basis of disability. Minority ethnic people with disabilities may also encounter negative perceptions of disability within their own minority ethnic communities and are open to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity by the dominant culture;
- Implications for Service Providers: One of the challenges facing health and disabilities services in Ireland is for them to recognise and acknowledge the ethnic diversity of people with disabilities. Health and disability services need to develop an understanding of the cultural beliefs, practices and needs of minority ethnic people with disabilities. A failure to respond effectively to minority ethnic people with disabilities can result in the provision of culturally inappropriate health and disability services. Barriers experienced by participants and highlighted by health service providers point to the importance of providing culturally competent health services, that is, the understanding that culture profoundly influences an individual's health beliefs, practices, behaviours and the outcomes of health care; responding respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, and affirming the worth and dignity of individuals, families and communities. Institutional racism is considered to be a factor preventing minority ethnic people with disabilities from accessing services and can lead to isolation and exclusion for them and their families. Health and disability services need to acknowledge and address the existence of institutional racism, both historically and contemporarily, and to develop the capacity to address prejudice among staff in their organisations;
- Implications for Employment Strategies: The marginalisation of people with disabilities in Irish society is reflected in their low level of participation in the labour market. Minority ethnic people with disabilities face a number of barriers in seeking to participate in the labour market and access employment. The barriers highlighted by participants include:
  - The low expectations of people with disabilities held by minority ethnic communities and by the wider society
  - Physical barriers to accessing education and employment.
  - Language barriers and exclusion from social networks

- 
- People with disabilities from minority ethnic communities may potentially face discrimination from employers on two fronts, which is ethnicity and disability.

The report does not have a specific section dealing with recommendations, however Section 6.3 in the report “Implications for Employment Strategies” recommends that employers need to recognise and take account of the fact that employees or potential employees may differ on more than one equality ground. The needs of and issues facing minority ethnic people with disabilities in accessing the labour market and participating in employment could be highlighted in training and policies targeted at employers and employer organisations.

## **B.10 Members of the Traveller Community, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and People with a Disability**

**Title: BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AFFECTING TRAVELLERS, REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS, AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

**Author: INOU BRIEFING PAPER, 2003**

### **Key Findings/Recommendations**

The purpose of this Briefing Paper is to outline some of the barriers to accessing and participating in the labour market faced by Travellers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers and People with Disabilities.

- Many Travellers have difficulties accessing education, training, targeted supports and employment because they are unaware such supports / jobs / courses exist;
- In many instances, members of the Traveller community leave the educational system with no qualifications and as a result often experience low levels of literacy, low skills level and low self-esteem. These all act as a barrier to accessing training and particularly employment;
- Discrimination acts as the key barrier to Travellers access to mainstream jobs. This discrimination affects all aspects of life, including training, provision of employment services and access to public premises. In spite of the introduction of the equality legislation particularly the Employment Equality Act (EEA) 1998, information on legal protection is limited amongst Travellers;
- Despite the ongoing efforts of Traveller representative groups, a major criticism from members of the Traveller community is the lack of attention at policy level to the particular needs of Travellers in the design and delivery of education, training and other supports. This results in the provision of services that are often unsuitable for Travellers needs.

The Paper also suggests ways in which organisations might alter their services to increase the participation and involvement of these communities of interests:

1. Inform Travellers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers and People with Disabilities on the options open to them and how participation in education, training or targeted supports can affect their social welfare payments, medical card, rent allowance etc;
2. Increase the participation of Travellers by conducting outreach services;
3. recognise the culturally diverse role women play;
4. recognise the important role religious groups and organisations play as a focal point in any new country/society;

- 
5. identify the need for any 'awareness' training necessary to ensure that their staff can identify the unique needs of certain groups and can provide the appropriate services and information;
  6. Invite a member of the Traveller community disability to be a representative on the organisation's Board of Management;
  7. Organise an 'awareness week' for each of the communities of interest to highlight the services available to them and to raise awareness to all of the difficulties faced by them in accessing employment;
  8. Inform Travellers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers and People with Disabilities of equality legislation particularly the Employment Equality Act 1998;
  9. Regularly monitor and evaluate the level and range of services and supports provided by the service provider to ensure they are all poverty and equality proofed.

**Title: EVALUATION OF THE LEVEL OF PROVISION AND TARGETING OF MEASURES UNDER THE EHRDOP 2000-2006.**

**Author: FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES, 2001**

**Key Findings and Recommendations**

The Evaluation of the Level of Provision and Targeting of Measures under the EHRDOP 2000-2006 made a number of recommendations relevant to the employment rates of people from disadvantaged groups as follows:

- There is need for rationalisation of overlapping target groups, specifically the unemployed and other socially excluded groups. To effect this we recommend more detailed systematic research on the education, training and employment needs and aspirations of those in these groups, and then an assessment of the ability of existing measures under the NDP (and other parts of the wider HRD system) to match these needs;
- Individual action plans, which are currently used in a number of areas, should form an integral part in ensuring that measures under the NDP and other parts of the wider HRD system match the needs of individuals and the labour market. A "holistic approach" should be taken in the development of individual action plans, where appropriate, with HRD interventions supported by other measures to aid people overcome wider barriers to employment so as to ensure progression pathways through the HRD system to eventual employment;
- Reflecting the policy of continued upskilling of the workforce and the adult population in the context of lifelong learning, there is a need for increasing flexible methods of delivery such as increased evening delivery, modular courses and open and distance learning (including e-learning).

**Title: MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EHRDOP 2000-2006**

**Author: FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES, 2003**

**Key Findings and Recommendations**

The Mid-term Evaluation of the EHRDOP 2000-2006 made recommendations across a wide range of areas. A number of the indicator made in relation to performance indicators in relation to the horizontal principles are relevant to the current report.

In relation to performance indicators the Mid-term Evaluation noted that:

- 
- 'There should be a review of data collection and reporting systems at Implementing Body level with a view to improving current procedures so that in all cases output and result indicators are reported on an annual basis;
  - Follow-up surveys should be organised jointly, on a common basis, for the OP as a whole, given the failure to date of individual agencies (with the exception of FÁS) to do it individually. Whether this involves a single or individual contracts with surveyors is an operational matter for the Implementing Bodies involved'.

*In relation to the horizontal principles the Mid-term Evaluation noted that:*

- 'in relation to gender equality, actions should continue and intensify to fully mainstream it across the Operational Programme. Specifically:
  - all Measures should collect and report their participant information on a gender-disaggregated basis. Although already a requirement, this is not happening across all relevant Measures, and is particularly limited with regard to result and impact indicators;
  - reporting of positive actions to promote gender balance (female and male) should continue. Where current Measure reporting is very generic it should become specific and reporting of progress should focus on specific tangible actions, e.g. revision of eligibility criteria, provision of childcare;
  - provision of more flexible *training delivery should be extended, including increased part-time provision.*
- *in relation to wider equal opportunities:*
  - the data collection system should be reviewed as to the feasibility of collection of data under the four grounds (which is essentially personal characteristics of people);
  - there is a need to consider how this should be usefully reported for Monitoring Committee purposes;
  - that the results of research by the EA Equality Studies Unit on how Measures should address this horizontal principle should be considered by the Monitoring Committee when available.
- *in relation to social inclusion:*
  - that data on the pre- and post-course status be collected, e.g. profile of participants in identified 'at risk' groups;
  - that the planned leavers survey focus on this issue;
  - that the focus on individual action plans and progression paths under the National Employment Service be ramped up.'

**Title: UPDATE (FINAL) EVALUATION OF THE EHRDOP 2000-2006**

**Author: FGS CONSULTING, 2005**

### **Key Findings and Recommendations**

The Final Evaluation of the EHRDOP set out a series of recommendations in relation to lessons for the development of future education and training programmes. In this section we present the recommendations made in the report in relation to 'Key Steps for Effective Measure Planning' and recommendations made in relation to 'Lessons for Measure Implementation'.

A number of recommendations in relation to key steps for effective measure planning are relevant to addressing the needs of people from disadvantaged groups. These include the points in relation to the needs to determine appropriate selection processes, the need to carefully consider the design and delivery arrangements of the intervention, the need for clear linkages between the intervention and with the wider HRD system and labour market, and the importance of the role of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

---

#### Recommendation FP 4: Key Steps for Effective Measure Planning

We feel the experience of the OP and relevant research offers a number of lessons for planning measures (HRD interventions). We recommend that these lessons be taken on board in the planning of measures for the next Programme. While this entire set of lessons is most pertinent to the planning of new measures (HRD interventions) many are also relevant to the potential fine-tuning of existing measures (interventions).

1. **The underlying education or labour market issue to be addressed should be very clearly identified and the objective of the intervention should be specified in terms of how it will address this need or issue.** The underlying human resource development need or issue should be clearly identified. Having done this the next step is to specify the objective of the intervention and do so as specifically as possible. In specifying the objective it is important to clearly state what the measure is trying to achieve in relation to the underlying HRD need. It also important to be clear on how the intervention links with the labour market. Where it felt that an intervention has more than one objective it is very important to have a primary and secondary objective otherwise an intervention can lose focus.
2. **It should be clear how new measures complement mainstream education and training provision.** The planning of new measures should include complementarities with existing provision in the mainstream education and training system.
3. **Following this the target group(s) should be carefully selected.** There is a need for very clear target groups. In defining these it is important to start with the needs the project is trying to address and then moving to the type of people for whom this is relevant. In order to avoid overlap and duplication it is also important to take into account which existing HRD interventions currently target relevant groups and how the planned intervention differs from these.
4. **It is very important to use the most appropriate selection process.** Having considered the target group it is important to design the most appropriate participant selection process. For certain types of interventions thresholds or cut-offs will be sufficient, e.g. time on the Live Register. However, in such case it is important to allow for flexibility, e.g. spouses of people on the Live Register who not on the Register, people who were on for required period, got a job but lost it quickly etc. More generally there is a need to consider if the selection criteria used in the past remain as valid today. For instance, in a context of near-full-employment and labour shortages, consideration should be given to whether the Live Register remains the appropriate basis for determining eligibility for access to ALMPs etc. Related to this for many types of interventions more qualitative selection process will be required.
5. **Careful consideration should be given to the design and delivery arrangements of the intervention.** In designing the intervention careful consideration should be given to the following:
  - **Size:** International research shows that schemes normally have diminishing marginal returns beyond a certain point and this should be factored into any scheme when determining it optimal size;
  - **Duration:** Determining the optimal duration of an intervention involves striking a balance. The intervention should be sufficiently long to achieve substantial results but not so long that participants become locked into the programme and less active in the labour market;
  - **Delivery:** The typical methods of delivery as they currently stand under the OP, i.e. primarily full-time attendance during “office hours”, are not in themselves appropriate to up-skilling the workforce and the general population in the context of lifelong learning. Careful consideration needs to be given

---

to the development of more flexible delivery times. This is particularly important to increase participation by and access for women returning to the labour force.

6. **Clear linkages should be established with the intervention and with the wider HRD system and labour market.** Irish and international research has shown that the stronger a scheme's linkages with the labour market (e.g. provision of specific labour market skills, or work experience) the more likely it is to have a positive net impact on participants' employment and earnings prospects. If a project is a step or two back from direct employment then it is important to have clear pathways to eventual employment for participants. For example, a list of courses they could attend next or employers who would give them a chance. Having clear and explicit progression pathways through the HRD system is especially important for individuals who require a number of separate interventions before they are ready to enter the work force.
7. **There is a need to ensure that the intervention remains responsive.** Once a project is up and running it can be difficult for it to be flexible. There can be a nature tendency for a project manager to focus on what the project has always been doing. In particular when the numbers are there for the project it can be very difficult for those involved in its delivery to see why they should do anything differently. International literature points to the need for continual responsiveness. Interventions need to be responsive not just to their target groups but also to the overall economic climate. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation can support this process. We discuss this in more detail at step 8 below.
8. **The role of ongoing monitoring and evaluation should be built into the intervention from the design stage.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is necessary to ensure that an intervention delivers maximum benefits to its clients. Central to effective monitoring and evaluation is the definition and provision of data on monitoring (performance) indicators. In line with good practice three types of monitoring indicators should be defined, as follows:
  - **Output indicators:** Represent the product of the operators' activity or more precisely that which is obtained in exchange for public expenditure. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of people partaking in a training course;
  - **Result indicators:** Represent the immediate advantage of an intervention for the direct addresses. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of participants who achieve certification;
  - **Impact indicators:** Represent the consequences of an intervention beyond its direct and immediate interaction with addresses. An example in the case of a training intervention is the number of graduates from a programme who are in employment one year following completion of the course.

For the vast majority of HRD interventions, especially those that involve the education or training of people, there is no reason why an output, result or impact indicator *cannot* be defined. The definition of indicators is challenging. But going through steps 1-7 above can greatly assist in this process.

For instance, if there is difficulty in defining the result indicator then perhaps this is because the objective of the intervention is not sufficiently clear (step 1). If there is difficulty in defining an impact indicator then perhaps this is because are the linkages between the measure, the wider

---

HRD system and labour market are not sufficiently clear (step 5). Provided sufficient time, effort, resources and expertise are allocated to the task it should be possible to define and ensure the collection of data for most HRD interventions.

A number of the recommendations made in relation to 'Lessons for Measure Implementation' are also relevant to ALMPs and people experiencing labour market inequality. These include the points in relation to ensure that participant selection criteria do not exclude suitable candidates, the need for flexible delivery and supports to promote participation by disadvantaged groups.

#### Recommendation FP 5: Lessons for Measure Implementation

**The experience of the EHRDOP programme provides a number of lessons for measure implementation. We recommend that these be taken account in the next programme. These lessons are as follows:**

- 1. New measures take longer to get up and running than typically allowed for in the planning process.** A key issue here is the length of time it can take to secure appropriate staff.
- 2. It is important to ensure that participant selection criteria do not exclude suitable candidates.** For example, a requirement for participants to be on the Live Register can disadvantage certain groups of women, such as the wives of men on the Live Register who may not be on the Register themselves.
- 3. There is a need for flexible delivery and supports to promote participation by disadvantaged groups.** For example, delivery of education and training outside 'normal office hours', paying for childcare and travel allowances.
- 4. There is a need to promote a greater focus on results and impacts from measure implementing bodies.** This is because there is a tendency for implementing bodies to focus on spend and 'outputs' and not on 'results' or 'impacts'.