

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1383

(Meeting/s of 30 May 2001)

Gender equality policy

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Agreement on the introduction of a new Gender Equality Policy for the Irish Civil Service

Meeting 30th May, 2001

1. Background

A formal, written policy on Equality of Opportunity has been in place in the civil service since 1986. However, research on gender imbalance in the Civil Service at HEO level and above, commissioned as part of the SMI process and published in 1999, showed that women were under-represented at senior management levels in the civil service and that progress towards a better balance of men and women in those grades had been minimal in the ten year period from 1987 to 1997. The report identified the under-representation of women in the Assistant Principal grade as a particular obstacle to the advancement of women to senior management levels within the Civil Service.

In light of the report, a Government decision of July, 1999 approved a programme of measures to address gender imbalance in the civil service. These included the development of a new draft Gender Equality Policy, with the adoption of strategic objectives and equality goals at Departmental level for the increased representation of women at senior management grades and a programme of affirmative action in the main human resources management areas.

. A high level Gender Equality Management Group, chaired by Ms Josephine Feehily, Revenue Commissioner, and with representatives from a number of Government Departments, developed a new Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service. In June 2000, the Government approved the new draft gender equality policy in principle and directed that consultations with the staff unions on the implementation of the new draft policy should begin. At the same time, the Taoiseach announced that the Government had

set a target of one third of posts at Assistant Principal level to be filled by women within five years.

Consultations between the Gender Equality Management Group and the staff panel on the new draft policy and its implementation started on 2 October, 2000. A number of meetings took place and various drafts of and amendments to the new policy were exchanged. A final version dated 4 May, 2001 was agreed between the two sides in May, 2001

2. Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service

The new policy commits the civil service to distinct gender equality objectives in relation to the main human resource policy areas of recruitment, placement and mobility, training and staff development, promotion, work and family issues and language. A fundamental aspect of the policy is the adoption of strategic objectives, including equality goals, at the level of individual Department/Office and the development of a programme of affirmative action in the main human resource policy areas. The setting of equality goals will be the responsibility of the Head of each Department in accordance with civil service management practice under SMI.

The Policy consists of the main policy and two supporting documents:-

1. *Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service.*
2. *Making It Happen: Guidance on Affirmative Action in Gender Equality.* This document contains guidelines on best practice in setting objectives and equality goals and an effective programme of affirmative action.
3. *Monitoring Gender Equality: Responsibility, Accountability and Monitoring.* This document sets out mechanisms for ensuring clear and effective designation of responsibility and accountability for the achievement of gender equality.

The Policy and the associated supporting documents which have been agreed at the subcommittee are set out in the Annex to this report.

3. The Gender Equality Management Group has agreed to the need for research on the following areas raised by the staff side:

- (i) The PSEU raised the issue of training in numerical analysis for female staff, especially in relation to posts in the I.T. sector where there is an under-representation of women. It was agreed that research would be undertaken to

try to identify the source of the problem, in particular the impact and outcome of civil service procedures, to what extent it is a 'cultural' issue with origins in perceptions and attitudes, and whether it stems from issues arising outside the civil service, such as the education system. This research will include CPSU grades and will address concerns raised by the CPSU in this area.

(ii) IMPACT sought research on gender equality issues in professional and technical grades.

(iii) CPSU sought research for their grades.

The details of these research projects will be dealt with at the Equality Subcommittee of General Council.

4. In relation to the implementation and availability of flexible, family friendly working arrangements, the AHCPS wishes to emphasise the need for a more accommodating approach by top management to requests from staff who need to balance their work and family responsibilities. Amendments to the relevant paragraphs dealing with these issues were also submitted by the PSEU.

5. Monitoring and review

It will be important that the implementation and development of the new Gender Equality Policy is monitored and evaluated as it evolves. *Monitoring Gender Equality* sets out mechanisms for ensuring clear and effective designation of responsibility and accountability for the achievement of gender equality. It requires Departments to have a process in place for implementing the policy and monitoring its progress, and for a review of progress to be undertaken by the Head of Department and Departmental Partnership Committee on a regular basis, at a minimum twice a year.

At a central level, the implementation of the policy on gender equality will be reviewed annually at the Equality subcommittee of General Council. The Department of Finance, in consultation with the civil service staff unions, will commission a formal evaluation of the Gender Equality Policy after 5 years.

6. At a meeting on 30 May 2001, the Council agreed this report.

Recording Agreement.

This report was adopted on 30 May 2001