



The Talent Spectrum:

Managing Across the Boundaries

International Diversity Conference - Clontarf Castle on the 11th September



Tommy Quinn, Kieron Gargan and Bryan Andrews



Eddie Sullivan (PAS Chairman) and Brian Dalton (Optim)



Ms. Josephine Feehily



Tommy Quinn, John Dollard and Paul Franey

The Public Appointments Service and the Employers' Diversity Network held an International Diversity Conference entitled 'The Talent Spectrum: Managing Across the Boundaries' in Clontarf Castle on the 11th September.

The Employers' Diversity Network was established by the Public Appointments Service in 2007, as a mechanism for organisations to share information and experience on diversity issues, particularly in relation to the recruitment, selection and management of employees. The Network comprises of organisations such as Dublin Bus, FÁS, Hertz, the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Temple Street Hospital and Dublin City Council in addition to a number of Government Departments.

With the dramatic change in the composition of the Irish workforce in recent years, employers are facing new challenges in attracting, managing and retaining employees who are more diverse in many respects including ethnicity, age, gender, disability and cultural background. In this context the Employers' Diversity Network and Public Appointments Service felt that it was an opportune time to hold a conference in order to share learning and insights and to stimulate discussion in this area.

The conference, which was expertly chaired by Mr. Fergus Finlay, Chief Executive of Barnardos, attended by approximately 130 delegates from across the Civil and Public Service and the Private Sector. The audience included a substantial international

element with representatives from Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

The first speaker of the day was Professor Philip O'Connell, a Research Professor with the Economic and Social Research Institute, who set the scene by providing a comprehensive overview of how the composition of the Irish workforce has changed in recent years, predominately through increased inward migration. Professor O'Connell described key characteristics of recent immigrants to Ireland including their relative youth and high levels of education, but also pointed toward some negative employment outcomes for this group such as higher unemployment rates, and lower earnings relative to comparable Irish workers.

This theme was expanded on in the afternoon by Tony Tyrell of WRC Social and Economic Consultants who gave an overview of preliminary research findings on 'Issues, Challenges and Innovation in the recruitment of non-Irish nationals'. This research was commissioned by the Employers' Diversity Network and explored the recruitment of non-Irish nationals both from the perspective of the employee and the employer, identifying common barriers and methods through which these can be reduced or overcome. A report detailing the full findings of this research is due to be published shortly.

Mr. Donald Lemaire, Vice President of the Staffing and Assessment Services Branch of the Public Services



Gerry Quinlan, Phyllis Behan and Duncan Farrell



Jarleth Regan, Pat Normanly, Vivienne Kavanagh and John Flynn.



Karen Mooney, Claire Nolan and Maria Dunne



David Bearfield, Vincent van Malderen and Silvia Alcif



Prof. Philip O'Connell



Mr. Donald Lemaire

Commission of Canada spoke to the audience about the legislative framework and initiatives in place to try to achieve a Canadian Public Service that is representative of its extremely diverse society. He emphasised that although Canada, unlike Ireland, has a long history of diversity, the population is continually changing and the challenge of promoting equitable representation is an ongoing one requiring continual review and assessment.

Dr Patricia Vendramin, Research Director of the Work and Technology Research Centre of Foundation Travail - University in Belgium, shifted the focus of the conference towards age by presenting some very interesting findings from European research on intergenerational relations in the workplace. Her research looked at differences between different generations in terms of how they approached work and how they interacted at work. The research pointed towards some measures that employers can take, such as tailoring training and career paths to take into account the needs of the different generations that can help ensure the efficient and harmonious functioning of a workforce that is diverse in terms of age.

Several speakers used a case study approach to describe the diversity issues within their organisation, including Ms. Cecilia Ronan, HR Director of Citi, who described the range of initiative and networks in place within Citi to support women, people from minority ethnic groups, people with a disability and parents, and the significant benefit that these are seen to provide.

Ms. Josephine Feehily, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, also gave a compelling presentation focusing on issues of gender, disability and ethnic minority in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. Ms Feehily highlighted the improvements that have been achieved in terms of gender balance at the more senior grades within Revenue and outlined the range of family friendly initiatives that have been successfully

introduced. Ms Feehily also spoke about the importance for an organization like the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, and for the Civil Service as a whole of having a representative workforce and the challenges that need to be overcome to achieve this.

The audience actively engaged with questions and discussion facilitated by the Chair, Fergus Finlay. Key topics discussed included the obligation of and benefits for Public Service organisations in ensuring that their workforce reflects society, the efforts and initiatives to date in terms of trying to create a more representative workforce in the Public Sector and the significant amount of work that still remains to be done in this area.

By Martina Rooney



Dr. Patricia Vandramin



Bryan, Donald, Phillip and Fergus



Prof. Phillip O'Connell and Oonagh Buckley



The Audience