

# Promoting Equality in Diversity, Integration in Europe

## Suggestions for Churches towards Equal Opportunity Employment



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*"When an alien lives with you in your land, do not ill-treat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."*  
Leviticus 19, 33-34

*"Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."*  
Ephesians 2, 19

Biblical quotes have long been important moral arguments against discrimination. Discrimination of the "other" threatens cohesion in society, where diversity is as much a reality, as change is. A society or workplace which ill-treats or discriminates against fellow-members is not respecting or encouraging use of the full potential of human resources available.

Recognition of both the moral arguments and the social and economic costs of discrimination have stimulated government, business, trade unions, churches and NGOs to implement anti-discrimination and integration measures.

Currently, the EU is funding a program to promote the integration of people who are not citizens of the European Union in the member states. Its goals are to develop integration models, seek out and evaluate best practice in the integration field, encourage dialogue with civil society, and set up networks at European level. Within this EU program, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), European social partners and churches are engaged in combating discrimination and furthering integration of migrants in the EU member states<sup>1</sup>.

This pamphlet was conceived as part of the program, in the hope that it may supply you with examples of measures you may consider adopting in your church or church organisation.

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## A Plan for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in the Workplaces of the Church of Sweden

Some years ago the Swedish Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination, whose tasks also included discrimination based on religion or faith, opened a discussion with the Church of Sweden on requirements in the church regulations regarding employment in the church. According to the church regulations all employees in the church, with a few exceptions, should be members of the church. Swedish legislation against discrimination does not allow any general exceptions for churches or religious organisations as to employment. The Om-

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<sup>1</sup> Practical examples already undertaken by business and unions throughout Europe are being gathered for your information on the ILO website: [www.ilo.org/migrant](http://www.ilo.org/migrant). A manual in which the above organizational initiatives are further detailed will be made available in the autumn of 2006.

budsman specifically referred to the ILO Convention Nr. 111 against discrimination and its wording: "Any distinction, exclusion or preference in respect of a particular job based on the inherent requirements thereof shall not be deemed to be discrimination." The Ombudsman and the Church agreed to draft and to distribute advice on how to implement the law against discrimination in the church, and to create a model on how to make a plan for equal rights and equal opportunities in the church workplaces. The aim was not to have a nice paper but to encourage a common process of learning, understanding and implementing not only the legislation but also the Christian vision of living in the present context of the parish, being 'a grain of salt in the community'.

The manual subsequently developed details on how to proceed, step by step. The Church of Sweden consists of hundreds of workplaces, most of them parishes. Starting from the common interest of being a part of a society with equal rights and opportunities, it encourages every workplace to develop a plan of its own. Every person employed should be involved in the process, not only those people responsible for recruitment. Making a plan together means sharing views, listening, learning and being responsible. The model was presented in all dioceses by representatives of both the Ombudsman and the church. On this occasion the requirement of membership was also discussed in detail. A success? It should be. After some time the Ombudsman will follow-up the implementation.

*Leena Björstedt, Church of Sweden, Sweden*

### **Equal Opportunities Policy for the Congregational Federation and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

The need for Christian churches to implement non-discrimination policies in employment in the UK cannot be understated. In Britain and Ireland churches recognised the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural make-up of society and the church, particularly following publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report in 1999. It declared that all UK institutions, including the churches, were 'institutionally racist', and did not in their processes and practices always treat people properly or professionally because of their colour or culture.

The churches responded to the moral and legal challenge of the report, but where equal opportunity policies were already in place, some sought to strengthen these. They recognised the need for 'ethnic monitoring' – which shows whether employers were meeting their obligations – and, therefore, saw the importance not only of employing more black and minority ethnic people, but also treating them equally, fairly and justly, and protecting their rights within the workplace.

The Congregational Federation and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) invited Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) to assist with the development of, or comment on, their equal opportunities policy statements

from the perspective of equalities legislation and best practice. Following the challenge of the Stephen Lawrence report, and the EU Race and Employment Directives, employers were aware of the need for i) a greater visibility of cultural and ethnic inclusiveness in the workforce, ii) compliance with employment legislation which prohibits public bodies and employers from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, disability, gender, religion or belief,<sup>2</sup> sexual orientation or political opinion, and iii) promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. The Anglican Diocese of Southwark in London undertook a complete review of all diocesan structures, including schools, in order to combat institutional racism and become more ethnically inclusive.

CCRJ conducted this review, and also advised Churches from the standpoint that, i) all people are made in the image of God and share equally in dignity and humanity, and ii) all are variously gifted with talents and abilities and should not be discriminated against, and iii) churches should act justly anyway transcending the legal obligations. Churches were challenged theologically not to practice unlawful discrimination not only as a legal duty, but also as a Biblical 'imperative'.

*Rev. Arlington Trotman, CCRJ, UK*

## Possibilities to Act: Getting Started

### Measures Aimed at Employees' Attitudes and Behaviour

You can combat discrimination by encouraging employees to reflect and confront prejudice. Here are some ideas on how to do so.

- ➔ A diaconal institution may **foster exchange of information on lifestyles in countries of origin, and cultural and religious traditions** at staff meetings or special functions of the institution.
- ➔ A church may **encourage talks, discussions or training on negative stereotyping** in staff meetings and training sessions.
- ➔ A diaconal institution may **provide anti-discrimination training**, aimed at changing attitudes of all staff, or key staff, such as supervisors.
- ➔ A church may **establish procedures to deal with discrimination** in the workplace. Responsibilities may be assigned to review complaints, to propose and to implement sanctions in accordance with rules determined and communicated to employees.

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<sup>2</sup> While the Race Relations Act 1976 protected Jews and Sikhs from unlawful discrimination, Muslims were not included. The current legislative proposals in the Racial and Religious Harassment Bill are seeking protection for Muslims. The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 imposed a general duty on all 'public bodies' to promote equality of opportunity and have due regard to good relations. The Churches are not regarded as public bodies in the context of this legislation, but are still obligated as employers under the 1976 Act not to discriminate.

### **Actively Recruiting and Promoting Migrants**

To employ or to promote migrants, you may

- ➔ set benchmarks for recruitment, training, qualification and promotion, and seek to achieve these with targeted measures and time frame.

#### **Active Recruiting**

A church may aim for a certain number of migrant social workers to be employed by a certain date, and choose to achieve this by circulating job advertisements in migrant organisations, in migrant media.

#### **Promoting Migrants**

A diaconal institution may set benchmarks for promotion of migrant employees, to improve their skills and abilities to carry additional responsibilities, and realize these targets by offering training in technical, language and leadership skills.

#### **Changing Rules and Procedures**

Recruitment and promotion initiatives may be accompanied by

- ➔ **a review of requirements:** eliminating the unnecessary and adding the needed. This may involve validating foreign diplomas and job experience.
- ➔ **anti-discrimination training** for the **decision makers in recruitment and training** procedures.
- ➔ **inclusion of migrants in recruitment and training procedures:** nominating migrants to selection boards, or hiring migrants as trainers.

**Volunteers may be an important backbone of your institution – or you may want to attract and retain more volunteers. The above ideas may be adapted for targeted recruitment and training of volunteers.**

### **Going all the way: Equal Opportunities Policy and Diversity Management**

The above approaches can be elements of diversity management. Diversity management emphasizes that institutions can validate differences among employees to the benefit of the organization, by fostering an organizational

culture of recognition and respect to difference rather than a culture encouraging homogeneity. Management and employees may choose to complement the change in organizational culture by drawing up and implementing an Equal Opportunity Policy.

#### Measures Aiming at Attracting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ➔ **Standard working hours** may be made more flexible to allow staff to observe cultural traditions. **Regulations for vacation and unpaid leaves** may allow for visits to migrants' countries of origin. Thus accumulation of holidays for lengthy trips to countries of origin may be made possible.
- ➔ Language of migrants may be used in workplace notices and management **communications**.
- ➔ **Dress codes** or **menus** in canteens may accommodate for cultural preferences.

**Certain areas of work may require accommodating religious diversity. You may choose to adjust working hours or dress codes. You may want to offer menus in canteens that accommodate for religious dietary regulations. Thus vegetarian, halal or kosher foods may be offered.**

With an **Equal Opportunities Policy** an institution aims to promote equality of opportunities in statements and action plans. Equal opportunities statements indicate that an organisation aims for equality in recruitment, promotion, and fair and equal working conditions for minority ethnic migrant employees. These should be accompanied by action plans that specify benchmarks or targets to be reached, and measures and responsibilities should be defined and allocated to achieve these targets and the assessment of progress.

## Accompanying Legal Measures

International and national laws create a legal framework for combating discrimination and encouraging integration. Intergovernmental or state action plans reinforce and encourage such measures. Churches can partake in the development and implementation of legal frameworks and action plans.

### **The United Nations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Framework and Action Plan**

The United Nations Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on Racial Discrimination lay the international foundation for combating discrimination. The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and the Members of Their Families combats discrimination of migrant workers and makes provisions for their relatives. The Conference of European Churches and CCME are calling for its ratification by European states.

The ILO Convention on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation sets standards for equal treatment and makes provisions against discrimination. The ILO Migration for Employment and the Migrant Workers Supplementary Provisions Conventions contain the principle of equality of treatment between regular migrant workers and national workers and stipulate minimum standards of protection for all migrant workers. In June 2004 ILO adopted a Plan of Action, aiming at ensuring that migrant workers are covered by the provisions of international labour standards, while benefiting from national labour and social laws.

### **The European Legal Framework**

On the European level, human rights, as defined in the European Convention on Human Rights, are furthered by political processes in the European institutions. The European Union recently reinforced the commitment to combat discrimination. The principle of non-discrimination was embedded in the Treaty of Amsterdam. In 2000, articles forbidding discrimination were added to the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights. In the same year the Council decided on two directives pertaining to equality of treatment in race and employment. Both directives have been or are being implemented into national law and are complemented with programs of action.

*The Racial Equality Directive implements the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial and ethnic origin in employment and training, education, healthcare, social security, habitat and access to goods and services.*

*The Employment Equality Directive implements the principle of equal treatment in employment and training irrespective of religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, disability.*

## Further Information

You may go to [www.ilo.org/migrant](http://www.ilo.org/migrant) or [www.wisdom.at/ilo/profileSearch.aspx](http://www.wisdom.at/ilo/profileSearch.aspx) where many examples of anti-discrimination measures implemented by business and unions throughout Europe are being gathered.

More detailed information and materials on the measures implemented by the Church of Sweden, the Southwark Diocese of the Church of England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland are available under "Activities" on [www.ccme.be](http://www.ccme.be).

## We value your opinion! We would love to hear about your experience, for example:

- Your ideas on anti-discrimination measures in the church workplace
- Have you already engaged in anti-discrimination activities? Such as?
- What are you planning? Doing? What have you done?
- Where would you need additional information or help?
- Your opinion on this pamphlet
- Your suggestions to us

We would be happy to hear from you! Your feedback is welcome at

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This brochure was prepared by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).



It was developed as part of the CCME participation in the project "Promoting Equality in Diversity: Integration in Europe", which was coordinated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).



The project "Promoting Equality in Diversity: Integration in Europe" was supported financially by the INTI budget line of the European Commission (DG Justice, Liberty and Security).