

Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022

Department of Foreign Affairs

Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Policy Review Controls: HR will review the Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as part of the finalisation of the next HR Strategy, and thereafter annually. It may be reviewed earlier for any of the following reasons:

- A change in law which may affect the policy
- An incident or policy violation which brings about a need for review
- An external review identifies such a need
- A review is requested by the MB GEDI Subcommittee.

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Foreword

In line with the Department's core values of Diversity, Integrity, Leadership, Service and Excellence (DILSE), I am committed to ensuring that the staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs are representative of the society we serve. I am also committed to developing inclusivity, building diversity and ensuring equal respect and opportunity for every member of staff, at home and abroad.

Our [Statement of Strategy 2021-2023](#) commits us to further embed a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace, emphasising Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI). The Department's [Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022](#) has a focus on GEDI, underscoring our commitment to making the Department of Foreign Affairs an employer of choice and an attractive place to work and all the different elements this encompasses. Future iterations of the Human Resources Strategy will continue to place these important issues at the core of considerations. Embedding principles of respect and inclusion also applies to how we deliver services to members of the public, and our [Customer Service Charter](#) makes a firm commitment to treat everyone fairly and impartially.

The publication of this HR policy on Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is part of our efforts to improve our impact in these four distinct, and inter-related, pillars. While progress has been achieved, I know there is a strong desire among staff that we go further, as expressed in the November 2021 staff survey on these matters. I welcome your ambition, which I share. I want us to set clear, progressive targets on gender, on diversity, on equality and on inclusion. Achieving these targets will take planned, prioritised and sustained effort, over a number of years.

Leaders and managers will have a key role to play. They should ensure that they are familiar with the policies/practices referenced throughout this document and lead by example. However, progress ultimately depends on all of us playing our part. Each one of us can reflect on our own behaviours, assumptions, and unconscious biases, address unacceptable behaviour, and be kind, generous and open to all colleagues.

Embedding a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace, being conscious of gender, equality, diversity and inclusion, enhances the experience for all us who work in the Department. A greater emphasis on these issues also aligns with making the most of new opportunities offered by the shift to blended working, and I hope will accelerate our efforts to be more innovative, agile and responsive as an organisation.

At the heart of our work on Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) is a commitment to openness and dialogue. In this regard, I want to recognise the role of the Management Board Sub-Committee on GEDI and the work of its constituent Working Groups, open to all interested colleagues. I look forward to continuing engagement on these important issues in the months and years to come.

Joe Hackett
Secretary General

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The publication of this policy represents an important step in our efforts to embed a culture of diversity and inclusion within the Department of Foreign Affairs. It is an opportunity to emphasise the importance we attach to creating an environment in which all colleagues feel that they can bring their authentic self to the workplace and reach their full potential. However, it is not simply enough to talk about the importance of this work, without also taking concrete steps to deliver on our commitments. In the recent years, we have made some important progress, particularly in the area of gender equality, but we recognise that there is more to do.
- 1.2 As a Foreign Ministry we can take pride in the diversity of who we are, with colleagues from all corners of the globe representing Team Ireland. We are much the better for this diversity and it is a strength that helps us deliver for Ireland each and every day. However, we also recognise the many challenges that working in a Foreign Ministry can bring for individuals and we will continue to work to reduce these challenges, including for individuals going and returning from posting.
- 1.3 This policy is a recognition of the fundamental importance of achieving a diverse and inclusive work environment that protects and fulfils the human rights of all staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs and helps us be a Department that is reflective of the citizens we serve. We embrace our obligations under equality and human rights law. The moral case is clear: regardless of our identity, background or circumstance, we all deserve the opportunity to develop our skills and talents to our full potential, work in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, be fairly rewarded and recognised for our work and have a meaningful voice on matters that affect us. We want the Department of Foreign Affairs to be a great place to work, where we all feel respected and valued. We want an organisation where each individual, no matter who they are or where they come from, feels they have a voice, that they are listened to, and that they belong. The evidence is clear that a more inclusive environment with a diversity of perspectives results in better policy formulation and service delivery for the citizens we serve and for our government. It is for that reason, that this policy makes a strong commitment to the work required to create a truly inclusive workplace environment.
- 1.4 This policy reflects the efforts, over many years, of many colleagues within DFA who recognised the need for action and helped advance and prioritise the Department's work on Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 1.5 Gender equality has been, and remains, a particular focus. Women make up 58% of the Department's total workforce. Significant steps towards greater gender balance have recently been made. The current Management Board is gender balanced (6 male, 6 female). Of the 22 Ambassadorial and senior-level Head of Mission nominations for 2022, 11 are women and 11 are men. Including Consuls General appointed, 18 women will take up Head of Mission roles in 2022 out of a total of 31. Once all these appointments to bilateral and multilateral missions are

in place in 2022, the percentage of female Heads of Mission will be 46%, up from 36% only one year ago.

- 1.6 A subcommittee of the Management Board was established in 2012 with a view to improving gender balance. This subcommittee's remit was formally expanded in 2017 to include broader diversity, equality and inclusion issues as outlined in the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts, together with the issue of discrimination on socio-economic grounds. At the end of 2019 the subcommittee gained a number of Working Groups made up of staff volunteers of all grades and from all sections of the Department at home and abroad, each one focused on distinct areas of gender, equality, diversity and inclusion: Gender; LGBTI; Parents / Carers / Family; Social Inclusion / Disability; Multicultural. Leadership from this subcommittee was a key factor in ensuring that GEDI was a central pillar of the Department's first HR Strategy 2019 – 2022.
- 1.7 Implementation of this HR Strategy, led by the HR Strategy Implementation Team and co-leads from HR and colleagues across the Department, has seen a number of policies put in place in recent years, which are referenced throughout this document and collated in an annex to this policy. This includes providing leadership across the civil service on reducing the Gender Pay Gap and through the introduction of a ground-breaking maternity leave cover policy.
- 1.8 Barriers to full and equal participation still exist for individuals in society¹, and within DFA as indicated by surveys in 2020 on diversity through recruitment and on remote working and in 2021 on gender, equality, diversity and inclusion. Such barriers can be due to, for example, socio-economic status, gender identity, civil status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. These identities can intersect and can result in greater levels of discrimination, challenges, and access to services and employment.² The Department recognizes the necessity to proactively remove barriers and combat discrimination to ensure a more equitable outcome for staff and the citizens we serve. A 'one-size-fits all' approach to managing people does not achieve fairness and equality of opportunity for everyone. Good people management practice, supported by HR, therefore needs to be consistent but also flexible and inclusive to support both individual and business needs.
- 1.9 This policy provides an overview of the operational policies and practices in place in relation to Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the Department, with a view to enhancing colleagues understanding of these, and strengthening their impact. It also identifies where we want to deepen these commitments in the future, with a view to developing inclusivity, building diversity and ensuring equal respect and opportunity for every member of staff, at home and abroad.

¹ Diversity-at-work-policy-brief-2020.pdf (oecd.org)

² One illustrative example of intersectionality of barriers: securing a reasonable accommodation for a disability can require a report from a medical consultant: the barrier to accessing the workplace is reinforced by a socio-economic barrier to accessing specialist medical services.

1.10 Locally engaged staff at our Missions are employed by, as well as represent, the Government of Ireland. It is therefore necessary, as a condition of employment, that local staff adhere to and uphold the same standards and values expected of all Department colleagues. Locally engaged staff should also be afforded the same dignity and respect as all other staff members. A list of relevant local staff policies are included in the annex at the end of this document or are available at this [link](#).

1.11 This policy is a living document that will be kept under review and which provides the context for a dedicated Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action plan.

2. Key Equality & Diversity Concepts

2.1 Gender Equality can be defined as the equal treatment of men, women and those who do not identify with either of those genders in society. Individuals, irrespective of their gender, should enjoy the same rights, opportunities and access. Gender equality aims to ensure that individuals (men, women, non-binary) are treated fairly, are valued, and are equally part of the decision-making process, recognising that the different perspectives of men, women, and non-binary individuals makes for better decision making and policy formulation. Addressing gender inequality requires acknowledging the different challenges and barriers that exist and seeking to overcome them.

2.2 Equality can be defined as ensuring that all individuals, irrespective of their identity (i.e. gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community etc.) have the opportunity to reach their full potential and to equal participation in society. As such, Equality recognises that certain groups of individuals have historically been subjected to greater levels of discrimination and disadvantage and seeks to address this situation by ensuring that policies and practices no longer discriminate against individuals and instead promotes equality of opportunity and inclusion.

2.3 Equal Opportunities can be defined as ensuring all those involved with or wishing to be involved with the Department are provided with opportunity based on their ability or potential to perform the required activity. For instance, the Department of Finance [Circular 24/2002](#) defines equality of opportunity as follows:

- All civil servants can be confident that their rights under the Employment Equality Acts are guaranteed and that no one will receive less favourable treatment because of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community;
- Throughout their working lives, civil servants can be assured of equality of participation in their Department/Office, regardless of gender (including gender identity or transgender people at any stage of the transition process) marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community;
- All civil servants have a responsibility to create a working environment in which differences are respected and in which all people – staff, clients and customers – are valued as individuals;
- As an employer, the Civil Service will strive to achieve real equality of opportunity by continually monitoring its employment practices to ensure that they do not perpetuate existing inequalities.

2.4 Diversity is about the unique blend of knowledge, skills, perspectives and thoughts people bring to the workplace. It is about recognising and respecting differences between people while valuing the contribution everyone can make. It includes everyone. Diversity can involve visible and non-visible differences between individuals. Diversity can be related to race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability,

sexual orientation and gender, (including gender identity, transgender people or people transitioning to another gender), as well as many other differences, including but not limited to, differences in values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural views, skills, knowledge, education, background, employment, parenthood, marital status, and life experiences of every individual.

2.5 Inclusion is about creating a safe and welcoming workplace that encourages diversity of thinking and opinion. It is about removing barriers to make sure everyone can participate and access opportunities. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that they can bring their authentic selves to work, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their potential. An inclusive work environment has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively for the benefit of organisational effectiveness and the achievement of strategic goals. An inclusive work environment where everyone feels they can be themselves and share their views, allows for a diversity of perspectives which strengthens decision-making and policy formulation. Inclusion is the key to unlocking the potential of diversity.

2.6 Discrimination is the unequal treatment of an individual because of their membership of a particular class or group, such as gender, race or trade union. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) defines discrimination as the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on any of the nine grounds which exists, existed, may exist in the future or is imputed to the person concerned. There are different types of discrimination covered including indirect discrimination, discrimination by imputation and by association. Discrimination may be subtle and unconscious and may not be easy to identify. For example, discrimination sometimes results from assumptions about the capabilities, characteristics and interests of particular groups or individuals, which are allowed to influence the treatment of staff, job applicants, clients and others. This includes unconscious bias. Generally, discrimination occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation, because they differ under any of the following grounds - definitions here are taken from IHREC:

The **'gender ground'** – Discrimination on the 'gender ground' happens where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another, because one is a woman and the other is a man. Pregnant women or women on maternity leave are also protected under the gender ground. Under EU law, a transgender person who experiences discrimination arising from their gender identity is also protected under the gender ground.

The **'civil status ground'** – Discrimination on the 'civil status ground' happens where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because they are of different civil status. Under the Acts 'civil status' is defined as being single, married, separated or divorced, widowed, in a civil partnership, or being a former civil partner in a civil partnership that has ended by death or been dissolved.

The **'family status ground'** – Discrimination on the 'family status ground' occurs where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because one person has a family status and the other does not. 'Family status' means responsibility as a parent or person in loco parentis for a person under the age of 18 years or responsibility as a parent or resident primary carer of a person of 18 years or over with a disability requiring care or support.

The **'sexual orientation ground'** – Discrimination on the 'sexual orientation ground' happens where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because they are of different sexual orientation.

The **'religion ground'** – Discrimination on the 'religion ground' happens where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because one has a different religious belief, background or outlook from the other, or that one has a religious belief, background or outlook and the other has not.

The **'age ground'** – Discrimination on the 'age ground' occurs where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared with another person because they are of different ages.

'Age' applies to employees over the maximum age at which a person is statutorily obliged to attend school. (The minimum school leaving age is currently 16 years, or the completion of three years of post-primary education, whichever is later).

The **'disability ground'** – Discrimination on the 'disability ground' occurs where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because one has a disability and the other has not, or the other has a different disability. Disability is defined as a 'substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry out a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment'

The **'race ground'** – Discrimination on the 'race ground' occurs where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because they are of different race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

The **'Traveller community ground'** – Discrimination on the 'Traveller community ground' occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another because one is a member of the Traveller community and the other is not. 'Member of the Traveller community' is defined as a member of a community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

3. Equality Legislation

- 3.1 Legislation is in place in Ireland to promote equality and human rights for citizens and eliminate discrimination.
- 3.2 Under the [Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015](#) organisations, including DFA, must aim to:
- promote equality
 - ban discrimination across nine grounds (Gender; Civil Status; Family Status; Sexual Orientation; Religious belief; Age; Disability; Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins; Membership of the Traveller community)
 - ban sexual and other harassment
 - ban victimisation
 - make sure suitable facilities for people with disabilities are available in relation to access to employment, advancing in employment and taking part in training
 - allow positive action to ensure everyone gets full equality across the nine grounds³
- 3.3 The [Equal Status Acts 2000-2018](#) prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods and services (i.e. public service, transport, financial services), accommodation and education. Under the act, the following grounds are protected from discrimination: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.
- 3.4 Under the [Disability Act 2005](#), there is a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities. Moreover, under Part 5 a public body must take all reasonable measures to promote and support the employment by it of persons with disabilities. Currently, public sector bodies must ensure that not less than 3% of staff employed are persons with disabilities. Where necessary, public sector bodies may run competitions confined to individuals with a disability to meet this minimum target.
- 3.5 Under Section 42 ([Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#)) of the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014](#), there is an obligation on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to promote equality, protect human rights, and eliminate discrimination. Organisations must ensure that the policies and practices they develop and introduce do not discriminate against individuals or infringe on their human rights. To do so, organisations must assess the equality and human rights issues relevant to its functions; put in place a plan to address any issues raised in its assessment to combat discrimination and promote equality; and report annually on developments and achievements in this area. This information must be in an accessible manner for members of the public.⁴

³ [The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 – A Summary - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

⁴ [Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

- 3.6 The [Irish Sign Language Act 2017](#) officially recognised the Irish Sign Language as a language of the State and introduced an obligation on public bodies to provide for the provision of its services to members of the public through Irish Sign Language.
- 3.7 Under the [European Union \(Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies\) Regulations 2020](#), all public bodies in Ireland must now ensure that their websites and mobile applications are accessible to all people, including those with a disability. Public bodies must ensure that their websites and mobile applications are: perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. Each website/mobile application must ensure that it has an accessibility statement setting out the degree to which the website and mobile application comply with accessibility standards and contact details for a relevant officer in the organisation who can be contacted should a member of the public require assistance due to the inaccessibility of the website/mobile application or to make a complaint.⁵
- 3.8 The [Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021](#), once regulations are in force, will require private and public sector employers (subject to employment thresholds) to report and publish information relating to their gender pay gap, and, where there is a gap, to explain why there is a gap and what measures are being taken to reduce it. The gender pay gap is the difference in the average gross hourly pay of women compared with men in a particular organisation. This reporting aims to increase accountability and transparency, and help ensure that employers address the gender pay disparity between men and women.

⁵ [European Union \(Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies\) Regulations 2020 | The National Disability Authority \(nda.ie\)](#)

4. DFA Policy & Practice

4.1 The Department strives to meet its statutory duties to the fullest extent on equality, as outlined in the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, Disability Act 2005, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Irish Sign Language Act 2017 and European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020, and Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021. Furthermore, a priority output under the Department’s Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 is to embed a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace, emphasising gender, equality, diversity and inclusion. An inclusive workplace is a more productive, enjoyable, and rewarding place to work; it also strengthens our Department’s effectiveness and capacity to deliver on our goals and serve our citizens and government.

Gender Pay Gap

4.2 The Department has been proactive in seeking to reduce the gender pay gap over a number of years. Since 2013, the Department has reduced its gender pay gap from just over 30% to 15.17% in 2022 and focused efforts will work towards the accelerating the reduction of this gap over the lifetime of our next HR strategy. The Department has been a leader in reporting on its Gender Pay Gap, publishing in 2021 its third iteration of the [Gender Pay Gap](#) report, along with an associated Action Plan to reduce it. Measures taken include efforts to increase the visibility of gender equality issues and improved training and work supports; in Q2 2021 the Department led on the establishment of an inter-departmental working group on the gender pay gap to facilitate sharing of best practice. DFA will continue efforts to reduce the Department’s Gender Pay Gap, implement the [2021 DFA Gender Pay Gap Action Plan](#), and continue to report on an annual basis.

Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying

4.3 The Department regards discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation or bullying of staff, service users or of others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct. Harassment or bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and serves to undermine the safe, supportive and welcoming environment, which the Department strives to achieve. Condoning such behaviour could also be treated as a disciplinary offence. As well as disciplining the perpetrator(s), we are committed to giving appropriate support to people who notify harassment of themselves or others. Further information on appropriate behaviour in the workplace is covered under the [Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour](#), [Dignity at Work Policy](#), and [Civil Service Disciplinary Code 2016](#). The Department is committed to thoroughly and impartially investigating any complaints in relation to discrimination, harassment or bullying as follows:

- Staff - [Disciplinary](#) and [Grievance](#) procedures
- Customers (those using our services) - Complaints procedure.

Where any negative trends of discrimination, harassment or bullying are identified, HR will investigate these fully and make recommendations to the Management Board.

Safeguarding

4.4 The promotion and protection of human rights is a cornerstone of Ireland's foreign policy and a priority for the Department. It is imperative that the Department operates in a way which does not impinge on the human rights of others and embeds a shared responsibility within the Department for the safeguarding of children as well as safeguarding adults from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. The Department has a zero-tolerance approach to breaches of child safeguarding and to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and as such is committed to promoting best safeguarding practice within the organisation so as to prevent abuses from occurring and to deal appropriately with breaches of policy where they do occur. Further information is available in our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

Reasonable Accommodation

4.5 The Department is committed to meeting its obligations under the Disability Act 2005. We will work to promote the Department as an employer of choice for individuals with a disability. We will build on this work in the future through our recruitment campaigns. Where such targets are not met, the Department will, as set out under Section 49 of the Disability Act 2005, take positive action to meet our obligations, including providing training or education for the purpose of qualifying persons with disabilities for specific posts or employment.

4.6 The Department ensures that requests for reasonable workplace accommodations are facilitated, in line with the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 and the Disability Act 2005, and guided by the [Code of Practice for the Employment of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service](#). The Department's [Disability Liaison Officer](#) is available to provide confidential support and guidance to any officer who would like to discuss their disability and work situation. As part of our commitment to raising awareness and understanding of disabilities, and our obligations under the [National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#), the Department provides training to all staff on [disability awareness](#). Details on the training and how to contact the Disability Liaison Officer are available [here](#).

4.7 As part of the Department's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, HR will introduce an Equality Impact Assessment for HR policies, processes and procedures in order to reduce potential direct or indirect discrimination.

Universal Design and Accessibility

4.8 The Department ensures that relevant policies, practices and strategies, including for example around ICT and Property Management, comply with universal design obligations and accessibility legislation.

Selection & Recruitment

- 4.9 The Department recognises and values the importance of attracting and welcoming a diverse workforce that is reflective of the society it serves. All eligible persons should have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in DFA on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. No job applicant or employee should receive less favourable treatment or be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- 4.10 The Department ensures job applicants are treated in a fair and transparent manner, free from unconscious bias, as set out in [the Code of Practice for Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service](#), the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, Disability Act 2005, and the [Code of Practice for the Employment of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service](#). The Department ensures that those sitting on interview boards have received unconscious bias training.
- 4.11 Human Resources regularly reviews internal practices and is working with the Public Appointments Service on a number of equality related issues. Future work will include monitoring data on all applicants, not just those that are successful, in order to identify practices that may unintentionally discriminate against specific groups.
- 4.12 Employees involved in the selection and recruitment process receive appropriate training to recognise when they are making stereotypical assumptions or judgements about people, and avoid any discriminatory practices in the way in which they shortlist, recruit or manage employees. Language used in competition advertisements and material for candidates is reviewed to avoid unconscious bias.
- 4.13 We will expand our outreach programmes to ensure that we are reaching under-represented groups, including through use of targeted internship programmes and the implementation of the [2021 DFA Building Diversity through Recruitment Action Plan](#). We work to continuously ensure that our recruitment campaigns (i.e. promotional videos/information booklet) are developed in such a manner to ensure that DFA is promoted as an equal opportunities employer, welcomes candidates from a diverse background, and does not indirectly discourage applicants with a disability from applying. We will seek to build on our previous engagement with the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) work placement programme and explore the possibility of DFA engaging in projects similar to the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) programme, an applied learning, development and socialisation programme for young adults with an intellectual disability. The Department will review ways in which to ensure that officers with a disability joining DFA, or moving internally, are supported. This builds on work already underway in this area in terms of ongoing engagement with the Public Appointments Service.

Retention

- 4.14 Officers may face different challenges throughout their careers in this Department, due to a range of different issues, including the particular challenges around postings. Putting in place policies and practices to support colleagues through these challenges and supporting their growth and development will strengthen our capacity to retain staff. By creating an environment whereby staff feel they are included and can openly discuss their circumstances without undue fear of negative consequences, we will ensure a more collegial and supportive working environment and be better able to identify and address these challenges.
- 4.15 The Department recognises that employees have different needs at different stages during their career, for example to balance work and caring responsibilities. In particular, DFA recognises the challenges that some, in particular, female, officers may face as a result of caring responsibilities. The Department attempts to accommodate staff requests to work flexibly, whether part-time or some other working arrangement, subject to the needs of the Business Unit. We also encourage initiatives designed to help staff who wish to return to work after a career break and extended leave. Civil service terms and conditions of employment allow for [paternity leave](#) and [adoptive leave](#) in addition to standard [maternity leave](#), in accordance with current legislation. DFA has a [Maternity Leave Cover](#) policy and a [Guide to Maternity, Adoptive and extended Parental Leave Supports](#), and a [Gender Pay Gap 2021 Action Plan](#), as well as an [international remote working policy](#). Allowance is also made for compassionate and dependent's leave to deal with domestic emergencies through our family friendly policies. Further information on related issues can be found in our [Bereavement Policy](#) and in civil service guidance on [Special Leave](#).

Training

- 4.16 All training opportunities, including secondments, are published widely through the intranet and line managers to all eligible employees, and not in such a way as to exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants from a particular group. In all training opportunities, the Department pays due regard to the need to promote inclusion and eliminate discrimination on the grounds set out in this policy, e.g. by providing interpreters and alternative catering options when requested.
- 4.17 The Department is committed to increasing the availability of in-house training on all aspects of Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In consultation with the Irish Centre for Diversity and the Management Board GEDI Subcommittee, HR will develop a bespoke training programme that will be available to officers in the Department, and which will address issues such as inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, disability awareness, multicultural training, as well as setting out clearly our obligations under Irish and European legislation.

Wellbeing

- 4.18 The Department has a [Wellbeing at Work](#) programme, which is centred around four pillars of wellbeing: physical, mental, social and environmental. All wellbeing workshops and initiatives, many of which raise awareness of diversity issues and promote inclusion, are advertised widely throughout the Department and open to all colleagues to attend. Events are generally hosted online, with recordings put on the intranet, to ensure maximum reach to all staff, including in missions all over the world.

Service Delivery

- 4.19 The Department sets out in its [Customer Service Charter](#) a commitment to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all customers, in accordance with the guiding principles of quality customer service. It is committed to ensuring that all customers are treated equally with full respect for each customer's rights and in accordance with equality legislation, to providing clean and accessible public offices, and to using clear and simple language in all communication. Equally, the Department expects all customers to treat our staff with courtesy and respect at all times, and where necessary will protect staff from harassment or threatening behaviour directed towards them. See our [Policy on Unacceptable behavior from customers and work-related violence or threats of violence](#).

Procurement

- 4.20 Diversity and inclusion will be considered during the procurement process where the criteria is relevant and proportionate to the procurement contract.

5. Future Direction

5.1 The Department has made important progress on diversity and inclusion in recent years. Building on progress achieved through the Gender Equality Action Plan, Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was a central pillar of the Department's HR Strategy 2019 – 2022, leading to the development of a number of GEDI-related policies that are referenced throughout this document and collated in an annex to this policy. The development of this GEDI policy has provided an important opportunity to reflect both on what has been achieved to date, within DFA and the wider civil service, and on our future ambition. Recognising that further progress is required, this policy sets the objective of developing a strategic, data-driven and systematic approach to the Department's next steps on GEDI and ensuring that Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion remains central to our Human Resources Strategy. Clear, progressive, measurable targets will be set to focus this work.

5.2 [Our Public Service 2020 Action 16: Promote equality, diversity and inclusion](#) identifies five interrelated components of a comprehensive approach to GEDI:

- Inclusive Leadership;
- Diversity Data;
- Recruitment & Selection;
- Training & Professional Development;
- Structures & Culture.

In this policy DFA commits to achieving progress across all five of these areas.

5.3 In October 2020, HR launched a survey on Building Diversity through Recruitment. The [results of this survey, and an action plan](#), were presented to the Management Board in June 2021.

5.4 In April 2021, the Management Board approved a proposal that the Department would engage in a diversity and inclusion benchmarking and certification process with the Irish Centre for Diversity. In November 2021, HR worked with the Irish Centre for Diversity to survey all Department staff on GEDI issues, with a view to developing an understanding of where the Department stands today on GEDI.

5.5 The data delivered via the survey will be analysed and further explored in a series of workshops, along with data resulting from the October 2020 Diversity through Recruitment survey. The ICfD will then propose a draft action plan, which will be taken forward by HR in collaboration with internal DFA stakeholders, notably the Management Board subcommittee on GEDI and related Working Groups. In developing this action plan, the Department will consider setting a level of ambition aligned with the [Our Public Service 2020 Action 16 EDI Maturity Model](#). HR will then submit a comprehensive and prioritised GEDI action plan to the Management Board for approval, including clear, progressive, measurable targets and governance arrangements to support achieving these. This DFA GEDI action plan will be central to the development and delivery of the next HR Strategy.

6. Governance

- 6.1 Responsibility for this policy sits with the Human Resources Division, which is committed to ensuring that the GEDI policy in terms of employment practices (selection, recruitment and retention) and service delivery is implemented, monitored and evaluated. HR monitors, evaluates and reports on the delivery of Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments through a variety of means, and is committed to improving its internal communication to staff.
- 6.2 The HR Strategy Implementation Team (HR-SIT) provides high-level oversight on the implementation of the Department's HR Strategy (2019-2022), including pillar 3 on GEDI. The SIT provides strategy implementation advice and support to implementation work; champions strategic change initiatives and communicates them to internal and external stakeholders. The HR-SIT employs a co-lead model. HR co-leads lead the initiation and implementation of projects under the Priority Actions in consultation with the relevant HR Director. Department co-leads are partners and co/creators in the process and provide a challenge function, advice and input to HR Strategy work based on their experience and background.
- 6.3 The Management Board Sub-Committee for GEDI plays an important role in identifying issues that need to be addressed and ensuring accountability. This Sub-Committee is co-chaired by two members of the Management Board and meets quarterly, providing visible evidence of senior management commitment to drive progress in this area. The work of the Sub-Committee is supported by Working Groups, made up of staff volunteers of all grades and from all sections of the Department at home and abroad. Each Working Group focuses on a specific area of gender, equality, diversity and inclusion; there are currently working groups on: Gender; LGBTI; Parents / Carers / Family; Social Inclusion / Disability; Multicultural. Colleagues interested in participating in the work of these groups are welcome to signal their interest via the Chairs of these groups, with contact details found on the [GEDI subcommittee intranet page](#).
- 6.4 Further consideration will be given to the relationship between governance of the future HR Strategy and GEDI governance structures in the development of the GEDI action plan and next iteration of the HR Strategy.
- 6.5 The Secretary General and Management Board will continue to collectively provide senior-level leadership and individually support GEDI actions within their respective teams.

Annex: links to Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy documents referenced in this policy

[Adoptive Leave](#)

[Career Break Local Staff](#)

[Bereavement Policy](#)

[Bereavement Leave Local Staff](#)

[Customer Service Charter](#)

[Code of Practice for Appointments to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service](#)

[Code of Practice for the Employment of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service](#)

[Code of Standards and Behaviour Guidance Local Staff](#)

[Circular 24/2002](#)

[Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour](#)

[Civil Service Disciplinary Code 2016](#)

[Dignity at Work](#)

[Discipline Procedure Local Staff](#)

[Grievance](#)

[Grievance Procedure Local Staff](#)

[Guide to Supporting Transgender Colleagues](#)

[Guide to Maternity, Adoptive and extended Parental Leave Supports](#)

[Harassment and Bullying Circular Local Staff](#)

[International remote working policy](#)

[Local Staff Recruitment & Management Circular](#)

[Maternity Leave Cover](#)

[Maternity leave](#)

[Paternity leave](#)

[Policy on Unacceptable behaviour from customers and work-related violence or threats of violence.](#)

[Refund of Fees Scheme](#)

[Sick Leave Policy Local Staff](#)

[Special Leave](#)

[Special Leave Local Staff](#)

*Human Resources Division
February 2022*