



An initiative of the European Union

What can employers do to tackle discrimination and promote diversity?

Frequently asked questions | Guidance for victims | The right steps | Benefits of diversity | Recognising discrimination



The right steps

For Diversity



Against Discrimination



Can an organisation that discriminates actually be working well in terms of overall management and performance?

New laws prohibit discrimination, harassment and victimisation of employees on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. Used positively they can help all organisations improve their performance.

> **Are you ready to comply with the new legislation?**

> **How can you take the right steps?**

> **Will you see it as a burden or an opportunity?**

> **Will it encourage you to**

- **employ the best from the widest possible pool of people?**
- **continually improve performance, productivity and service?**
- **ensure that you have a good reputation with your customers, clients, service users and the wider community?**

This Fact Sheet outlines what the best employers and managers will be doing to ensure that discrimination does not take place or to deal with it effectively if it does.

First steps to become a non-discriminatory employer

Acknowledge that discrimination can occur

Don't ignore any potential case of discrimination. They can have costs in time, money and stress for everyone involved, as well as potential negative publicity. Inaction can be viewed unfavourably in any legal case.

Get to know the new legislation

Make sure that you and your staff are aware of the main features of the new legislation. Don't wait until you have a problem. Remember, you are responsible for the actions of your employees, so make sure that they know what is expected of them.

Create the right climate

Look at how you can create a workplace where dignity and respect for different people are a reality in practice.

Develop a Non-Discrimination Policy

Establish a clear message that discrimination, harassment and victimisation are not acceptable in the workplace and be prepared to abide by and enforce these policies.

Be prepared to lead

Statements and actions from the leadership of the organisation create a strong message about how you expect people to behave in the workplace.

Look at the whole of your organisation

Check all your policies, systems and practices to see where discrimination might exist and be prepared to make changes to improve things.

Communicate what you are doing

Tell employees, their representatives and the wider community what you are doing to ensure discrimination is being tackled.

Improve the skills of employees

Train personnel in how to recognise and deal with discrimination. Employees, who are taught to respect difference, may be less likely to engage in discriminatory behaviour.

Deal with complaints

Put in place a clear and independent process for dealing with complaints in a transparent way. Above all don't victimise the victim – that too is illegal!

Take Positive Action

You can consider special programmes to help employees from under-represented groups to apply for jobs or take up new responsibilities.

Review your initiatives

Things change. Recent cases may establish case law. Complaints can help you identify specific issues to be tackled. Make sure you continuously review what you are doing.

Make people accountable

Tackling discrimination is not only the responsibility of one group. Make it part of the job description of all employees and help them to understand what they can do themselves.

Measure your progress

Set goals and devise ways in which you can collect information that tells you how well you are doing in ensuring discrimination does not take place in the workplace.

Connect with external stakeholders

Develop links with external organisations that represent or work with a wide variety of people, in order to reach a wider pool of people or to get advice about your initiatives.

Seek expert help

There are many different organisations and experts that can help you implement these steps. Find out where you can get further information and assistance.

Review your policies and practises

The new European anti-discrimination legislation focuses on outcomes and behaviours, not intentions. It is what you do as an employer that counts. Everyday operations can be a source of unintentional discrimination. You can review your current policies, procedures and practices to identify where you need to invest in change, as well those good practices that could be transferred to others in the organisation. It also helps in achieving broader performance improvements as you focus on "how things work".

Key areas will include, for example, recruitment and selection, the work environment, training and development, promotion & career development, staff retention, pay, rewards and benefits, redundancy and termination, health and safety,



Reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities

The new laws give particular rights to disabled persons to expect that you will “reasonably accommodate” their needs. Employers should look at providing special equipment and assistance so that people with disabilities can make a contribution in the workplace. Whilst specific, focused changes may be needed for different individuals, it is likely you will need to look at:

- > specific technical or mechanical adaptations;
- > adapting the work environment, facilities, mobility and access;
- > being more flexible about working arrangements;
- > changing management and staff attitudes.

Whatever needs to be done, your best advisers will be people with disabilities!

Don't see this as a burden but as an investment in new ideas and working methods. In fact many changes require imagination rather than money! Often these changes can benefit not just the disabled employee but also the organisation as a whole.

communication with employees and the public. Look at how your policies are written and how they work in practice.

- > Do they promote or undermine people's dignity and respect?
- > Do they impact adversely on different groups of employees, even if unintentionally?
- > Do they make incorrect assumptions about the needs and contribution of employees?
- > Do they accommodate the different needs of employees?
- > Do all the requirements actually relate to the job that needs to be done?
- > Are they actually necessary for the performance of the organisation?
- > Are they legal under anti-discrimination law?

Reviewing and changing how your systems operate will help in tackling discrimination and improving performance.

This is one of a series of fact sheets aimed at providing basic information on European Union Anti-Discrimination Policies, and giving practical advice on how organisations and individuals can avoid and combat discrimination. To find out more about the EU-wide campaign “For Diversity. Against Discrimination.” and information about the situation in your Member State, visit our website: www.stop-discrimination.info

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