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PRESS RELEASE

21st Monitoring Report shows continuing fall in workforce

The twenty first Fair Employment Monitoring Report, published today by the Equality Commission, shows that the total number of monitored employees in Northern Ireland fell for the second year in succession.

The Monitoring Report is drawn from statistics provided by almost 4,000 employers, based on their workforce in the year 2010. It shows a total of 512,726 monitored employees, a decline of 4,546 or 0.9% from 2009. This particularly affected men, whose numbers fell at nearly six times the rate for women - 3,991 less men, 655 less women.

The breakdown of the monitored workforce by community background in 2010 was [54.1%] Protestant and [45.9%] Roman Catholic, an increase in the Catholic share of 0.5 percentage points from the previous year.

Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, said it was notable that employment in the private sector had declined for the second successive year, although more slowly than in 2009, whereas the public sector increased marginally for the first time since 2005.

“In terms of community background, the established pattern of a changing balance continued to express itself,” Mr. Collins said. *“In addition to the change in the proportions of Protestants and Roman Catholic in employment, the number of Roman Catholic applicants once again exceeded that for Protestants.”*

Though Roman Catholic applicants, at [50.7%] represent a reduction of 0.3% on 2009, applicants from both community backgrounds increased – Protestant applicants by 1.4% and Roman Catholic applicants by 0.4%.

“The overall number of applicants grew only marginally, as the increase was confined to the public sector and was offset by a large decrease in private sector applicants,” Mr. Collins pointed out. *“The number of appointments in 2010 was the lowest number recorded in the past ten-year period. A decline was recorded for all categories: Protestant, Roman Catholic, men and women, with the reduction being steeper for Protestants and women.”*

As has been the case since 2006, the Roman Catholic share of appointees continued to exceed that of Protestants: [52%] and [48.0%] respectively in 2010.

The proportion of women in the monitored workforce continued to grow, albeit by a small amount, to the highest proportions observed over the last ten years. Women now represent 52.7% of the monitored workforce; 46.3% of the private sector and 63.7% of the total public service workforce.

“The data in the Monitoring Report represent a snapshot of the workforce of Northern Ireland at a point in time,” Bob Collins said. *“That overview is immensely valuable but deeper levels of understanding are revealed by closer analysis of the position in individual employments or at a sectoral level. The publication of these annual reports, of course, is but a part of the Equality Commission’s engagement with issues of fair employment, and we will be publishing more specific analyses in 2012 – one focussing on the pattern of applicants and appointees over the past twenty years; and another on patterns of employment in the health sector.”*

“Considerations of fairness in employment have an enduring relevance for Northern Ireland. In an environment that is volatile, with rapid economic and demographic change, patterns of employment will inevitably change and the balance in respect of community background will also change. It is not enough, however, to make assumptions that any such change is simply a result of demography or economics,” Mr. Collins said. *“There is a need for vigilance and for a continuing increase in awareness so*

that the causes of change can be fully appreciated and so that superficial analysis does not mask deeper issues.”

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