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PRESS RELEASE

Equality Commission Response to CSI

Equality Commission Responds to Northern Ireland Executive's Consultation on Cohesion Sharing and Integration

Equality of opportunity and good relations are inseparably linked, the Equality Commission has said, in responding to the OFMdFM's consultation on the draft programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.

"The main purpose of a strategy on cohesion, sharing and integration must be to find ways of dealing with the inheritance of history, in terms of the separateness and lack of interconnection between the two main traditions in Northern Ireland." Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission said."

The Commission's response to the draft programme states that the realities of the present must also be looked at. That new fault lines, such as racism and homophobia have to be addressed; and that effective engagement with women must be a driver of policies and practice to achieve the Strategy's goals.

"It is not a dilution of CSI to recognise that it must go beyond issues of sectarianism and racism," Bob Collins said. "On the contrary, it is a strength. We live in a complex society, with a changing and dynamic set of identities. This needs to be reflected in the final Strategy, to promote a better future for all."

The Commission stresses that the focus of the Strategy must be on tackling the persistent and systemic separateness and lack of interconnection between the two main traditions. It addresses the core CSI issues through such themes as the legacy of the past; the economy; education; shared spaces and housing; and expressions of culture.

The full response of the Equality Commission to the draft CSI consultation document can be accessed from the website.

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