



KEY POINT BRIEFING

Equality in Participation in Public Life Policy Recommendations

Priority areas for intervention

The Commission considers, following engagement with stakeholders and wider analysis, that there are immediate priorities and / or a particular pressing need to secure change in relation to:

- **improving data collection and disaggregation;**
- **increasing diversity in government public appointments** for women and people with disabilities; and
- **increasing diversity in political representation** for women and individuals from minority ethnic groups.

IMPROVE EQUALITY DATA COLLECTION AND DISAGGREGATION:

Action should be taken to address identified gaps in equality data: We call upon public authorities to ensure comprehensive monitoring, analysis and reporting of equality characteristics to public and political life. We also call upon departments to take more extensive action to encourage candidates to complete and return monitoring forms.

Ensure that data is sufficiently disaggregated to allow for meaningful equality analysis, to better inform public policy development: We call upon government departments to ensure where data is collected it is routinely collected and disaggregated across the Section 75 equality categories.

INCREASE DIVERSITY IN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS:

Establish and promote support measures, and targeted actions to increase the participation in public life of people with disabilities: We recommend action to identify and implement specific measures to tackle the under-representation of disabled people.

Ensure early implementation of an action plan to achieve the Executive's 2016 target for gender equality in board and chair public appointments: Action by government departments is needed to address recruitment and selection processes which may hamper greater diversity in public appointments and to tackle the under-representation of women in remunerated posts.

Implement a cross-departmental diversity strategic action plan to address under-representation and support participation: The action plan should include targets and review mechanism. Action must seek to not only address under-representations and known barriers, but also to raise awareness of opportunities and their relevance to specific equality categories.

INCREASE DIVERSITY IN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION:

Advance the participation of women, and individuals from minority ethnic groups, in political life:

We call on government and political parties to take prompt steps to further promote and support the participation in political life of women, and those from minority ethnic groups, by actively tackling the barriers they face. We also recommend actions to develop and broaden candidate pools.

Advance the active and meaningful participation of women in peace building and post conflict reconstruction: We continue to recommend steps, including temporary special measures, to increase the representation of women in political and public life, including in peace building and post conflict resolution in Northern Ireland.

ENSURE ACCESS TO THE VOTING SYSTEM BY THOSE WITH DISABILITIES:

Remove barriers across all stages of the electoral process to ensure that people with disabilities can exercise their right to vote: We recommend that the government, political parties and civil society take action to promote the benefits of voting, remove barriers to accessing the voting system, and support those with disabilities and other under-represented groups to register and use their vote.

TACKLE CROSS-CUTTING BARRIERS TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:

More effectively engage with, and foster the active participation of, people from across the full range of equality categories: We continue to recommend the full and effective involvement of those from across the full range of equality categories in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of strategic actions; and to build capacity within relevant sectors.

Address structural barriers which can deter individuals from a range of equality categories from participating in public life: Structural barriers can include recruitment criteria and processes, for example application forms asking for formal qualifications; the requirement of previous experience; costs of participation and the balancing of family and working life. We reiterate our call for accessible, appropriate and affordable childcare. More carer friendly policy and practices are needed.

Meet the physical access and communication needs of prospective participants: Consideration should be given to the extension of accessible public transport, particularly in rural areas; and to the communication needs of prospective participants. Organisations have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and public bodies should ensure safeguards are in place necessary for individuals to participate fully as they move to 'digital by default'.

Build capacity, overcome perceived barriers and foster a sense of belonging: We call for action to improve capacity building and targeted action to better understand and foster a 'sense of belonging' for under-represented groups. Further, we call for action to engage with under-represented groups via promotion and outreach to raise awareness of the potential benefits for individuals and society.

Challenge stereotypes and prejudice: Action is needed across society, including by government, civil society and the media to: encourage the participation and visibility of under-represented groups in public life; promote role models; and tackle the high level of prejudicial attitudes towards individuals associated with their equality group characteristics.

