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# Positive Action Measures Across Different Equality Grounds, Organisations and Sectors in European and Non-european Countries

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*Abstract: This article is based on a large-scale European Commission project on international perspectives on positive action measures. The paper presents an analysis of the perceptions of positive action held by respondents from all the countries participating in an international survey, focussing specifically upon differences across equality grounds, sector and organisation type. This paper will also provide examples of positive action being applied in European and non-European countries that participated in the study. The study adopted extensive literate and online survey to obtain data from designers of positive action. Findings are discussed, conclusions drawn and wide-ranging recommendations are made at the European Commission, individual countries and organisational levels.*

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Equality Grounds, Disability, Diversity, Equal Opportunities, Gender, Online Survey, Positive Action, Race

## Introduction

**T**HE UNDERSTANDING OF the term positive action and related terminology varies significantly across countries, sectors and equality grounds. This situation is further compounded by the fact that terms such as positive action, reverse discrimination, positive discrimination, affirmative action and corrective action are used synonymously.

ously in myriad contexts (Adam 1997, Archibong *et al.* 2006). Other terminologies utilised include 'constructive action' (Cunningham 1997), 'reasonable accommodation' (Irving and Kleiner 1999), 'structural initiatives' (Fielding 1999), 'diversification strategies' (Groschi and Doherty 1999), 'mainstreaming projects' (Kingsley 2001) and 'balancing measures' (McCrudden 2007). Whilst these terms may be considered to be related and borderline cases, Archibong *et al.* (2006) posit that these terms should, however, remain distinct from positive action itself. More broadly, Iles and Hayers (1997) use the overarching 'diversity competence approach' to describe effective international team working, whereas Miller and Rowney (1999) prefer to use 'managing diversity'.

Archibong *et al.* (2007) describe positive action as having three significant conceptual dimensions: the legislative; the executive or practice; and the political, which includes its communication or surrounding debate. They posit that while statutory bodies explain the legislative concept, and managers apply this concept through workforce diversity measures, but above all positive action is embedded within a larger political context. Statutory equality bodies are charged with explaining the application of the legislative context, managers within organisations need to expand the concept of positive action into practical diversity measures, while communication of positive action through a variety of media may remain dependent on context and is often driven by the political agenda in question. The authors explain that these factors can impact on the nature of positive action and the initiatives that materialise in reality. In fact, there is clear evidence in the literature that misinterpretation of positive action does exist (Chater and Chater, 1992; Johns, 2005) and can often lead to lack of, or limited engagement with, Positive Action (Archibong *et al.* 2007).

The literature reveals a shortage of evaluative research on positive action initiatives and measures of effectiveness of interventions were generally either omitted altogether from the literature, or were incomplete (Band and Parker, 2002). Nevertheless, there is some indication of positive outcomes following positive action initiatives in the health and education sectors (e.g. NHS, 2005, Payne and Huffman, 2005, Baxter *et al.* 2008). It is absolutely imperative that those either directly or indirectly affected by it have a clear understanding of positive action purpose, and that initiatives that are costly to implement can demonstrate clear utility and value for money.

Dhami *et al.* (2006) echo this observation, as they describe measurement of the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in the USA as a difficult endeavour. They assert that most studies on this subject focus on the economic attainment of ethnic minority groups, but some measure gross outcomes, others focus on labour force participation, and yet others on earnings. These factors all affect the evaluations made. Holzer and Neumark (2000) note clear evidence of better medical care for minorities and low-income people from affirmative action in terms of recruitment into medical schools. Holzer and Ihlanfeldt (1998) suggest that customers often like being served by co-ethnics, implying that minority customers might be happier (and white customers less happy) as a result of affirmative action.

Recent studies have engaged in an empirical assessment of the Fair Employment Act in Northern Ireland and analysed the patterns of affirmative action agreements between the Fair Employment Commission and employers in Northern Ireland between 1990 and 2000 (Heaton and Teague 1997; Osborne and Shuttleworth 2004; McCrudden *et al.* 2004). Heaton and Teague argued that the tension between a positive institutional context for affirmative action and negative ground level religious circumstances could be better managed in a climate of peace. More recently, Osborne and Shuttleworth (2004) considered the effects of the le-

gislation ‘a generation on’ and highlighted the success of affirmative action measures in securing change, particularly in producing a substantial improvement in the employment profile of Catholics (Osborne and Shuttleworth 2004), who are now well represented in senior level jobs.

Reports frequently state that initiatives have been ‘successful’ because they have led to increased minority group recruitment. In fact, most of the positive action literature focuses on the recruitment stage of the employment cycle (Secker 2001; Refugee Council 2006; Ward 2006). However, meeting targets or increasing numbers does not necessarily confirm ‘success’, but is also about improving skills so that the candidates can get the jobs for which they apply (Shifrin 2004). However, research into positive action in the aviation industry, (Davey and Davidson 2000) found that whilst positive action led to increased female representation, women were also far more likely to leave the industry. Whilst women were successfully recruited through positive action, this could not necessarily be considered to be synonymous with success.

Our literature review, however, did not find any study that had evaluated the effect of positive action on culture that was based on evidence and measurement. Furthermore, we found little evidence of longitudinal research into the success of positive action interventions. Typically where an intervention was reviewed it was evaluated in the immediate to mid-term (e.g. Barnes *et al.* 1998; Arksey 2003; Anderson 2004). Nevertheless, we did find encouragement in one study by Payne and Huffman (2005) which found that mentoring of USA army officers was positively related to affective commitment and negatively related to turnover behaviour. The study also provided longitudinal evidence, as affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between mentoring and actual turnover behaviour ten years later.

## **The Present Study**

This article is based on a large-scale European Commission project on international perspectives on positive action measures. The paper presents an analysis of the perceptions of positive action held by respondents from all the countries participating in an international survey, focussing specifically upon differences across equality grounds, sector and organisation type. This paper will also provide examples of positive action being applied in European and non-European countries that participated in the study. The research sought to help the European Commission develop a framework for better understanding the role of positive action measures in preventing or remedying discrimination. It also sought to help the Commission gain a better insight into the kind of practical positive action measures already being taken in the European Union (and in the EFTA-EEA countries), as well as the possible costs and benefits of positive action measures. The study also examined how legal frameworks, policies and practices of positive action in the European Union compare with those Canada, United States and South Africa.

The study involved individuals responsible for designing and implementing positive action measures including Human Resources personnel, Equality and Diversity Leads, Cohesion and Service Development Managers, Chief Executives and other Senior Managers with responsibility for equality. Specific objectives of the study included exploring the:

- historical, social and political context within which positive action measures have been developed across both employment and service provision.
- perceptions, understanding and the rationale for developing and implementing strategies for positive action, covering the equality grounds of age, disability, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. Aspects of gender which intersect with other grounds were also considered.
- outcomes and impact of positive action measures in participating organisations.
- perceived effectiveness of the actions undertaken and how this could be improved.

## Methods

The research was carried out in three distinct phases: a literature review and development of a working definition of positive action; an on-line survey in 27 European Union Member States, the EFTA-EEA countries and in third countries and 3 non-EC countries participating in the study; and a comparative in-depth study. Findings from the legal analysis, comparative study and methodological challenges are reported elsewhere (Archibong *et al.* 2009 a and b; Bell *et al.* 2010).

An initial in depth literature review was conducted in order to explore the wider theoretical and practice debates in relation to positive action. The findings of this review helped identify key themes and informed the development of a definition of positive action that was used in subsequent phases of the study. This was necessary given the confusion and inconsistency surrounding the use of the term ‘positive action’ and its perceived synonymity with terms such as ‘affirmative action’, ‘reverse discrimination’ and ‘positive discrimination’ (Archibong *et al.*, 2006; Groschi and Doherty, 1999; Adam, 1997).

An online questionnaire was undertaken in order to provide an overview of the nature and extent of positive action activities taking place both at a country level and Europe wide. The survey was carried out within the 27 European Union Member States, two members of the European Fair Trade Association (Iceland and Norway) and three non-EU countries (United States, Canada and South Africa) participating in the study. Using a Likert scale to record responses, the survey elicited information from organisations about their implementation of equality and diversity policies, their understanding and perceptions of positive action and their use of positive action measures, including measures of outcomes. It also asked organisations to identify possible barriers to positive action and any future plans to conduct positive action. Respondents were provided with the option of completing the questionnaire in English, French or German initially. The questionnaire was drawn up in English and then translated into French and German. It was then sent to native speakers of the translated version, to ensure that its content was translated appropriately for national contexts and to ensure that the original meaning of questions was maintained (Atkin and Chattoo, 2006). The need to achieve conceptual equivalence was considered to be particularly vital given the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of terms such as ‘positive action’, ‘targeted recruitment’ and ‘championing schemes’ in countries where English was not the native language. Once amendments were made to the few translation errors identified, the questionnaire was further piloted on six people in the UK, in order to identify any other difficulties with the content and context of the tool. Feedback from these participants resulted in minor modifications being made to the questionnaire.

## Findings

### ***The Context of Equality and Diversity***

Participants emphasised the need for positive action measures to be part of an overarching equality and diversity strategy in any organisation. We considered by way of context whether organisations had a written equality and diversity policy and what variations might exist between sector and organisation type. The survey data showed that almost half (49%) of the organisations that responded had a written equal opportunities policy, though this varied considerably between demographic groups. Organisations with 5000 employees and over and representing the public sector were significantly more likely to have a written equality and diversity policy (81%) than those with fewer than 10 staff (24%) and that represented voluntary sector organisations. Whilst respondents from public sector reported more likelihood (59%) of having a written policy, there were variations between areas of work, with health organisations (79%) and Colleges/Universities (64%) more likely than voluntary sector social care organisations (38%) to have a written equality and diversity policy. To some extent, these distributions were not surprising, as they mirrored the trend in some countries that public sector organisations will have an obligation to produce a written policy.

It was widely agreed by respondents to the questionnaire that equality and diversity monitoring enabled employers to check the effectiveness of their policies and procedures and was required as a precursor to the development and implementation of targeted strategies. The centrality of monitoring for the successful implementation of positive action reflected a clear hierarchy with gender being the most widely monitored (49%) and sexual orientation (15%) the least monitored ground. Those who did monitor their equality and diversity activities did so primarily for current employees, followed by monitoring of job applicants. Almost half (48%) of organisations that actively monitored these diversity areas published some or all of this information.

Whilst 55% of organisations in the survey had specific targets on service user/customer profile with respect to equality groups, local authority (75%) and social care organisations were significantly more likely to have these targets. It was rather surprising to note that organisations with a smaller employee base (11- 25) were more likely to have specific targets on service delivery at 81%, above an overall 51% response rate by surveyed organisations, as compared to organisations with a large number of staff (5000+) at 37%.

### ***Understanding of Positive Action***

When asked which statement they thought best described 'positive action' as understood in their organisation, the only statement which over half (56%) of the sample agreed upon was 'organisational commitment to equality and diversity'. Around 40% agreed on 'activities to combat disadvantage and discrimination' and 'action to combat stereotypes' and over a third chose the legal obligation to address equality and diversity; action to redress under-representation and 'affirmative action to reverse specific discrimination' to describe positive action. The variations between those groups that confused positive action with positive discrimination mainly occurred on a country basis. Findings from the survey show an overall significant confusion about positive action. Overall 19% of respondents confused positive action with positive discrimination. But this level of confusion was particularly high in Austria at 48%;

Greece (42%); Hungary (33%), Bulgaria (32%) and the combined eight EU case study countries at 23%. Respondents from all non-EU countries combined were significantly less likely (9%) to confuse positive action with positive discrimination. Interestingly, none of the 18 survey respondents from the USA reported this confusion. This finding contradicts the literature (Bacchi, 2004) which automatically links positive discrimination to affirmative action in the USA and participants' views during the workshops. It is to be noted that the contrast between the survey and workshop findings (Archibong et al 2009a) is indicative rather than summative, owing to the vastly different context and variations in numbers of participants from the non-EU countries who participated in the survey; 70 of the total respondents, representing Canada 35 (5.5%), the United States 18 (2.8%) and South Africa 17 (2.7%), respectively.

Overall perception of the benefits of positive action was assessed at the beginning and at the end of the survey; the second time, the wording of the question asked respondents to rate the statement *taking into account the definition of Positive Action used in this survey*. The result shows that all of the ratings increased the second time, with an overall increase of about 3% in the proportion agreeing. The ordering of the responses were the same. This indicates that a clarification of the nature and purpose of positive action led to a better understanding of its actual nature. This may have generated a more positive response or attitude to positive action and helped respondents to reach a clearer perception of its utility. Despite the apparent confusion over the nature of positive action, clearly the majority of the respondents had a favourable attitude towards it. If clarification promotes a positive response amongst respondents, it is at least plausible that awareness rising amongst those who currently have little understanding of positive action would have an even greater effect. A consistent finding was that respondents at the Chief Executive/Managing Director (CE/MD) level or equivalent gave higher ratings to certain of the statements: *Positive Action [would be/is] [can be] recognized as valuable by this organisation* (average 76% before and 85% after completing the survey) was rated by CE/MDs at 90% before and 94% afterwards. Positive action is one of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation (average 69% before and 73% afterwards) was rated by Chief executives at 82% before and 88% afterwards. Voluntary organisations and NGOs also tended to give slightly higher ratings.

### **Drivers for Positive Action**

The most significant, the most significant driver for positive action initiatives was legislation (47%). There was a reasonably even response covering the other identified drivers positive action, ranging from 17% for influence from funding bodies to 36% for internal consultation. Any action targeted towards encouraging organisations to develop positive action initiatives needs to consider a wide range of potential influences whose relevance may differ according to organisation type. The survey also showed that amongst the EU countries, UK (84%) and Ireland (83%) had a significantly higher proportion of respondents with a written equality and diversity policy. Analysis of the documents provided by organisations based in both of these countries, such as mission statements and annual reports also reflected a commitment to equality beyond rhetoric. At the lowest end we had organisations from Slovakia (29%), Greece (25%), Bulgaria (24%) and Poland (13%) with equality and diversity policies. Overall, 59% of the organisations in the eight EU countries involved in the comparative study had a written policy on equality and diversity.



### **Support for Positive Action**

The study shows that the great majority of participants (85%) agreed that there was *Strong individual commitment from participants to positive action*. This result was a little higher for NGOs and voluntary organisations, at 88%, but lower in the public sector (78%) and in large organisations with between one and five thousand employees (73%). Seventy eight percent agreed that there was *Leadership and senior management support for positive action*; those at CE or MG level were more optimistic about this at 90%, those in the public sector were lower at 70% and colleges and universities lower still at 60%. Those individuals who gave their current role as working in equality and diversity were also less sure of support from leaders, positive action, rating this at 64%. Three quarters of respondents (76%) agreed they received *Positive feedback from services users/ customers*. The only significant difference in this rating was between sectors, with voluntary/ NGO rating it higher at 81% and the public sector lower at 70%. Slightly lower numbers (72%) thought there was *Broad support from employees*. Again, this was higher for voluntary/NGOs (80%) and lower in the public sector (60%), but also markedly lower for colleges and universities at 48%. The lowest rating was for *Support from line managers* at 69%. If this is a problem, those at CE or MD level seemed unaware of it since their rating was 82%. Public sector organisations and colleges & universities were again lower than average at 62% and 35% respectively. People working in equality and diversity also rated this lower at 59%.

### **Barriers to Positive Action**

Lack of money and lack of time were the most frequently cited barriers to positive action (46% and 37% respectively). Reluctance of target groups to participate, lack of support from line managers and resistance among employees were cited by fewer than 20% of respondents. A relatively low proportion (13%) of respondents thought that substantial resistance or cynicism among employees was a significant barrier. Given the selective nature of the sample, we could speculate that this potential barrier may be more significant in the wider population. Based on the previous discussion around the definition/understanding of positive action, this problem could be tackled by providing better information and explanation to the general public regarding the nature of positive action.

The survey also suggested that there was reluctance on the part of organisations to ask questions about these issues both to potential and current employees. Disability monitoring was undertaken by only 26% of organisations whilst sexual orientation was monitored by a mere 10%.

### **Outcomes and Impact**

When survey respondents were asked how effective positive action is seen to be in various areas, it is of note that the highest ratings are given to more intangible items such as awareness of issues, the organisation's reputation and people's self confidence, all of these being endorsed by more than three quarters of respondents. Positive action's potential contribution to business success was less well recognised, with only a third (32%) agreeing that it translated into *better financial results*. There were generally higher ratings by those at CE/MD level, and lower rating in the public sector, especially colleges and universities.

A broad range of measures were reported to be used by respondents, and no single measure showed a response greater than 40%. Only 16% had an external assessment and only 26% employ targets/performance indicators. The other measures involved periodic or *ad-hoc* reviews, staff and user consultation and anecdotal evidence, which by their nature are likely to be attitudinal rather than focussed on measurable outcomes.

### **Positive Action in Practice**

Overall, 72% of survey respondents said that their organisation had some kind of initiative or programme which they thought could be described as positive action. Fifty percent or more respondents were implementing measures in the areas of age, disability, racial or ethnic origin and gender, with a quarter addressing the area of religion or belief and one fifth addressing sexual orientation. Of the types of positive action identified in the questionnaire, there was a fairly even spread of responses indicating that multiple measures were commonly used across the equality grounds. When asked when positive action measures were first introduced, almost half of the respondents (48%) had introduced such measures more than 5 years previously, 40% between 1 and 5 years, and 8% under a year before the survey.

### **Examples of Positive Action**

In order to provide further insight into the kinds of measures applied in the European Union, Canada, South Africa and the United States of America, we give concrete examples of positive action measures. Drawn from the current study, these examples reflect localised interpretations of positive/affirmative action. Detailed description of the examples are available in the country reports (at <http://www.brad.ac.uk/health/pamecus/>), where analyses confirm the considerable misunderstanding about what constitutes positive action and the overlap with other complementary measures, such as equality and diversity monitoring and impact assessment. In addition, there was no example of positive action to cover the diversity ground of religion and belief.

**Black and Ethnic Minorities and Vocational Training in UK:** Leeds Mental Health Teaching National Health Service Trust (a hospital) in the United Kingdom encourages people who are black or from ethnic minority backgrounds to take up a range of internships. The aim is for the internees to gain confidence and skills, and to remain employed in the National Health Service after the internships have come to an end.

**Asylum Seekers and Employment in Austria:** A scheme financed through the ESF (EQUAL), FluEQUAL, increases opportunities for asylum seekers in the labour market, by providing them with access to German language courses and vocational training and encouraging them to enter the labour market.

**Disability and Higher Education in UK:** Birmingham University has established a scheme which provides financial awards to students with disabilities, including students who have dyslexia, to help them with their studies. The money does not have to be spent on specific disability aids. Instead, the award recognises that students with a disability often find it difficult to supplement their income through part-time work whilst they are studying.

**Ethnic Minority Parents and Education in Austria:** The City of Vienna, in cooperation with various organisations representing ethnic minorities, has a project (MA 17) which is designed to promote greater involvement of ethnic minority parents in their children's edu-

cation. The project involves information events, translation services and child care services and also provides German language classes for mothers of ethnic minority children. These take place at the child's school.

**Various groups and Housing:** The City of Vienna housing department has established a scheme to address inter-cultural conflict amongst residents of the city's public housing. The city employs a group of intercultural mediators who work in mixed teams to provide support that is easy to access and accept for as many people as possible. The concept of "culture" as used in the scheme covers not only people of different origins and customs, but also addresses conflicts between young and old people, and accommodates sign language users.

**Ethnic Minorities and Academia:** The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) has established a grant scheme (Mozaic) to increase the number of researchers from ethnic minorities who are carrying out PhD. research at Dutch universities. The scheme is only open to applicants from an ethnic minority background. Socially disadvantaged groups and university admission: In Hungary, Article 19/A of Government Decree 268/2000 on the General Rules of Admission Procedures of Universities provides that a socially disadvantaged applicant shall be admitted to a university faculty if he/she reaches 80% of the admission threshold determined for the given faculty. The category of 'socially disadvantaged' persons includes, inter alia, those whose parents only completed elementary school. The number of students admitted on the basis of this measure shall not exceed 3% of the maximum number of students determined for the given faculty.

**Integrated Education for Roma:** Since 2004, the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture has been implementing programmes to reduce the segregation of Roma children in substandard schools/classes, as well as in schools/classes for children with mental disabilities, and foster the integration of Roma children in mainstream education. The government programmes include measures such as providing an integration payment to schools which included children with special educational needs, a programme entitled "Last Bench" aiming to integrate Roma children unjustly categorised as disabled back into mainstream classes, and the creation of a requirement that schools adopt and implement concrete equal opportunity policies in order to be eligible for Structural Funds.

**Roma and Access to Employment:** A special employment programme at USA Steel in Kosice targeting the Roma community exists in Slovakia. Within this programme, USA Steel co-operates closely with municipal authorities in three surrounding areas (Vel'ka Ida, Saca and Kosice's Lunik IX district) to identify Roma candidates for employment at its factory. Through this programme, USA Steel subcontracts Roma candidates through the municipal office for a period of one year, after which time the individuals concerned may be considered for regular employment.

**'Ability Edge' project in Canada:** An initiative which involved several banks getting together and creating internship opportunities for people with disabilities. In addition, students with disabilities were provided with a scholarship towards post-secondary education.

**Internship programme for Aboriginal students in Canada:** Within the Bank of Montreal, students of aboriginal origin were provided with the opportunity to gain experience working in the bank, which also offered them a scholarship towards post-secondary education.

**Vienna needs you – police officers with a migrant background:** In order to increase the number of police officers with a migrant background in the police force in Vienna, a recruitment campaign was set up in November 2007 targeting Austrian nationals of migrant background. A 'tandem-couple' made up of a police officer with migrant background and

a representative of the Viennese Municipal Department for Diversity visits schools and migrant community associations to present the initiative as well as to act as a role model. There are no quotas implemented and there is no explicit preferential treatment of applicants with a migrant background.

**Mingo Migrant Enterprises in Austria:** In May 2008, an office was set up which offers free information and counselling in different languages to minority ethnic businesses, which often face difficulties in accessing mainstream support due to linguistic barriers and cultural differences. The assistance entails provision of information and help with implementing operational steps to achieve innovation as well as support in dealing with agencies and authorities.

**Roma Internship Programme for Reporters and Editors in Hungary:** The aim of this initiative was to increase the positive presence of Roma in the media. The Public Television and Public Radio each facilitate 10-month internships for five individuals, during which the time the interns attend professional skills classes, are provided with tools to address psychologically harmful situations they may encounter, paired with a professional mentor, provided with a scholarship and receive a certificate upon completion.

**Equal Chances Against Breast Cancer for Socially Underprivileged Women in Hungary:** In cooperation with Roma NGOs and representatives, the organisers reached out to Roma women with the aim of encouraging a wider provision of breast cancer screening. This included providing transport to screening sites and mobile screening units in isolated settlements. In addition, through cooperation with Roma representatives and health service providers, the scheme tried to facilitate sustainability by encouraging open lines of communication and cooperation.

**Accepting Working Place Model in Hungary:** In order to address the high attrition rates within a poultry processing plant, the company worked with the local employment centre and vocational training centre to set up a project providing on-the-job training for employers and employees, many of whom were unskilled with low levels of education.

**Roze in the Netherlands:** The problems faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in terms of accessing employment and working in hostile environments prompted the formation of a network of LGBT people within the Roze trade union. A website and a web based forum were set up to facilitate exchange of experience and has also served as a platform for the organisation of public events and campaigns to enhance the visibility of LGBT people in employment.

**Social fieldwork in Slovakia:** The main purpose of this project is to provide Roma people living in socially excluded environments and Roma settlements with quality social counselling and assistance. The programme is managed by the Social Development Fund and is open to municipalities which have a Roma community. Based on its size, the village or city can apply for funding for one or several social fieldworkers. The workload is clearly defined and the fieldworkers serve individual clients or families.

**Targeted recruitment for management and supervisory level in South Africa:** In 1993, as a means to increase the number of black people at management and supervisory level, an electricity company owned by the government, instituted targeted recruitment of black people within the organisation. Formal mentorship programmes were set up for lower level personnel to be able to move into management positions, where existing white post holders were encouraged to serve as mentors. Opportunities were also made available for

sponsorship of black people to study at appropriate Universities within and outside of South Africa, to enable them to take over from white post holders.

**Improving the recruitment of people of Chinese and mixed ethnic background into the health service in the UK:** A Primary Care Trust introduced a number of initiatives to improve the representation of under-represented groups into the workforce, including specific ethnic groups. In order to attract more applicants of Chinese and mixed ethnic background, job vacancies were emailed to 300 community organisations and also distributed through the organisation's weekly bulletin. A national website 'Ethnic Britain' was also used to advertise 80 posts. In addition, guidance for potential applicants on how to access NHS jobs was translated into different languages.

**Mosaic Initiative in the USA:** As part of the University's strategy to increase diversity among ranked faculty from under-represented ethnic groups, from May 2008 \$1million has been made available to fund the Mosaic initiative. As part of this venture, departments are able to apply for funds to the dean or director of its division to cover the cost of items such as salary, research support and laboratory equipment.

**Open Up in Sweden:** This development project created a working scheme for young persons with functional disabilities by SEKO tele Stockholm, with the goal of finding them jobs in the IT/telecom sector. The project also helped companies recruit from this group, as well as generally supporting them to get in touch with persons with disabilities who were users of their services.

**Drugs project in Ireland:** A drugs awareness project was set up targeting Traveller parents as a result of research highlighting the problem of drug use in this community. The aim of the project was to reduce the number of people using drugs as well as to try to normalize discussion in drugs by engaging the community about the problems of drug use. To date, the 10-session course has run five times in less than two years.

**Teaching assistant in Slovakia:** A programme is implemented in schools to fund teaching assistants in providing language and individual learning support for socially disadvantaged children in order to help them overcome existing barriers in the education system. Whilst it began as an NGO initiative, this programme is now funded by the Ministry of Education through the Regional School Offices.

## Conclusion

A general conclusion of the research is that whilst the conceptualisation of positive action varies widely across countries, some broad generalisations can be made. Terminology to describe remedial action to address past and present injustices targeted at marginalised groups differs.

It was widely agreed by participants in the study that equality and diversity monitoring provides a tool to enable employers to check the effectiveness of their policies and procedures and is required as a precursor to the development and implementation of targeted strategies. The centrality of monitoring in the successful implementation of positive action revealed a pattern with gender, age, disability and racial or ethnic origin being the most widely monitored grounds and sexual orientation and religion or belief being the least monitored grounds.

There were variations in the extent to which sectors provided an enabling environment for the development of positive action. Whilst a good number of organisations had a written policy on equality and diversity, larger organisations were not as effective in setting appro-

priate targets for employment and service delivery. Monitoring is an important aid to implementing positive action since it provides a basis for identifying evidence of under-representation. Whilst some organisations recognise the value of monitoring, the absence of relevant data may have hampered efforts to formulate appropriate positive action measures.

A clarification of the nature and purpose of positive action led to a better understanding of the actual nature of positive action. There was a reasonably even distribution of responses in relation to the drivers of positive action with legislation featuring highly. Therefore any action targeted towards encouraging organisations to develop positions or initiatives needs to consider a wide range of potential influences whose relevance may differ according to the type of organisation concerned.

There was widespread consensus about the need for organisational support for positive action, especially management buy-in. However there were disparities in different sectors, with third sector organisations more likely to support positive action than public and private sectors. It was noteworthy that a relatively low proportion of respondents thought that substantial resistance or cynicism among employees was a significant barrier to positive action.

A broad range of methods were utilised to assess the outcomes of positive action. However, there was a tendency to rely upon 'softer' approaches to evaluation including ad-hoc reviews and anecdotal evidence. Whilst the quantitative evidence from the survey suggests a spread of positive action initiatives covering different grounds the qualitative data from consensus workshops and interviews did not provide any examples of measures related to religion or belief (Archibong et al. 2009a).

Positive action needs to be addressed as an integral part of a wider organisational corporate mission, workforce planning and service development, working closely with the relevant governmental bodies. A more coherent and collaborative approach to the introduction of positive action between organisations should be adopted. This collaboration will not only help to increase the acceptability of the programmes but may also help convince managers of the likely benefits of positive action, not least if other organisations are competitors. A strategy found effective in the USA is to encourage organisations to compete for recognition in equality and diversity ('justice') fields: if bodies are competing to excel in positive action, this creates healthy competition. Awards might be created and publicly presented to encourage this. In addition, organisations should ensure involvement of members of minority groups in the development and evaluation of positive action measures. Individuals who have benefited from various positive action initiatives should be encouraged to work within the extension of such programmes, in order to increase representation amongst positive action implementers.

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