



→ thinkforward...

“Whether it was the result of lengthy deliberations or simply a happy coincidence, I am delighted that the chosen title of this particular publication is “Thinkability”, as it could also be considered the key proposition that has, and will continue to underpin the Government’s ongoing development of disability equality policy and legislation.

Thinking of people with disabilities in terms of their potential or ability, has allowed us to place disability firmly as an Equality issue. That shift in mindset enabled the Government to provide innovative disability legislation which is now enshrined in both the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act. At the same time, the policy of Mainstreaming, in the delivery of services for people with disabilities, has resulted in a more integrated approach across all Government Departments and State agencies.

But it’s about much more than just introducing legislation. It’s about counter-acting the marginalisation of people with disabilities in all areas of Irish daily life, particularly in the workplace, where people with disabilities can secure a degree of independence which will add to their overall quality of life. With the continued co-operation of employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector, we remain committed to the pursuance of equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the public service, along with encouraging a similar approach in the private sector.

Throughout our endeavours, I believe that the constant proliferation of information about all issues pertaining to people with disabilities is a key factor. Information promotes awareness which in turn promotes understanding and subsequent change for the better. I am hopeful that this publication will act as another link in the information-chain that will eventually create an environment (both in the wider sense and more specifically in the workplace) in which those with disabilities can look towards a future of possibilities, not limitations”.

Willie O’Dea
Minister of State, Dept of Justice, Equality & Law Reform

→ thinksuccess...

Special Olympics World Games 2003

The 11th Special Olympics World Summer Games were held in Ireland in June 2003. It was the first time this event was held outside the United States of America. It was also the largest sporting event to be held in the world this year and was the largest sporting or cultural event ever held in Ireland. The Games were not only a significant milestone in international sport, but the event was an unprecedented success, not just in terms of medals won, but as a testament to the athletes, their families and the hard work and commitment of the thousands who volunteered.

The Games and activities related to the Games have had a profound influence in raising the profile of those with disabilities, along with a very real sense of constructive change, epitomised by a succession of Government announcements, a reinvigoration of the spirit of “volunteerism” and demonstrable steps forward in the development of sports opportunities for people with disabilities.

As Mary Keogh of the Forum for People with Disabilities put it, *“People with special needs have come out in the open and they aren’t going back !”*

→ Pick a Number!

7,000	Athletes	177	Host towns involved.
3,000	Coaches & Officials	500	Families
8,500	Athlete family members and supporters	11,000	Host town volunteers
21	Sports	20,000	Games volunteers
23	Sports venues in the Greater Dublin Area and in Belfast	1,000	on Wait-list that were never used
26	Accommodation venues.	31,000	Volunteers in total from the 32 counties on the island of Ireland and abroad
160	Delegations, with all continents represented.	540	International volunteers
52	Languages; 6 official languages: English, Russian, French, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin Chinese.		



→ thinkawareness...

Lack of knowledge about disability in general, and the many forms it can take, is one of the key limiting factors in promoting a better understanding of, and a more informed attitude to, colleagues with disabilities. Disability is a total or partial loss of function - the nature of which usually comes under at least one of 5 broad groupings or headings i.e. Physical, Sensory, Intellectual, Hidden or Mental Health/Mental Illness

→ Defining Disability;

In their Strategy for Equality (1996) The Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities defines a person with a disability as; *"A person with a physical, mental, intellectual, emotional or sensory impairment and who, due to lack of receptiveness and adaptability in existing social structures and otherwise, encounters obstacles to participation on equal and equally effective terms with others in all aspects of life in the community or a person with a record of such impairment or a person who is so regarded by third parties"*.

→ Mainstreaming;

In the past, services for people with disabilities tended to be provided separately to those for everyone else, thus hindering inclusion and integrated policy development. This changed in June 2000 when the policy of mainstreaming was introduced, whereby services for people with disabilities are now provided by the public bodies which are responsible for providing the service to the community generally.

// // *It makes me smile when people do their own version of sign-language - if they only knew what some of their signs REALLY meant!!*

→ thinkaction...

The European Commission designated 2003 as European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD) in order to raise awareness of the abilities and skills of the 37 million people with disabilities in Europe, as well as the many barriers and obstacles they face daily. In Ireland, the activities are centred on four main themes: Awareness Raising, Rights, Responsibilities & Partnership, Youth & Disability and Employment.

The following activities were sponsored by the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform as part of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003

- Advertising Campaign to promote the EYPD
- Design for All Exhibition co-funded by the Office of Public Works
- Regional Seminars on the theme "Youth – Beyond Disability"
- National Botanic Gardens' "Sensory Garden"
- EYPD Bus – travelling through Europe promoting the objectives of the Year
- Film-makers Disability Forum, as part of the Cork Film Festival
- TV Series focusing on the lives of people with disabilities



On the 23rd October this year, Taoiseach and Patron of the European Year of People with Disabilities, Mr. Bertie Ahern TD launched the "100 Days 100 Ways to Make The Difference" nationwide campaign at the Mansion House in Dublin, urging all sectors of Irish society to make a pledge to improve the lives of the 400,000 people living with disabilities in Ireland and to ensure a lasting legacy for this specially designated year.

In all, in excess of 50 projects, at local and national level received grant funding from the Irish government and the European Commission to the value of €1 million. An additional grant of €500,000 was made by the Irish government to support the co-funding of joint venture flagship projects.

/// *I hate it when I am talking to someone and they walk away without my knowing.*

→ thinkability..



"2003 has been an exciting year for people in the disability sector with many many people taking part, giving of their time to make European Year of People with Disabilities a success.

The legacy of this year will manifest itself in the development of progressive disability legislation, and the awareness of the general public of the skills and abilities of people with disabilities. I would like to see the Irish public embrace the spirit of EYPD in this year by asking not what others are doing for people with disabilities but what they can do to really Make The Difference."

Angela Kerins, Director, Rehab Group.



"We in the CIPD believe that good employment practice is based on valuing people as individuals and looking at their diverse and unique abilities rather than any perceived disabilities. Managing diversity recognises that people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives on life can bring with them fresh ideas which can make work more efficient and improve products and services by nurturing creativity and innovation. Employers need to engage with this large untapped reservoir of commitment and talent with its capacity for contributing positively to improved competitiveness".

Michael McDonnell, Chief Executive, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in Ireland



"It really annoys me when people in the office see me coming and then quickly slide up against the wall and pretend that they are not there when I walk past".

→ thinkability... 07



➔ thinkachievement...

“Through people’s belief and encouragement, they can be the matches that light the candles of achievement for all these wonderful people” – Ronan Tynan

➔ Q - What do you think these people have in common ?

Buzz Aldrin, Alexander the Great, Muhammad Ali, Hans Christian Anderson, Yasir Arafat, Beethoven, Alexander Graham Bell, David Blunkett, Christy Brown, Lord Byron, George Burns, Richard Burton, Julius Caesar, Ray Charles, Cher, Agatha Christie, Winston Churchill, Brian Crowley, Tom Cruise, Charles Dickens, Walt Disney, Feodor Dostoevsky, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Mia Farrow, Michael J. Fox, Gareth Gates, Vincent Van Gogh, Whoopi Goldberg, Goya, Stephen Hawking, Katherine Hepburn, Bob Hope, George Freidrich Handel, Ernest Hemingway, Anthony Hopkins, Magic Johnson, James Joyce, John F. Kennedy, Rita Lawlor, John Lennon, Jay Leno, Brid Lynch, Steve McQueen, John Cougar Mellencamp, Michelangelo, Heather Mills, John Milton, Claude Monet, Dudley Moore, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Napoleon, Sir Isaac Newton, Alfred Nobel, Eugene O’Neill, Pope John Paul II, Itzhak Perlman, Edgar Allen Poe, Christopher Reeve, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Axl Rose, George Bernard Shaw, Martin Scorsese, Carly Simon, Socrates, Sylvester Stallone, Jackie Stewart, Donald Sutherland, Quentin Tarantino, Tchaikovsky, Leonardo da Vinci, George Washington, Robin Williams, Tennessee Williams, Stevie Wonder, William Butler Yeats, Neil Young.

➔ A – All of them had or have a disability and rose to the top of their chosen field.

/// “I want to call on the people of Ireland to renew that incredibly generous spirit that was so apparent during the Special Olympics this summer. As the largest volunteer effort in Irish history was mobilised all over Ireland, we witnessed the extent of what can be achieved when Irish people stand together and give of their time and their talent to benefit others”
An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD

→ thinklifestyle..

A Day in the Life – by Micheal Lavin, Department of Finance

→ 6.40am

I am awakened by the alarm on my mobile phone which heralds the start of a new working day. Breakfast is usually a straightforward affair of porridge, beans or eggs. It's easy to tell when the porridge is cooked - simply tap the base of the plastic bowl after taking it out of the microwave. If the porridge is cooked there is a noticeably hollow sound from the bowl. Toast poses no problems as it obligingly pops up when it is done. When pouring a mug of tea, you place the index finger of the right hand on the rim of the mug. When the warm liquid reaches a few millimetres from the top you sense the increase in heat on your finger. Braille markings on the cooker means that both my wife Theresa and I can accomplish the task of cooking without any difficulty.

→ 8.00am

Breakfast over we leave for the DART. Experience has taught us exactly where to stand on the platform in Killester in order to be precisely opposite the door of the 8.17 southbound DART. Some of the new trains announce the stations as we approach them. Otherwise there are a number of ways of knowing when I am at Lansdowne Road station short of actually asking somebody; one way is count the stations - not very practicable, as I usually meet someone on the train and have a chat, thus rendering this method totally untrustworthy. Another means of station identification occurs in Pearse Station as the sound changes as the train enters, due to the fact that the station is covered in.

→ 9.00am

I work in the Department of Finance Helpdesk where we provide technical support on all the Department's different computer systems. Being unable to see the computer screen I use what is called a screenreader. This is a computer program which converts the text on the screen to speech which is spoken out through the computer's sound card. The designers of screenreading programs are trying hard to make their systems more dynamic but there is still a good way to go. My work involves logging calls from users on a Microsoft Access database and trying to problem-solve while the person is on the phone with a problem.

Sometimes I would evaluate websites for other Departments or Government agencies to check for accessibility and usability. If any printed material comes across my desk, I scan it into my computer and read it with my screenreading program. All in all, using such assistive technology allows me to be productive and independent

→ 1.00am

At lunchtime I visit the canteen with my work colleagues and sometimes I go for a walk around Ballsbridge. I'm not very comfortable walking around this area on my own as there is a lot of overhanging foliage and thorny bushes which can result in getting very wet or scratched on the face.

→ 5.00pm

As I leave for the homeward journey I am constantly aware of new hazards on the footpath that weren't there that morning. Such things as a child's bike, a car carelessly parked on the path, roadworks or a litter bin badly positioned are a nightmare. Walking home from the DART station poses no great difficulty,- that is, except for the two dogs who try furiously to bite my cane as I pass their gate a few yards outside the station.

→ 6.00pm

Back home once again and the process of cooking the dinner begins. No great difficulties once you are organized. I know of one case where a blind person added milk to what she thought was custard powder but in fact was Andrews liver salts ! Tins that feel alike can be a source of difficulty, however there is a difference between peas and beans; if you shake peas they make a completely different sound to shaking a tin of beans. When we do our shopping we would differentiate between say lamb chops and pork chops by asking the butcher to put a knot on one of the bags.

→ 8.00pm

At night I like to listen to some television or a talking- book on tape. I always listen to the news and Prime Time. *That about sums up a typical day in my life. I have tried to give a balanced view on things - I do encounter problems but most of them can be overcome thanks to the generous nature of the human spirit and a belief in some form of a Higher Power. I take each day as I find it and let tomorrow take care of itself.*

/// I hate it when the driver of a car honks the horn to let me know it is safe to cross the road.

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➔ thinkinformation...

➔ Comhairle

Comhairle is the national support agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services.

Comhairle provides:

- Citizens Information for the general public
www.comhairle.ie/#citizens
- Support for Information Providers
e.g. voluntary and statutory organisations
www.comhairle.ie/#providers
- Social Policy and Research
www.comhairle.ie/social/information

T: 1890 777 121 W: www.comhairle.ie

➔ National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority, on behalf of the State, promotes and helps secure the rights of people with disabilities.

T: 01- 608 0400 W: www.nda.ie

➔ The Equality Authority

The Equality Authority is an independent body set up under the Employment Equality Act 1998. This Act and the Equal Status Act 2000, outlaw discrimination in employment, vocational training, advertising, collective agreements, the provision of goods and services and other opportunities to which the public generally have access on nine distinct grounds one of which is disability.

T: 01-4173333 W: www.equality.ie

➔ Oasis

The Oasis (On-line Access to Services, Information and Support) website developed by Comhairle is an Irish eGovernment initiative. Oasis is frontline information on public services for use by the general public and provides a very large quantity of information on services available to the public

W: www.oasis.gov.ie



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