



Intercultural Competence in the Irish Public Sector: Applying Public Sector Duty via a Research-Informed Project

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GORM

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GORM is an award winning social enterprise that specialises in social psychological research & intercultural training and consultancy. Our team of expert Psychologists (Msc. and PhD Levels) have over 30 years of accumulated academic research and industry experience in the area of Intergroup Relations, Cultural Diversity, Culture Management and Change Management.

Not only is Team GORM experts and champions in the area of diversity and inclusion, GORM operates as a social enterprise, reinvesting its profits to elevate the voices of marginalised communities through digital media, and to enable such communities through access programmes.

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PROJECT CONTEXT

In today's world, we find ourselves in increasingly polarised societies, leading to divisions that seem more pronounced than ever before. Differences in opinions, beliefs, and values have created deep rifts within communities and nations. However, it is crucial to recognize that our societies are inherently diverse, comprising individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives.

Public Sector entities, such as government institutions, educational institutions, and community organisations, have a unique opportunity to create spaces that encourage dialogue, empathy, respect, and collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, as per the [Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty](#), all public body organisations in Ireland have the legal obligation to eliminate discrimination and inequalities that perpetuate divisions within our society, and promote equality and opportunities to protect human rights.

With the rich diversity that exists today in Ireland with around 12% of the population from diverse backgrounds (Census 2022, Central Statistics Office), multicultural frameworks in the Public Sector when managing diversity have brought Ireland so far. However, previous research has indicated that such multicultural frameworks in Ireland have different outcomes for different communities (McGinninty, 2022). The multicultural approach to integration has been heavily criticised due to the lack of positive engagement between majority and minority group members where communities were simply coexisting. Therefore, intercultural approaches have been seen to provide means for communities to positively engage across lines of difference. Contrary to multiculturalism, Interculturalism is a diversity framework that promotes positive communication between people of different backgrounds as opposed to the tendency for groups to isolate and simply co-exist. Rather than merely accepting the presence of different cultural groups within a society, Interculturalists actively foster communication and understanding among them (Penaz-Ibáñez & López-Sáñez, 2006).

Embracing Interculturalism (engaging across differences) in the Public Sector not only supports public bodies to implement the obligations of the Public Sector Duty in eliminating systemic inequalities and discrimination but also provides a unique opportunity to create spaces and facilitate interactions that go beyond mere tolerance and instead promote genuine appreciation and celebration of diversity while working in the Public Sector. It involves recognizing the value that different cultures, traditions, and perspectives bring to our society and actively working towards creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Diversity can bring conflict due to potential differences in perspectives, values, and cultural backgrounds, ultimately leading to misunderstandings and confrontations. But why have an intercultural approach to managing diversity? Following the Irish Human Rights and Equality

Commission Act 2014 Section 42, Public Sector Duty ‘imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their functions to have regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination; promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services; and protect the human rights of staff and services users’ (IHREC, 2019).

In order to counteract the outcomes of a multicultural framework in the Public Sector, an Intercultural approach can strengthen the efforts to uphold Public Sector Duty, therefore Intercultural Competence within the Public Sector is key. Intercultural Competence refers to ‘the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions’ (Deardorff, 2006). Intercultural Competence as part of the Public Sector Duty would enhance the ability to effectively engage with and understand diverse communities, ensuring equitable service delivery, promoting inclusivity, and fostering positive relationships with stakeholders. This fosters trust and ensures that individuals from all backgrounds can access culturally appropriate and responsive services that meet the specific needs and support they require. In the long run, it allows for the development of policies and programs that pave the way for the recognition and celebration of diverse cultures, traditions, and identities, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging for all communities, especially those in traditionally marginalised communities

In summary, GORM recommends Intercultural Competence to be an integrated component of the Public Sector's Duty to advance human rights and promote the belonging of marginalised communities. By investing in Intercultural training, promoting diversity within their workforce, and actively engaging with marginalised communities, the Public Sector can create an environment that values and respects the unique perspectives and experiences of all individuals and equips Public Sector workers to engage with different and diverse communities in a culturally sensitive manner. Through these efforts, we can work towards a society where the rights of marginalised communities are protected, and a sense of belonging is fostered for all.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Intercultural Competence, also known as cultural intelligence, or interculturalism, has been widely researched in the USA (Deardorff, 2006, 2008; DeJaeghere, & Zhang, 2008; Bennett, 2004, 2012) and different European countries (Bildstein, Gueldenberg & Tjitra, 2013; Ting-Toomey, 2014; Verkuyten, Yogeeswaran, Mepham, & Sprong, 2020). But it is a newly fresh concept recently arrived in Ireland with little projects or research on a national level. Engaging in research about Intercultural Competence in the Irish context represents a pioneering opportunity to develop a solid foundation within the Public Sector while providing valuable insights to policymakers, Public Sector professionals, and community leaders in making informed decisions and implementing effective measures that advance Intercultural Competence in the Public Sector.

For this reason, GORM got the opportunity to develop a Research-Informed Intercultural Competence Training Project with the support of Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Grants Scheme 2021-2022 Theme B: Supporting Compliance with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. With a foundation of participatory research with different Irish Public Sector organisations, the aim of the present project was to investigate the Irish Public Sector landscape in terms of Intercultural Competence and, as a result, curate an evidence-based workshop training focused on adequately engaging with and upholding their duty to the human rights of marginalised communities, and creating a space for constructive transformative change.

This project is aimed at public bodies and the beneficiaries are minority communities, namely ethnically diverse communities. The creation of this programme is devised by skilled cultural and social psychologists who are from culturally diverse backgrounds and have the experience, skills and knowledge for its creation. Likewise, in researching for the programme, GORM has been supported by academic experts and community members.

Therefore, the present project stated the following goals:

1. To research about existing Cultural Diversity communication and Intercultural Communication research and specific needs of the Public Sector.
2. To develop a needs assessment in the form of a short questionnaire and interview to address the current landscape of Intercultural Competence in the Irish context.
3. To develop collaborations with a diverse set of public organisations and implement the Needs Assessment.
4. To analyse the data obtained and disseminate individual evaluation reports and further support to each public organisation involved.
5. To analyse the data obtained as a whole to curate a 1-day long participatory research-based Intercultural Competence training workshop.
6. To widely disseminate research with a social media campaign and a public report acknowledging the support of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
7. To facilitate learning and training for public bodies and people in positions of power to better engage in intergroup dialogue and behaviour .

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project goals previously stated were lined as the project timeline. In this sense, the project team started in October 2022 with a thorough background research about the current cultural diversity and intercultural communication at the national and international levels, key for the development of the project. Based on this background research and the support of several consultancy sessions with an academic expert in the area, the team developed a Needs Assessment tool for public bodies addressing intercultural competency in the Irish context.

Following in-depth research of international experts and researchers in Intercultural Competence (see the work of Dr. Darla Deardorff or Dr. Milton Bennet), the Needs Assessment's objective was to assess the three main pillars that constitute Intercultural Competence:

Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
The recognition of one's own culture (cultural self-awareness), the awareness of other cultures, and the understanding of key aspects of interculturalism: intercultural competence and communication, diversity (including its 7 dimensions), culture and intersectionality.	One's attitudes (norms and values) towards cultures which are different from their own, development of cultural-perspective taking, empathy and respect to otherness while staying motivated to discover more; and being curious to put oneself in places where differences are present (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty).	The behavioural ability to compromise: being comfortable with discomfort. Having the tools to effectively encounter, appreciate and aim for reconciliation when facing uncertainty: differences, needs, disagreements in diverse environments.

Figure 1

Three Main Pillars of Intercultural Competence

To do so, the Needs Assessment consisted on, firstly, a short questionnaire in the form of a Qualtrics link (data gathering software) consisting of 3 open-ended questions and 17 Likert-scale questions; and secondly, followed by an open discussion about the Needs Assessment exploring challenges, insights, or any other point that might be needed to be raised by the participants. The questions of the questionnaire were inspired and re-adapted from the INCA Project (European Commission, 2009) and Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale Short-Form (M-GUDS-S, 2000). The questions and interview structure will remain unpublished to keep its research applicability.

Thereby, the data obtained from the Needs Assessment needed to go through a:

- Qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and the open discussion that shed light into insights of the public body in relation to culture, diversity, and Intercultural Competence, and therefore, have a better understanding of the quantitative results.
- Quantitative analysis of the Likert-scale questions. 16 of them were rated from 1='Strongly Disagree', 2='Disagree', 3='Neutral', 4='Agree', and 5='Strongly Agree'. Higher rates represent higher levels of Intercultural Competence, with some reversed items. Responses on 3=Neutral were rated as low Intercultural Competence.

While assessing each pillar with more than 6 items would have enhanced research reliability, the decision was made to prioritise survey fatigue and adhere to the data analysis timeline, as a lengthier survey would have required a longer analysis period that was not feasible due to project restrictions. For this reason, the questions were intentionally approached with a general strategy rather than being overly specific, aiming to cover a broad range of topics as comprehensively as possible with a limited set of items.

Prior to starting the outreach plan of action of contacting public organisations, a communications plan was designed. This entailed a detailed step-by-step communication strategy developed in agreement with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission team: an invitation email briefly introducing the project with a project-description pager, data disclaimer attached (stating the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and organisations throughout their participation in the project), and a short-form in relation to the organisation's general information (i.e., field, number of employees, challenges faced or areas for support in terms of D&I...).

The timeline was as follows:

1. Public body organisations were invited via email to the project following the communications strategy in place.
2. If interested, an initial meeting with the team and the public body's representatives was hosted explaining the details of the project, participation, goals, and benefits.
3. In the case of agreement, a Needs Assessment call (1h) was scheduled and the public body's representative invited between 5 to 10 participants.
4. After completing the call, the link to the Needs Assessment questionnaire was left open for a 2-week data collection period.
5. After this, the team proceeded with the data analysis and,
6. Public body's representative received their Evaluation Report describing the results obtained, strengths and areas to support, with an invitation to discuss the results in a consultancy meeting.

The outreach was focused on organisations in the Midwest of Ireland and it was initiated within GORM's networking lines followed by IHREC's recommendations. Unfortunately, months into the outreach goal, the team kept encountering challenges in engaging with public bodies for their participation in the project, experiencing a low rate of response. This lack of engagement was unexpected, hindering the project's progress and weakening the potential for mutual benefit. Although this was unforeseen and could reflect a limited cultural understanding, it manifests the relevance of promoting Intercultural Competence training in the Public Sector.

With the support of the IHREC team, a newly updated communications strategy was implemented. In the period of a couple of months, insisting on previously contacted organisations and with a new contact list, the efforts led to initial meetings and final successful completion of the Needs Assessment with a total of 4 public body organisations. No organisation will be named in this report in keeping their anonymity and confidentiality agreed.

The Needs Assessment call was kept active until May 2023 while putting efforts into engaging with more public bodies. In the meantime, the team successfully disseminated the Evaluation Report with the results and areas to support to the 4 organisations engaged but the several invitations to further discuss the details and support regrettably elicited no further correspondence back to the team. In addition, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission received bi-monthly reports detailing the advancing of the project, and the team received their support along the way.

During the last period of the project, the team focused on conducting the analysis of the full data from all public bodies and developing the social media campaign alongside the present final report. As a result of the experience and data obtained, the team has successfully curated the skeleton of the Intercultural Competence Workshop, the main objective of the present project. This has been achieved with the support of academic and Intercultural Competence expert Dr. Anca Minescu.

PROJECT FINDINGS

A total of 42 participants from 4 different Irish public bodies have been involved in the project. Each Intercultural Competent pillar (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills) was assessed with 6 items each and a joint score of the three pillars together. The last question assessed the general response to each diversity dimension (Race, Ethnicity, Sex & Gender, Religion, Sexuality, Age, Disability, Socio-Economic Status/Background) and likewise, a joint score.

The scoring interpretation is as follows:

	Low Competency	Medium Competency	High Competency
Description	<p>Have a narrow understanding of culture, diversity and intercultural competences.</p> <p>Knowledge on culture, diversity and intercultural competences are low.</p> <p>Attitudes/Openness to new cultures is low.</p> <p>Skills to adapt to new cultures/environments are low.</p>	<p>Have a general understanding of culture, diversity and intercultural competences.</p> <p>Knowledge on culture, diversity and intercultural competences are medium.</p> <p>Attitudes/Openness to new cultures is medium.</p> <p>Skills to adapt to new cultures/environments are medium.</p>	<p>Have a very wide understanding of culture, diversity and intercultural competences.</p> <p>Knowledge on culture, diversity and intercultural competences are high.</p> <p>Attitudes/Openness to new cultures is high.</p> <p>Skills to adapt to new cultures/environments are high.</p>
Abilities	<p>Cannot differentiate culture from diversity.</p> <p>Can only explain diversity on one or two domains (gender, race etc.).</p> <p>Can only explain culture as nationality or ethnicity.</p>	<p>Can explain culture and diversity in a general manner.</p> <p>Can mention more than a few domains of diversity.</p> <p>Can adapt their behaviours to already exposed cultural settings.</p>	<p>Can explain culture and diversity on a complex level.</p> <p>Understands the multilayers of intersectionality of culture and diversity.</p> <p>Can adapt their behaviours to new cultural settings easily.</p>
Scores	1-3	3-4	4-5

Figure 2

Scoring Interpretation

Firstly, in terms of the KAS pillars (Knowledge, Attitudes & Skills), the results obtained showed a joint score of 3.12, representing a medium-low competency. Individual scores are as follows:

KNOWLEDGE = 3.225. Medium competency.
ATTITUDES = 3.030. Medium-low competency.
SKILLS = 3.091. Medium-low competency.

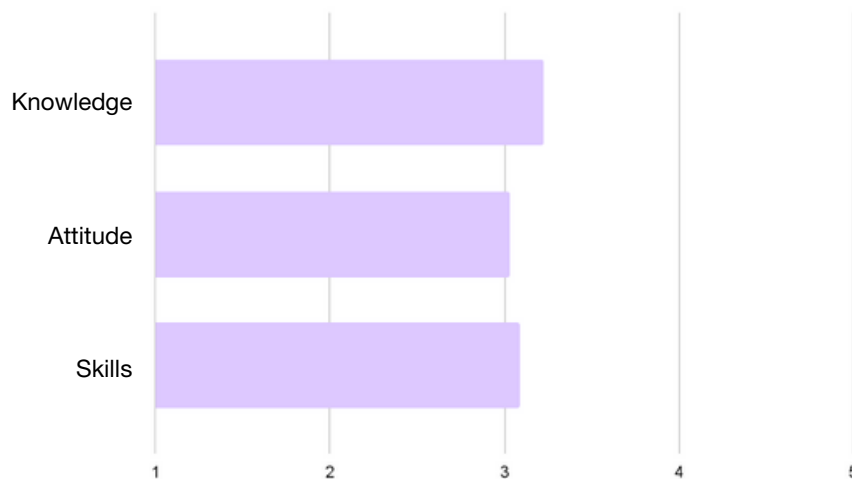


Figure 3

KAS Results, Bar Chart

As highlights from the data, the lowest scoring items were:

- 'I think people in my organisation understand when others do not feel comfortable around them' = 2.00
- 'I think people in my organisation go to places where they meet people from diverse backgrounds' = 2.20.

These items assessing Knowledge and Attitudes showed that despite the overall moderate competency scores obtained, the findings indicate a lack of self-awareness regarding participants' own cultural context, potentially resulting in limited pursuit of intercultural interactions.

Noteworthy, on the other hand, the highest scores obtained were both assessing Knowledge:

- 'I think people in my organisation learn new things from people who have a different background than them' = 3.86
- 'I think people in my organisation are aware that there are diverse ways of life that are different to their own' = 3.79.

The items indicate a significant level of knowledge and awareness regarding the benefits of diversity and intercultural contact, yet it appears that this knowledge is not effectively translating into attitudes and skills. In other words, while participants demonstrate a solid foundation of knowledge, there is a clear need for strong support in bridging the gap between knowledge and tangible actions.

Secondly, in terms of the three open-ended questions, it became evident that participants' performance exhibited a wide spectrum of outcomes. Some demonstrated exceptional results:

- *'Intercultural Competence to me is understanding the difference in communicating with individuals from different culture. It is understanding when and why conflict may occur as a consequence to inappropriate communication'.*
- *'Culture is the written and non written, verbal and non verbal elements which can describe or differentiate one group from another. It can be micro or macro. It is based on values, which are implicit and explicit.'*
- *(Diversity): 'A practice which promotes multiple and sees the value in making decisions which include a range of perspectives across domains such as gender, age, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation and ethnicity.'*

Conversely, others displayed contrasting performances of narrow awareness or familiarity with the concepts of culture, diversity, and Intercultural Competence:

- *(Intercultural Competence): 'The ability to deal with individuals from different cultures'.*
- *(Culture): 'How we do things here' '*
- *(Diversity): 'Not homogeneous. A variety of cultures and peoples'.*

This varied range of outcomes highlights the diversity of participants' abilities and attitudes and how that may influence their actions within their organisation. By recognizing and understanding these disparities, further analysis should be undertaken to identify deeper needs and tailor support accordingly to enhance overall development and success. Noteworthy, the team recognizes and empathises with the fact that certain participants were not diversity and inclusion experts as they came from various departments within their organisations. Describing these concepts might be challenging and we acknowledge the difficulty they may have encountered. However, this serves as a clear indication of the necessity for additional training that takes into account the significance of a diverse and intercultural Ireland for public service providers.

Thirdly, the last question of the questionnaire addressed 7 diversity dimensions (race, ethnicity, sex and gender, sexuality, religion, age, disability, and socio-economic status) and asked *'How is my organisation doing in terms of the following diversity dimensions?'*

Again, the question was intentionally framed this way to cover a broad range of topics and interpretations with just 1 item per dimension. Furthermore, by not providing examples or more detailed questions (i.e., How is my organisation doing in terms of gender quota / religious festivities / gender-neutral bathrooms?), we aimed to prevent the unintentional influence or contamination of participants' responses. It was very important to avoid raising awareness of strategies embracing diversity that they may not have been previously cognizant of. This approach ensured a more accurate assessment of their existing knowledge and perceptions.

The joint score of all 7 dimensions indicated low competency. The highest scoring dimensions– Sexuality and Sex & Gender–both presented medium-high competency scoring. Contrarily, the lowest scores were Socio-Economic Status/Background and Religion.

Highest Scoring Diversity Dimensions	Lowest Scoring Diversity Dimensions	Overall Score of 7 Diversity Dimensions
Sexuality = 3.51	Socio-Economic Status/Background = 2.56	2.991
Sex & Gender = 3.37	Religion = 2.57	

Figure 4

Diversity Dimensions Scoring

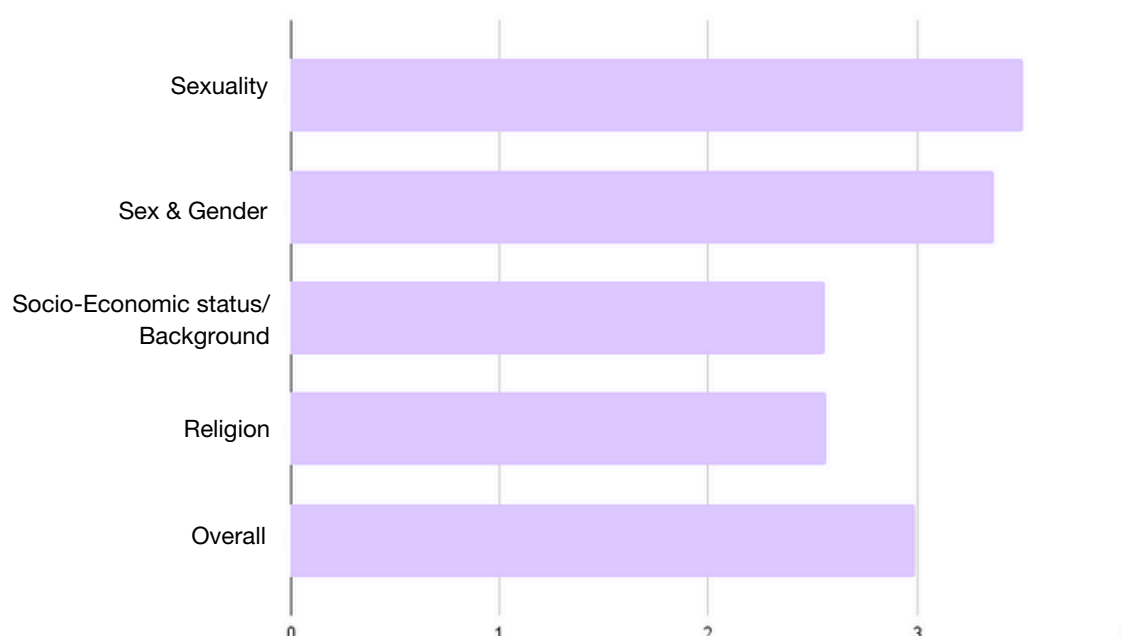


Figure 5

Diversity Dimensions Scoring, Bar Chart

Note of mention, during the open discussion a significant number of participants shared that they had never considered certain dimensions of diversity and were unaware of how their organisation was addressing those dimensions. This lack of awareness regarding diversity strategies in place can likely indicate the absence of a strategy altogether, including efforts to raise awareness. However, it is crucial to state that this is a preliminary analysis and further in-depth research should be conducted to validate these findings.

Lastly, the team capitalised on the open discussion to further comprehend the obtained findings, encompassing both the open-ended questions and quantitative analysis. These discussions not only validated certain results but also brought attention to strengths and areas in need of support for the evaluation report. Some highlights that emerged from the discussions included:

'Sometimes because we're afraid that we are going to get around, we don't have those conversations at all. The fear of getting it wrong, actually makes it shut down and reverse...don't ask anything at all, and I'm sure people won't find it offensive but we become inactive instead of trying to get to know people.'

'I would love to know how to ask questions without offending anyone.'

'They (diverse) people should just know better English, it's their responsibility to figure that out, not (the organisation's) fault.'

'I was honest when answering but to know whether people did it intentionally or not is important to be asked.'

'Maybe people don't adapt their behaviours because they are under-resourced. The context is important...there might be things that are disrespectful but there are reasons why. It's not feasible to make a D&I focused with the resources in the context. They are committed to do their job but is very demanding and asking them to do more could be pushing people.'

'There's a nervousness around people when speaking with people from different languages, and we might be overcompensating from a good place but people might find it wrong. This might be caused because we are not aware of what we need to do.'

'We know a lot about gender but we don't know much about other dimensions...'

'The idea of what we want to answer vs. whether 'are we really there? Does my colleagues think like this? I hope so.'

One common element found in nearly all organisations was the fear of offending others, which often led to inactivity or a halt in interactions with diverse communities. This is particularly concerning in the context of the Public Sector, as limited interaction might result in a limited understanding of their needs. It is worth noting that this element emerged as a manifestation of some participants' self-awareness and motivation to take action. Contrarily, other quotes indicated denial or defensive attitudes when addressing intercultural confrontations or challenges faced, and reluctance to acknowledge their own role in promoting Intercultural Competence. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address these barriers and promote a more inclusive and culturally competent Public Sector.

In analysing the data as a whole, it became evident that there was a prevailing tendency towards medium-low levels of Intercultural Competence. Regardless of the diverse set of profiles within the data, these findings highlight the need for tailored training aiming to build bridges and foster a more inclusive and culturally competent Public Sector.

MEDIA CAMPAIGN DISSEMINATION

The research project incorporates a comprehensive social media campaign aimed at disseminating information about the significance of Intercultural Competence in the Public Sector and the research findings. GORM, as an organisation operating in the media sector, possesses a substantial presence and a combined following of more than 10,100 on all of our social platforms and has established itself as an authority on Intercultural Competence and social psychology with numerous national and international conferences, third-level education institutions, and private companies keynote invitations. In addition, with our innovative media content, GORM makes academic knowledge more accessible adapting the language to the audience and therefore, creating a new platform with intercultural competence learning for all. The dissemination of the research on GORM's social media platforms is highly beneficial to the research project, as it not only ensures the report reaches a wide audience but creates an awareness of the need for Intercultural Competence in the Public Sector and generates an interest in the report.

The social media campaign comprises three separate Instagram carousel posts, three LinkedIn posts, and a blogpost. The Instagram carousel posts and LinkedIn posts provide both contextual background regarding the significance of the research, as well as information about the research findings. The Instagram and LinkedIn posts are divided into three separate carousels, in order to shorten the information into digestible content pieces. The Instagram posts are targeted towards service users and focus strongly on providing context to the research. The LinkedIn posts are targeted towards Public Sector staff in leading positions with decision-making facilities and thus hone in on the significance of Intercultural Competence within the Public Sector. The posts explain the topics of Public Sector Duty, Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Competence in the Public Sector/ Research Findings.

Through the visual components of Instagram and LinkedIn, the posts apply appealing design components and a simple and comprehensive structure to communicate the context of the research to raise awareness of Intercultural Competence in the Public Sector and generate an interest in the full report. Each post is linked to the report through a call to action, urging the reader to read the full report, which is published on GORM's website.

CONCLUSION - NEXT STEPS

The motivation for this project was to understand on a micro level how the Public Sector displays Intercultural Competence as a part of having regard to their Public Sector Duty obligations, which is essential for public body service providers and their service users. We at GORM believe that these public bodies, as pioneers in participating and obtaining a tailored evaluation report in the area of Intercultural Competence, can make a huge impact when it comes to diverse populations and communities in Ireland as service providers. Having these conversations with leaders at public bodies has represented a key step towards a more inclusive Ireland.

Developing Intercultural Competence can positively contribute to the objective of promoting human rights and eliminating discrimination as set out in the Public Sector Duty. This Duty is not only about meeting legal obligations; it is about creating a Public Sector that not only serves its service users but does so in an appropriate and culturally sensitive manner; thus creating a society where everyone feels a sense of belonging and where diversity is celebrated. By investing in research and pioneering efforts in Intercultural Competence, Ireland has the opportunity to become a model for other nations facing similar challenges. The impact of such research can extend beyond the Public Sector, influencing other sectors of society and contributing to the overall well-being and cohesion of the country.

Despite the difficulties in engaging with public bodies when it comes to the importance of Intercultural Competence, the present project actively collaborated with 4 important Irish public organisations. All bodies showed great interest and motivation to apply this kind of knowledge to their organisations. During the meetings hosted, none of the organisations showed previous knowledge of the concept of Intercultural Competence, some had notions of cultural sensitivity or cultural intelligence while having great enthusiasm for learning more about it. Unfortunately, once the evaluation report was handled, no more interest was shown despite our numerous attempts. As said, this was unforeseen and is speculated to be the result of public bodies engaging in a context with low cultural awareness and understanding, which ultimately weakened the potential for further collaboration and mutual benefit.

The comprehensive analysis of the data, as outlined earlier, revealed a general trend of medium-low levels of Intercultural Competencies. Examining specific questionnaire responses and verbalizations from the discussions, despite the diverse range of participants (although not yet representative of the Irish population or the organizations' sample), GORM came to the conclusion to recommend the training in and integration of Intercultural Competence into the public body's work to implement the statutory obligations of the Public Sector Duty. While some examples demonstrated a great interest, motivation, and self-awareness, others displayed a lack of enthusiasm with some quotes reflecting hesitance to recognize personal responsibility. These attitudes are particularly concerning within the realm of Public Sector Duty, where effective interaction and understanding of diverse communities are essential.

As per the Developmental Model for Cultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 2004), individuals with these attitudes lean towards [ethnocentricity](#), which is the belief in the superiority of one's own cultural group and the tendency to judge other cultures based on one's own cultural norms and values. This mindset hinders Intercultural Competence as it prevents individuals from recognizing the value of diverse perspectives and limits their ability to engage effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. On the contrary, attitudes leaning towards the [ethnorelative](#) spectrum of Bennett's model play a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and intercultural society: individuals appreciate and respect cultural differences, leading to increased understanding, empathy, and effective communication across diverse groups. This mindset creates an environment where collaboration, cooperation, and cultural exchange can thrive, ultimately promoting a more harmonious and interconnected Public Sector and thus, society.

In a society where inequality and marginalisation are present, it is highly recommended for the Public Sector to prioritise Intercultural Competence as a means to promote inclusivity and ensure the rights of all individuals are upheld, aligned with the National Action Plan Against Racism. We truly hope that regardless of their change of motivation towards the end of the project, this innovative and pioneer research project is the beginning of bringing closer public bodies and their right-holders when addressing, designing, and delivering services as a part of their Public Sector Duty. This would show the true beginning of the Intercultural Competence journey for the Public Sector in Ireland.

However, further steps are needed to follow this newly created path and transition from a multicultural to an Intercultural Public Sector. Firstly, there is a need for continued research and assessment to track progress and identify areas that require improvement within public body organisation. Secondly, it is essential to invest in training programs that equip leaders and individuals with the necessary skills to effectively and adequately navigate intercultural interactions and diverse environments.

Lastly, fostering partnerships and collaborations between public bodies, community organisations, and individuals from diverse backgrounds. By working together, sharing resources, and exchanging knowledge and experiences, we can create a supportive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes intercultural dialogue.

In conclusion, the present project holds great significance as one of the first social psychology research-based Intercultural Competence within the Public Sector in Ireland. Its findings have shed light on the current landscape of Intercultural Competence within the Public Sector and as a result, has provided valuable insights for future initiatives. Despite their subsequent decreased engagement, it is important to acknowledge the initial commitment of the 4 public bodies involved in the project. It demonstrated a commendable dedication to exploring Intercultural Competence and laid the groundwork for fostering Intercultural Competence as part of the Public Sector Duty and an Intercultural Public Sector.

GORM would like to appreciate the support obtained from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in developing and implementing the present project. This fruitful collaboration serves as a groundbreaking initiative in researching Intercultural Competence within the Public Sector in Ireland. Its findings provide a foundation for future endeavours, highlighting the importance of active engagement from public bodies. By continuing to invest in research, education, and collaboration, we can pave the way for a truly intercultural Ireland, where understanding, respect, and inclusivity thrive.

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