

# Our Mandate

The Commission draws its authority from the Equal Employment Opportunities Law, (1988) and is able to initiate and engage in all types of legal processes concerning discrimination in the labour market. We have the power to handle cases of discrimination, file lawsuits on behalf of employees who are illegally discriminated against, and submit legal opinions on critical issues in the name of the Commission itself. We can also secure legal injunctions to oblige employers to disclose employment-related data.

In addition to the National Commission, three Regional Commissions can be contacted by the public: for Jerusalem and the south; Tel Aviv and the centre; and Haifa and the north. We give initial legal advice to anyone who contacts us regarding any aspect of discrimination in the labour market.

We are also able to organise general training and promotional activities on equality and discrimination in the workplace, provide guidance and training for employers, conduct research and give advice to policymakers on relevant issues.

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# Our Mission

The EEOC addresses a wide range of challenges, all relating to core problems faced by Israeli society today. Our tasks, focusing on the employment arena, relate to the discrimination against, and the exclusion of, wide sectors of the population – in ways that are unacceptable in a modern democratic state and are often unlawful as well.

**We have therefore identified a number of key action areas on which we will focus in 2012-2013, including three 'flagship initiatives' and three 'seed actions'.**

# The Public Sector

The EEOC aims to begin 'at home' and enhance the diversity of employees in the public service – so that the public sector may reflect the population of Israel in its entirety, setting an example for all employers in the country. A 2011 survey - conducted for the EEOC by the Economic Research Unit in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor – shows that 84% of the employers questioned believed diversity of employees would benefit their businesses.


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## What are we doing to advance equal employment in the public sector?

Advancing equal opportunities and diversity in public sector recruitment has been selected as one of the EEOC's flagship initiatives for 2012-2013.

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## Our activity in this area will address a wide range of key considerations. We will:

- use our legal powers to intervene in cases of discrimination in recruitment and hiring in the public sector;
- publish legal opinions on the issue;
- strengthen cooperation with the Civil Service Commission given its responsibilities for public sector employment;
- help to disseminate the values of equality at work through the Code of Ethics and regulations of the Civil Service;
- conduct training programs for public sector CEOs and human resources managers;
- deliver lectures and discussions in Civil Service seminars;
- develop surveys and studies to define, identify and evaluate:
  - who are the citizens applying for jobs in the Civil Service?
  - who are the candidates who win the tenders and/or pass the entrance tests?

- who are the successful employees that gain promotion in the Civil Service?
- are the entrance tests fair from a cultural perspective?
- what are the barriers preventing the employment of candidates from certain population groups in government offices?
- cooperate with representatives of sectors partially or wholly excluded from the Civil Service;
- participate in a group that will include key figures from the public sector, as well as representatives from workers' organisations, NGOs and other organisations involved in the issue.

# Gender Pay Gap

Women in Israel suffer from discrimination in the workplace – at the hiring stage, in relatively low salary levels and limited in promotion opportunities, and in their terms of termination or retirement. The large majority of senior positions are held by men, often overseeing a cadre of women who are no less talented or dedicated but whose status and salary are significantly lower. A further major issue is the division of parental responsibility between mothers and fathers, as this directly impacts on women's position in the labour market. As a result – despite explicit legislation – pregnancy and parenthood often prevent

women's employment and promotion, and still serve as common grounds for dismissal. Many mothers of young children discover they are unwanted or are not promoted in their jobs.

## The numbers speak for themselves:

Israel's official 2010 statistics on employees' income show a gap of 34% between the average monthly income of men (9,720 NIS) and women (6,386 NIS). An extraordinary 32% of all complaints received by the Commission in 2011 were about pregnancy-related discrimination. And a 2011 EEOC-sponsored survey of employers found that 35.3% of private sector managers believe that mothers of young children experience discrimination in the workplace.



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## What are we doing to fight gender pay gaps at work?

Reducing the gender pay gap has been selected as one of the EEOC's flagship initiatives for 2012-2013

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### Our activity in this area will address a wide range of key considerations. We will:

- answer the enquiries from women employees who feel they are victims of gender pay gap discrimination;
- conduct legal action against employers discriminating against women in terms of salary
- work with policymakers in the Knesset and government to take forward critical reforms;

- gather information and conduct studies on the situation in Israel and the rest of the world;
- prepare campaigns to raise public awareness;
- maintain regular contact with employers in the private and public sectors;
- co-operate with NGOs and organisations promoting women's rights in Israel.

### If you have encountered discrimination at work because you are a woman, **contact us!**

The EEOC offers you a wide range of legal services including consultation, representation and guidance. We are committed to helping you defend your rights – to which you are entitled by Israeli law – so you can enjoy an equal opportunity to make use of your abilities and earn a decent wage.

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# Inclusion of the Arab Population in the Workforce

Israel's Arab citizens suffer from unmistakable discrimination in the labour market. Arabs who want to earn a decent salary from a profession that they have qualified for through considerable effort, in fact have significantly fewer opportunities than their Jewish peers. In addition to

difficulties such as language, culture and transportation, the Arab population contends with the fact that many Jewish employers in the private sector – in leading sectors such as hi-tech, industry, law or accountancy – clearly prefer Jewish professionals and avoid hiring Arabs, even when the latter have excellent and proven credentials.

## The numbers speak for themselves:

Israel's official statistics for 2010 showed that only 41.3% of Israeli Arabs aged 15 and above participated in the workforce (compared with 57.3% of the total population), and the rate of unemployment in the Arab sector stood at 8% (compared to 6.6% in the general population). Among Arab women only 22.5% aged 15 and above participated in the workforce, and unemployment was 8.8%.

Similarly, there are significant pay gaps between the Arab and Jewish communities. The official 2010 statistics showed that Arab males earned on average 45.4% less than Jewish males (5,691 NIS compared to 10,428 NIS) and the average wage of Arab women (4,387 NIS) was 32.2% less than that of their Jewish counterparts (6,470 NIS).

An employer survey initiated by the Commission in 2011 found that employers are not blind to the problem: 39.4% of private sector employers think there is discrimination against Arabs in the labour market.

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## **What are we doing to fight the discrimination of Arabs in the workplace?**

Enhancing the employment of Arabs and the inclusion of Arab employees in the private sector has been selected as one of the EEOC's flagship initiatives for 2012-2013.

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## **Our activity in this area will address a wide range of key considerations. We will:**

- answer enquiries from Arab citizens who feel they have encountered barriers and discrimination based on their nationality;
- conduct legal action against employers practising discriminating on grounds of nationality;
- carry out a study of the barriers preventing the integration of Arab employees in the private sector;
- initiate programs for raising awareness among Arab men and women of their employment rights and how to enforce them;
- publish recommendations on equal opportunities and non-discriminatory employment for Arabs in Israel;
- provide private sector employers with training and guidance about recruitment of employees from the Arab sector;
- cooperate with NGOs, organisations and businesses working to advance equal employment opportunities for the Arab population;



- organize a round table with representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors civil, to address the barriers to the employment of Arabs as well as to initiate and implement solutions;
- urge the government to set out a full policy on the equal employment of Arab citizens.

If you have encountered discrimination at work because you are an Arab citizen, **contact us!**

The EEOC offers you a wide range of legal services, including consultation, representation and guidance. We are committed to helping you defend your rights – to which you are entitled by Israeli law – so you can enjoy an equal opportunity to find your place in the job market, make use of your abilities, receive appropriate conditions and earn a decent wage.

Equal Employment

Seed Action

## Employing Older Persons

People over 50 – and often even over 40 – suffer from discrimination in the workplace due to their age. Women and men with extensive experience, at the height of their powers and professional skills, find themselves unemployed with no source of income. Their applications for various jobs are repeatedly rejected, and they discover that many employers don't even read resumes showing a birth date earlier than 1970.



## The numbers speak for themselves:

The Israeli government's official statistics for 2010 – broken down by age – showed that the participation rate among employees is highest between the ages of 24 to 44, and then drops sharply. Surveys conducted for the Commission over the last two years have found that 48% of job-seekers aged over 45 in Israel feel they are discriminated against because of their age when seeking work, and 47.6% of private sector managers believe there is discrimination against older employees in the labour market.

## What are we doing to fight discrimination against older employees?

The EEOC has declared combating age-related discrimination a major project for 2012-2013.

## Our activity in this area will address several key considerations. We will:

- provide help and information to people over 45 who feel they have been discriminated against at work, or when applying for work, because of their age;
- conduct legal action against employers practising age-related discrimination;
- advance the issue among policymakers in the Knesset and in government;
- conduct a study to assess the age barrier in the labour market;
- maintain ongoing contact with employers in the private and public sectors, to raise awareness and prevent age-based discrimination;
- co-operate with NGOs and organisations promoting the rights of older employees.

## If you have encountered discrimination at work because of your age, **contact us!**

The EEOC offers you a wide range of legal services, including consultation, representation and guidance. We are committed to helping you defend your rights – to which you are entitled by Israeli law – so you can enjoy an equal opportunity to find your place in the job market, make use of your abilities, receive appropriate conditions and earn a decent wage.

Seed Action

# Reducing Employment Discrimination against the Gay–Lesbian Community

The status of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Trans-genders in Israeli society has significantly improved in the last 20 years, but full equality is still to be achieved. Even today many members of this community are forced to hide their sexual orientation when looking for work, or else suffer from discrimination – often covert as well as counter to the legislation – at their place of work.

## **The numbers speak for themselves:**

Sexual preference is a personal, private and sensitive matter, and therefore it is particularly difficult to conduct surveys and obtain reliable statistics on this type of discrimination in the workplace. That said, a comprehensive study conducted in 2009 in the 27 countries of the European Union indicates that a large part of the Gay-Lesbian community feel they do not get equal opportunities in the workplace.

## What are we doing to combat discrimination due to sexual tendencies?

The EEOC has selected the fight against discrimination on grounds of sexual preference as a major project for 2012-2103.

### Our activity in this area will address several key considerations. We will:

- respond to enquiries from Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Trans-genders who feel they have been discriminated against in the workplace, or when applying for a job, because of their sexual orientation;
- conduct legal action against employers practising discrimination on grounds of sexual preferences;
- carry out a study on labour market discrimination and barriers connected with sexual orientation, in different sectors and geographical areas;

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- assess the unique employment needs of the Gay-Lesbian community;
  - maintain ongoing contact with employers in the private and public sectors;
  - cooperate with NGOs and organisations promoting the rights of the Gay-Lesbian community;
  - act to advance this issue among policymakers in the Knesset and in government.

### If you have encountered barriers and discrimination at work because of your sexual orientation, **contact us!**

The EEOC offers you a wide range of legal services, including consultation, representation and guidance. We are committed to helping you defend your rights – to which you are entitled by Israeli law – so you can enjoy an equal opportunity to find your place in the labour market, make use of your abilities, receive appropriate conditions and earn a decent wage.

# Inclusion of the UltraOrthodox Population into the Workforce

A large proportion of the Ultra Orthodox in Israel do not participate in the workforce at all. However the percentage of Ultra-Orthodox working women is much higher than that of working men. The reasons for this situation are complex, and seem to come from two directions: On the

one hand, the Ultra-Orthodox themselves prefer to keep away from the wider market. On the other, many employers do not rush to employ them. That said, it is clear that the Ultra-Orthodox sector is one of the poorest in Israel, and solutions are required to enable them to work and to provide properly for their families.

## The numbers speak for themselves:

The official government statistics for 2010 show that only 37.5% of Ultra-Orthodox men participate in the Israeli workforce. In contrast, the rate among working Ultra-Orthodox women is 60.8%.

## What are we doing to raise the employment rate in the Ultra-Orthodox sector?

The EEOC has selected increasing the rate of employment among the Ultra-Orthodox as a significant project for 2012-2013.