

Glossary

The following glossary is from the "Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for ECEC" (Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, 2016). Based on the RECOde Framework (2025) and the Anti-bias approach (Derman-Sparks, 1989), we present this glossary to proactively address prejudice, discrimination and racism in HEI, with a particular focus on ECEC. However, these terms and definitions have been developed by colleagues in their specific contexts. We hope that this material will inspire you to create your own glossary and transformative journey!

Anti-racism.	An activist approach or policy that aims to challenge and combat racism in all its forms: institutional, individual, behavioural and attitudinal.
Assimilation.	Assimilationist approaches are based on the assumption that it is natural and/ or desirable for the minority group or subordinate group to adjust to the values and norms of the majority or dominant group. The culture of the minority/ subordinate group is denied and is viewed as inferior
Asylum seeker.	An asylum seeker is an immigrant who has applied for refugee status on the grounds that they fear persecution in their country of origin, or because their life and liberty is threatened by armed conflict or violence. Asylum seeker status is temporary while a claim for refugee status is being processed. Asylum seekers have limited rights. They are not illegal immigrants.
Bias.	Having a preferred point of view, attitude or feeling about a person or group. Can be positive or negative.
Black.	A term chosen by people from many African, African-Caribbean, and Asian/ South-Asian people to describe and distinguish themselves in terms of solidarity against racism. The term 'people of color' is used in the US and Europe to refer to people who experience discrimination and racism on the basis of visible skin colour.
'Coloured'.	'Coloured' is an outdated term that should be avoided as it is generally viewed as offensive to many Black people. The terms Black or mixed heritage, where appropriate, are preferred.
Critical cultural awareness.	Describes an approach to childcare practices/materials/resources that are designed or used to minimise exclusion, support individual children's identity, promote respect and foster inclusive practice.
Civil status.	Individuals are entitled to equal treatment whether you are single, married, separated, divorced or widowed, in a civil partnership or previously in a civil partnership.
Diversity.	Describes the diverse nature of society. It includes, for example, social class, gender, family status, returned Irish emigrants, the many minority groups as well as the majority group.

Discrimination.	Policy, practice or behaviour that leads to unfair treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of their identity or perceived identity. It can be intentional or unintentional, and may be direct or indirect.
Early Childhood Education and Care.	Refers to the Education and Care sector as a whole.
Early Childhood practitioners.	Refers to those working with children in the sector.
Early Childhood services.	Refers to all the places where children are cared for and educated.
Emigrant.	A person who has left their country of origin (e.g. Ireland) to live and work abroad.
Equality.	The importance of recognising different individual needs and ensuring equity in terms of access, participation and outcomes for all children and their families. It is not about treating all children the same.
Equal opportunity.	The right of access for every child and family to full participation in early childhood services and equitable outcomes between groups.
Ethnic.	This term is used to describe minority ethnic people or things (e.g. in the context of traditional dress, food, shops, hair products, etc.) and when used in this context, it may fail to acknowledge that we all have ethnicity.
Ethnic group.	“An involuntary group which shares a common ancestry, culture, history, tradition and sense of belonging or peoplehood and that is a political and economic interest group. Ethnicity is a way of categorising people on the basis of self-identification and ascription by others.” (Platform against Racism: Glossary of terms). The term ‘ethnic group’ may refer to those from minority or majority groups in society.
Gender.	Individuals are entitled to equal treatment whether you are a man, a woman or a transgender person.
Gender bias.	Attitudes, opinions, messages, encouragement, organised activities, or design of play materials, that, being unequal for boys and girls, influences unequal preferences, use or participation between boys and girls.
Identity.	An internal concept of who you are, how you regard yourself and how others see you. It involves what you have in common with others and what makes you different.
Immigrant.	Describes someone who has left their home country and arrived in another country to live or work.
Inclusion.	A process involving a programme, curriculum or educational environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong, and can progress to achieve his/her full potential in all areas of development.

Indigenous.	Describes people who are native to the country in which they are living (e.g. Aborigines in Australia; Native American Indians in the USA).
Institutional racism.	Racial discrimination which has been incorporated into the structures, processes or procedures of organisations, either because of racial prejudice or due to a failure to take into account the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic people. Institutions have the power to sustain and promote racial injustice by providing opportunities for some people and not others, by providing career advancement, training, influence, promoting self-respect, etc. Institutional racism occurs where the activities, practices, policies or laws of an institution lead, intentionally or unintentionally, to less favourable outcomes for minority ethnic groups.
Minority group.	Any minority community or culture within society, such as Traveller, Jewish, disabled, etc.
Majority group.	The predominant culture in society (e.g. white, settled, Catholic, able-bodied, etc.)
Mixed heritage.	Refers to a person whose parents or family identify with more than one cultural heritage.
Multicultural.	A recognition of the many minority cultures within a society. Also refers to an educational approach that includes looking at minority cultural experience.
[persons with a] disability.	those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Parents.	Parents. A parent, guardian or carer.
Participation.	Being involved at all levels of a process, and at all stages, from inception to evaluation. Being consulted as to your views, and ensuring that all views are heard and given due consideration. Effective participation is a process through which stakeholders influence initiatives, resources and decisions that will affect them.
Race.	A socio-political concept which categorises people into biologically distinct, superior or inferior species or races, and has been used to justify cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, but in fact has no scientific basis. There is only one human race.
Racism.	“Any theory which involves the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others presumed to be inferior, or which bases value judgements on racial differentiation, has no scientific foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity.” (UNESCO General Conference, 27 November 1978, Declaration on race and racial prejudice).
Religion.	Individuals are entitled to equal treatment no matter what their religious beliefs are or if they do not hold any religious beliefs.

Refugee.	A person outside of his or her country of origin, who, on the basis of personal circumstances, including fear of persecution, has attained the legal status 'refugee' as stipulated in the 1951 Geneva Convention.
Sexism.	Any attitude, action or institutional practice that oppresses or undermines people because of their gender.
Sexual orientation.	Sexual orientation. Individuals are entitled to equal treatment whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual (straight).
Special educational needs.	A child has special educational needs (SENs) if he or she has a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child has a learning difficulty if he/she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age, or has a condition or impairment that prevents or hinders the child from using educational facilities or materials.
Stereotype.	An oversimplified generalisation about a particular group, race or sex, based on widely held assumptions, presenting a rigid view that can be difficult to change.
Traveller.	Member of the Traveller community, which is a minority group with a shared language, heritage and nomadic culture.
Values.	Qualities that an individual or group believes to be important and worthwhile for themselves and for others. Values guide your goals, choices and how you live and work. Values are personal; you acquire your values growing up within your home culture, and they will be different depending on that culture.
Xenophobia.	Describes extreme feelings of fear or hostility towards outsiders, expressed through attitudes, views or actions in response to individuals or groups from a different national, ethnic, religious or cultural background.