



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

**Message from the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD,
concerning the Opening Power to Diversity project.**

I welcome the Opening Power to Diversity measure which is an innovative way to involve immigrants to our country in its political life.

The political system affects everyone and, if democracy is to be meaningful, we need as much engagement as possible by people with politics. We need as many people as possible, from all walks of life, influencing the decision making process.

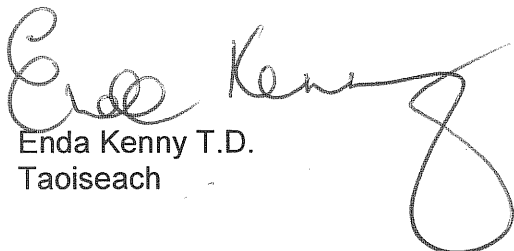
Of course, immigrants may face more barriers to participation than many others. Naturally enough, unless and until one becomes an Irish citizen, there are restrictions on the franchise and on eligibility for office. Moreover, the immigrant is coming to terms with living in new surroundings and may take time to learn about and understand the Irish Governmental and political system.

I welcome the Opening Power to Diversity initiative as a way to help deal with this. With the cooperation of the authorities in Leinster House and TDs, the measure gives immigrant participants an inside look at our political system at a level which only a small minority of the public will ever experience.

The participating interns can observe and be part of all aspects of a TD's work and, in this way, get a good insight over a six month period into how our political system works in practice. From the evidence so far, the participants on both sides - the immigrants and the TDs - have benefitted greatly from taking part in the project.

I would like to commend Crosscare for developing this project and offer it my support. Clearly a lot of careful preparation and thought has gone into it, and it has received funding support from the Department of Justice and Equality.

In conclusion, I want to wish the project continued success and hope that all the participants will benefit individually as well as acting as a bridge to their wider communities.


Enda Kenny T.D.
Taoiseach