

Review of Ireland January 2023

The Review of Ireland by the Committee on the Rights of the Child with respect to Ireland's implementation of the Rights of the Child.

In August 2022 the Presentation Interprovincial Justice Desk as part of the International Presentation Association, in collaboration with other congregations, made a joint submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Our submission contributed to the review of Ireland by the Committee which examines how well the Convention on the Rights of the Child is being implemented in Ireland and the steps taken by Government to ensure that every child's rights are protected. The submission outlined concerns and recommendations across five specific areas of concern:

1. Children as victims of Domestic violence.
2. Children as victims of Human trafficking.
3. Children living in the Direct Provision system.
4. Right to education.
5. Racism in schools.

This joint submission was a collaborative effort by the [International Presentation Association](#) (IPA) with the [Christian Brothers](#) European Province Advocacy Office, [Our Lady of Apostles Ireland](#), the [Society of African Missions](#) – Irish Province, the [Cork Migrant Centre](#), and [Presentation Brothers](#) Ireland. This work was supported with input from local grassroots groups and both national and international civil society organisations including Barnardos, in Ireland.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Ireland signed the UN Convention on 30 September 1990, and ratified it on 28 September 1992. This means that the Irish State committed itself to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children, as outlined in the UN Convention.

The Review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the body of 18 Independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All countries who have signed the Convention are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. Ireland is under review this year.

Our Joint Submission

You can download the IPA Joint Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child [here](#) and our submission to the Committee with respect to the rights of those children with families in prison can be found [here](#).

On Tuesday 24th of January prior to the first session of the Review of Ireland, those in Civil Society gathered in a small room in the Palais Wilson to plan how to maximise the impact of their attendance by sharing printed submissions with each other, by linking with like-minded NGOs where we spontaneously collaborated around social media and messaging.



Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth led a large Irish Delegation that attended the Review. The Committee on the Rights of the Child posed upwards of 50 questions in the first session whereupon the Irish Delegation retired for 20 minutes to prepare their answers. Upon their return as many questions as was feasibly possible were answered and those that couldn't were flagged by the Minister as questions he would come to in time when more information became available. The Committee was rigorous in its' examination and very well informed and indeed commented from time to time on the quality of the answers provided where they thought more needed to be done or that the answers weren't comprehensive enough.

The Committee were extremely critical of the lack of availability of quality disaggregated data that would offer a clear picture of those children in Ireland furthest behind. We were able to approach the individual committee members on this very topic of poor data with respect to children who are victims of human trafficking and domestic violence and ask them to press this issue home in subsequent or follow up questions. We were also able to approach the Irish civil

servants to ask for clarity where we felt answers fell short of what was required. This was a real advantage of being present in the chamber. We were able to have a real-time influence on the proceedings through by engaging with the Committee and the Irish Delegation and further, we are also able to bring to the Committee queries or questions that were being posed by co-authors of our submission who were watching the sessions online at home in Ireland.



Brian O' Toole (Director at the Interprovincial Justice Desk) and Sr. Jo McCarthy PBVM (Cork Migrant Centre) at the UNCRC

The minister and the Irish Delegation had the evening of the 24th to prepare answers to over 70 further questions that were posed in the second session which was due to take place on the morning of the 25th. In the three hours of the second session, once again the Irish Delegation were interrogated on their commitment to children in Ireland and at times there was robust exchange in the follow-up questions which were spontaneous and often prompted by a less than complete government answer. What is clear is that the government have work to do, what is also clear is that the Irish government do care about children and the Minister worked hard over the course of the sessions. He made a special point of thanking all those from Civil Society who attended and submitted concerns and recommendations to the Committee and he met with us after each session.

And even more generously, when the review was completed Minister O' Gorman invited the entire Civil Society delegation to attend a lunch meeting with him at the Irish Mission in Geneva to ask us specifically to speak to the issues that concerned us and to help him to prioritise what his department should do following the Review given that he has maximum, 20 months left in the Government term. We were able to ask him to submit the concluding observations to the SDG Unit in the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications for consideration in the preparation of the Irish Voluntary National Review, to be presented at the High Level Political Forum in New York, July 2023.



While the review was happening it was important to us to have a presence in the Office of the Children's Ombudsman where they were screening the review for interested NGOs and individuals with the aim of preparing a statement for the press. On the first day Sr. Ann Marie Quinn PBVM, Executive Director of the International Presentation Association attended and on day 2 of the review Sr. Imelda Wickham PBVM of New Directions attended.

The concluding observations of the Committee for the Rights of the Child with respect to the review of Ireland were published [HERE](#) and will help us to decide our next steps in collective advocacy as we try to impress upon the government to implement the recommend-

ations speedily and fully. Below are particular recommendations of ours that have been identified in the concluding observations as worthy of note and in need of being addressed.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Violence against Children

The UN Committee recommends that the State should:

- revise the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence to ensure refuge accommodation provision is in line with Council of Europe standards
- effectively implement the Strategy, enabling children to apply for protection and safety orders in their own right and ensuring child-friendly and multi-sectoral support for child victims of violence





UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Asylum-Seeking, Refugee and Migrant Children

The UN Committee recommends that the State should:

- ensure that all asylum-seeking children, including disabled children, have prompt access to housing, education, health services, social protection, psychosocial integration support and reasonable accommodation



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Non-discrimination

The UN Committee recommends that the State should:

- expedite and implement the review of the Equality Acts to protect children's rights
- allocate sufficient resources for the launch of the National Action Plan Against Racism

Commission on Children and Young People
of the National Children's Rights and Equality Commission

ombudsman do leanaí for children

The Committee recommends the State take urgent action in six key areas:

- non-discrimination
- violence
- mental health
- standard of living
- education
- child justice

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Children's Rights Alliance prepared a [statement](#) relative to the work that must be undertaken by the government if children's rights are to be sincerely upheld.

Upon our return we debriefed and each contributor in the consortium identified their concerns and recommendations and these were reframed in such a manner as to inform 5 separate inputs to the Official State Voluntary National Review (VNR) that would outline the progress of Ireland relative to their SDG promise. You can read our submission to the Irish VNR [here](#).