



## **Progress Report on the Implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education**

### **Irish Human Rights Commission ('A' Status NHRI) Submission**

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is Ireland's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), set up by the Irish Government under the Human Rights Commission Acts 2000 and 2001.<sup>1</sup> The IHRC has a statutory remit under the Human Rights Commission Act 2000 to endeavour to ensure that the human rights of all persons in the State are fully realised and protected in the law and policy of the State. The IHRC seeks to ensure that Irish law and policy set the standards of best international practice. Its functions include, keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice in the State relating to the protection of human rights, and making such recommendations to the Government as it deems appropriate in relation to the measures which the IHRC considers should be taken to strengthen, protect and uphold human rights in the State. The IHRC was chair of the European Group of NHRIs from 2006-2011.

The IHRC welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the Progress Report on the implementation of the World Programme on Human Rights Education (WPHRE). The IHRC is committed to promoting human rights education. It does this through two streams based in its Research, Policy and Promotion Division: the first is to consider HRE in its broadest sense, including promoting human rights in educational policy in Ireland and promoting human rights components in education in all sectors. The second way in which the IHRC promotes the WPHRE is through its Human Rights Education and Training Project, which focuses on HRE for the Civil and Public Service.

The WPHRE informs all of the IHRC's work in the area of Human Rights Education.

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on the work of the IHRC, see our website at [www.ihrc.ie](http://www.ihrc.ie).

## 1. Promoting the WPHRE in Human Rights Education Policy

### ***Baseline Study***

In 2011, the IHRC published **Human Rights Education in Ireland - An Overview**. This baseline study considered human rights initiatives in Ireland across a diverse range of sectors including primary, secondary and higher education, the civil and public service, the legal profession and the community and voluntary sector (civil society). The purpose of the study was to inform the IHRC's own human rights education strategy and provide an evidentiary foundation for the development of a National Action Plan on Human Rights Education in Ireland.

The WPHRE encourages Member States to carry-out a baseline study to inform their work on human rights education, in particular the development of a National Action Plan on Human Rights Education. As the Irish Government had not conducted such a study, the extent and nature of human rights education in Ireland was not clear. In the absence of such an evidence base, in 2009-2010 the IHRC took the decision to carry out a baseline study to provide an overview of human rights education initiatives.

The definition of human rights education that informed and shaped the report was that of the WPHRE. The study illustrated the breadth of covenants, conventions, treaties, declarations and agreements that support and promote human rights education and State parties duties in that regard.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the World Decade on Human Rights Education, followed by the WPHRE and the subsequent plans of action in operationalising the delivery of human rights education were recognised and taken on board. In analysing the levels and extent of human rights education in Ireland, the IHRC used the WPHRE's five recommended components of a successful national programme of human rights education.<sup>3</sup> The OHCHR guidelines on developing a National Action Plan on Human Rights Education informed the IHRC's recommendations to the Irish government in that regard. The Report is available at <http://www.ihrc.ie/publications/list/human-rights-education-in-ireland-an-overview/>

A summary of the findings of the IHRC's report is included below in Appendix 1. The report concluded with a recommendation on the establishment of a National Action Plan on HRE for Ireland.

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<sup>2</sup> It emphasised the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO declarations at United Nations (UN) level and the recommendations of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly at regional level.

<sup>3</sup> A human rights education perspective in education legislation and policy, policy implementation, teaching and learning, the learning environment and the education and professional development of teachers/educators and other personnel.

## **2. Examples of IHRC Work promoting HRE in Schools**

### ***Politics and Society***

The IHRC has made policy submissions to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on *Politics and Society*, the new subject at Senior Cycle in secondary education and successfully influenced an even stronger emphasis on human rights education in the final syllabus.

### ***Civic, Social and Political Education***

The IHRC has made submissions to the NCCA on strengthening *Civic, Social and Political Education* (CSPE) from a human rights perspective and calling for it to remain a compulsory state examinable subject and resources and supports for it to be expanded in the revised Junior Cycle curriculum.

### ***Human Rights – Framed by Young People for UDHR@60***

The IHRC organised a very successful event with CSPE students to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students were invited to submit posters promoting a human rights message. The poster and accompanying human rights message had to be a collaborative exercise. The posters were exhibited and the students invited to the launch to speak about their posters and each received a certificate of participation. The posters were then exhibited in libraries across Dublin during the year.

### ***Human Rights – Framed by Young People in 2012***

In 2012, the IHRC will invite CSPE students to promote submit posters promoting a human rights message. The creation of the poster and accompanying human rights message will collaborative exercise. The posters will be exhibited and the students invited to the launch to speak about their posters and each will received a certificate of participation. The posters were then exhibited in libraries across Dublin.

### ***Citizenship Education Network***

The IHRC is a member of the Citizenship Education Network (CEN) that brings together people working on human rights education, citizenship education and development education in schools. The IHRC promotes the overarching nature of human rights education and its contribution to formal education curriculum.

## **3. IHRC promoting WPHRE as a National Human Rights Institution**

### ***OHCHR WPHRE 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase***

The IHRC made an extensive submission to the OHCHR on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the World Programme on Human Rights Education. In its submission the IHRC highlighted the importance of continuing to support teachers and educators to roll-out human rights education in primary and secondary school settings. It called for the Second Phase to prioritise education and training with civil and public servants and law enforcement officials.

The IHRC was pleased that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights took on board some of the IHRC's recommendations.

### ***Human Rights Council***

In September 2010, the IHRC made an oral statement on Human Rights Education to the Human Rights Council on behalf of the European Group of NHRIs, welcoming the draft Plan of Action for the second phase and welcoming the focus on higher education, civil servants, law enforcement and the military as such training is critical to equipping these public service professionals with the understanding and skills to reflect human rights values and standards in both legislation and policy, and their everyday work. The European Group of NHRIs supported the need for States to adopt comprehensive human rights pre-service and in-service training policies with such training as a mandatory criterion for professional qualification and promotion. The statement also reiterated the Groups' belief that NHRIs are ideally placed to assist States in the implementation of accompanying national action plans and in promoting and offering, where possible, training in human rights, as indeed they are called on to do so by the World Programme and are mandated to do so under the *Paris Principles*. NHRIs also have an important role in monitoring and advising on the development of national action plans.

### ***UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training***

The IHRC contributed to various drafts of the Declaration through the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs.

## **4. Human Rights Education and Training Project for the Civil and Public Service**

The IHRC developed the Human Rights Education and Training Project (HRETP) in 2010 in response to research that identified a gap on human rights application and knowledge within the Irish Civil and Public Service, which also reflected a global trend identified by the WPHRE. The Project aims, among other areas, to share its learning internationally, particularly with other NHRIs.

The IHRC recognises the valuable expertise and commitment across Ireland's Civil and Public Services and indeed internationally and seeks to complement existing work in this Sector by producing tailored materials to the specific needs of each Department, Service and/or specific team within these structures.

To date the Training Project has:

- delivered face-to-face training to approximately 400 participants across the Civil and Public Service;
- developed a reference 'Human Rights Guide' of which 7000 have been distributed (including 1500 to the Irish Prison Service, 1900 to the Police Service) ;

- developed a training website that includes various tools and resources on human rights – [www.ihrc.ie/training](http://www.ihrc.ie/training);
- developed an on-line learning video on Human Rights for the Civil and Public Service
- developed bespoke training materials including extensive research papers;
- developed a Training for Trainers component to their programme of work to support Civil and Public Service Trainers to deliver and incorporate human rights training;
- shared learning with other NHRIs, networks and stakeholders;
- offered advice and collaboration with regards to bespoke materials and project management;
- an independent evaluation report on the first 18 months of the HRETP.

In the next 12 months the Project will:

- develop and deliver a 3 day training course to new cadets and 1 day training course via international programme with the Irish Defence Forces;
- collaborate on course content and new materials with the Defence Forces;
- publish a reference 'European Convention on Human Rights Guide' for distribution;
- develop a human rights training course and materials for Prison Officer's and deliver this directly to Prison Trainers for 'Train the Trainer' delivery;
- develop multiple eLearning modules including tools for the Police Service (An Garda Síochána) and the Probation Service;
- Deliver the second round of 2 day Human Rights Training the Trainer course for the Civil and Public Service;
- advise, develop and deliver on domestic and international human rights training projects;
- develop a new evaluation template for evaluating Human Rights Education and Training work with the Civil and Public Sector via an independent evaluation team and international advisory group, following on from the independent evaluation of Phase 1.

### *Rationale*

Knowing about human rights is an essential part of all work in the Civil and Public Service in Ireland. As well as Ireland's obligations under international human rights law and the legally binding provisions contained in the Irish Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 has placed a specific obligation on the Civil and Public Service to carry out their work in a way that is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. There is a need to place human rights at the centre of policy making, planning, infrastructure development and service provision. Every Civil and Public Servant should be aware of their legal obligations in order to ensure this happens. The training project aims to support the proactive application of human rights in the daily work of the Civil and Public

Service, while encouraging a more positive shift in attitude and behaviour in this sector to human rights.

The State has primary responsibility for upholding human rights. The Civil and Public Service plays a key role in ensuring that human rights of everyone are protected through policy and in practice. It is important that Civil or Public Servants understand their responsibilities to uphold and promote human rights in their work. The HRETP aims to help and support the Civil and Public Service through HRE methodology to understand their role in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights in Ireland. These responsibilities are not solely an issue for policy-makers, chief executives, or police officers; human rights concerns are relevant from management to front-line staff, and everywhere in between.

### *Human Rights Guide*

The HRETP produced a short, accessible reference *Guide Human Rights Guide for the Civil & Public Service* to compliment the training and raise awareness throughout the Civil and Public Service. Feedback has been very positive and to date more than 7,000 hard copies have been disseminated across the Civil and Public Service in Ireland. The Guide has received international interest and several statutory human rights bodies from other countries have approached the IHRC for advice on replicating the model.

### *Training*

Training sessions are delivered via mixed media, with information delivered in non-legalistic language. Discussion groups, established human rights activities, case studies and exercises on the practical application of materials in the workplace, all contribute to a highly informative and accessible experience for attendees. Participants have called the training, all of which is bespoke, 'a fantastic learning tool' and a 'good insight into the legal area of human rights, but also the practical elements of how we ourselves act as public servants'. Others mentioned that it encouraged them to examine their own procedures and practices in a new light, as well as helping them to promote human rights values in service delivery.

Feedback from training courses delivered to date has been very positive and the training style, using participatory approaches, rated highly. The vast majority of participants reported that they found the training beneficial and that the courses consistently met or exceeded expectations. Take up by over three times the target number of participants has been attributed to the careful building and maintaining relationships within the sector, and by providing a focused approach to training. 'Training for Trainers' participants gave positive feedback about the quality of the training sessions even though the majority of those attending had no formal training or instruction prior to their involvement in the HRETP, yet all participants felt that the training had made them more aware of how to factor human rights into their organisational operations.

All course participants receive a basic introduction to the international human rights framework, including the United Nations treaty bodies and their monitoring systems and the European regional systems of rights protection. Participants then explore how human rights are protected at a domestic level through the Irish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003. Workloads and constraints of Civil and Public Service staff are given careful consideration when planning training sessions.

### ***Microsite***

A Project microsite within the wider IHRC website has a range of useful information sources and links to human rights education materials. Further e-learning tools are under development and these can be made available to multiple audiences.

## **Appendix 1 – Summary of some of the IHRC findings from its HRE Report**

The study was published in July 2011 and its broad findings were as follows:

### ***Formal Education***

The strongest evidence of human rights education is in the school sector. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) informs the primary curriculum and human rights principals underpin Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), a key conduit for human rights education at this level. There is also a growing HRE presence in teacher education. However, not enough class time is devoted to SPHE and teachers lack human rights education materials and in-service training. Amnesty International - Ireland has produced excellent material that has been piloted successfully, and the IHRC has called for its approach and material to be mainstreamed. The IHRC has also called for more explicit teaching of human rights education in initial teacher education, highlighting the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education at St Patrick's College of Education in Dublin as good example of such efforts.

At second level, in the Junior Cycle (12-15 year olds), the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) subject is a very positive model to advance human rights education. It is a compulsory state examinable subject. The curriculum is human rights oriented as are the teaching and learning approaches. The completion of an Action Project forms part of the assessment. However, insufficient time is allocated to the subject and as a result it does not have the same status as other compulsory state examinable subjects. The IHRC is concerned that its impact will be further undermined if it loses its compulsory status in the revised Junior Cycle.<sup>4</sup> In March 2011, the IHRC made a detailed submission to the Minister for Education and Skills calling on him to ensure CSPE remains compulsory.

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<sup>4</sup> While critiquing the downgrading of CSPE in the revised Junior Cycle, the IHRC has welcomed efforts to mainstream human rights principles in the aims of the curriculum and in the learning statements as well as moves to more project-based assessment.

While there are very active and passionate teachers of CSPE organised in their own association, the in-service supports to teachers of CSPE have been severely cut back. The IHRC recommended a reversal of these cuts. It also called for a module on CSPE with a strong human rights orientation to be a compulsory part of initial teacher education.

A promising initiative in secondary education is the development of 'Politics and Society', a new subject in the Senior Cycle which is human rights based. A stronger human rights focus in initial and in-service teacher education is crucial to ensure that the full potential of 'Politics and Society' to strengthen human rights is realised.

### ***Higher Education***

Human rights law is a feature of most law courses but there are openings and potential to increase human rights content of humanities courses and in courses for the health and caring professions such as nursing, mid-wifery, carers of child, people with disabilities and older people. Cross-campus programmes such as the Community Knowledge Initiative<sup>5</sup> and Campus Engage<sup>6</sup> to promote the interaction between the Higher Education Institution and communities and to promote active citizenship are exciting and evolving initiatives. The IHRC found that while there is an openness to human rights education, there is a need for greater promotion of the WPHRE Plan of Action for HEIs within the Higher Education sector.

### ***Civil and Public Service***

Having meet with bodies responsible for education and training in the Civil and Public Service and undertaking a review of policies and programmes, the IHRC found that there was little or no human rights education or training in the civil and public service and saw it as a huge gap to be filled. The findings in IHRC Human Rights Education Report informed the development of the IHRC's Human Rights Education and Training Project (see above).

### ***Community and Voluntary Sector***

Community and voluntary organisations in Ireland play a fundamental role in promoting and defending human rights. Specific organisations promote human rights standards explicitly and deliver human rights education and training to different target groups. However, it is clear that there is an increasing interest from a wider range of organisation to advocate for change using human rights and as a result there is an interest in and demand for human rights education and training. The increasing engagement of civil society with the treaty monitoring mechanisms and most recently the Universal Periodic Review are contributing factors to this increasing engagement. There are also some important examples of local communities taking on a human rights based approach to advocate for change.

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<sup>5</sup> The CKI aims to promote greater civic engagement through core academic activities, namely teaching, research and service at the levels of students, staff, courses, programmes and the institution as a whole.

<sup>6</sup> CAMPUS ENGAGE is a network for the promotion of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education It is an initiative funded by the Irish government, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF 1). The current Campus Engage partners are: Dublin City University, National University of Ireland, Galway (lead partner), National University of Ireland, Maynooth, University College Dublin and the University of Limerick



***Legal Profession***

With more resources dedicated to education, there would be scope for the Committee for Judicial Studies to increase the focus on human rights and the IHRC is supportive in their efforts to expand their programme. Regrettably the human rights focus of the Law Society's professional education programme has diminished with the removal of a compulsory module on human rights from their programme. There is also scope for the Kings Inns which train Barristers to make human rights a more prominent aspect of their education and professional development programmes.