

**Questionnaire on best practices and challenges faced by civil society in respect of involvement with regional and international organisations, including United Nations bodies**

**Submission by Ireland**

**25 October 2017**

**I. Challenges**

a. Reprisals

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council and special procedures mandate holders have repeatedly denounced reprisals against HRDs in recent years but reports of reprisals have nonetheless increased. Ireland welcomed the designation, in October 2016, of the ASG on human rights to lead on the issue of reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights. Ireland was part of the core group at HRC36 which led on the successful negotiation and adoption of a resolution (A/HRC/36/L.26/Rev.1) supporting increased cooperation with the ASG and other UN mechanisms.

b. Accreditation

The current practice whereby NGOs must first gain consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is not functioning effectively. Ireland is concerned about the continued deferral of accreditation and maintains that the NGO Committee is in need of reform. Many civil society organisations have raised their concerns about the NGO Committee with Department officials. In this regard, Ireland welcomes and supports the calls of the Special Rapporteur to “reform the Committee on Non- Governmental Organizations to prevent Member States from blocking accreditation applications with perpetual questioning and to unilaterally vetoing applications.”

c. Legislation

Ireland is concerned by the threats posed to civil society from legislation that, either directly or indirectly, impacts on the work of civil society organisations.

**II. Best Practices**

**UPR process**

Civil society involvement in the UPR process is officially encouraged by the UN yet the amount of involvement is largely dependent on the civil society space in the country under review. Ireland held wide-ranging consultations with various civil society actors in advance of its UPR review in 2011 and 2016. Two examples of best practices in this regard have been highlighted by civil society in Ireland: the setting up of a website to inform and receive submissions; and advertising in the national media to draw attention to the process.

**Stakeholder engagement on poverty and social exclusion**

The Department of Social Protection is responsible for advising Government on, and developing policies to tackle, poverty and social exclusion. The [National Action Plan for Social Inclusion](#) (NAP inclusion) identifies broad stakeholder engagement as one of the

formal monitoring and reporting mechanisms to review progress, and on implementing the cross-cutting and targeted interventions identified to address poverty.<sup>1</sup> The Department, in consultation with relevant stakeholders will review the Plan this year. The new plan will also be informed by international developments through the European Commission and other bodies (e.g. UN Sustainable Development Goals).

Stakeholder engagement has a well-established and strong footing in the Department of Social Protection. The national and local stakeholders include people experiencing poverty, civil society groups, government/public officials, social partners and experts. There are multiple consultation structures in place. Examples include bilaterals with civil society groups; an annual Pre-Budget Forum; biannual bilateral meetings with the Community & Voluntary Pillar; and the Social Inclusion Forum. The Department also supports various social inclusion initiatives, including the Young Social Innovators and the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The European Commission organises an Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth (ACIG) to bring together policymakers and civil society to discuss what the EU can do to ensure that all citizens reap the benefits of truly inclusive growth. Six delegates from Ireland participated at the ACIG 2017 event focusing on Youth and Social Inclusion on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

The Department of Social Protection's Disability Consultative Forum (DCF) has operated since 1996 and is comprised of the principal organisations representing people with disabilities and service providers. It acts in an advisory capacity to the Department on disability related issues.

### **The National Economic and Social Council (NESC)**

The role of the NESC is to advise the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in Ireland. The NESC was originally established in 1973 and has a statutory status under the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006.

The members of the NESC are nominated representatives of business and employers' organisations, trade unions, agricultural and farming organisations, community and voluntary organisations, environmental organisations; as well as heads of Government departments and independent experts. The composition of the NESC Council means that it plays an important and unique role in bringing different perspectives from civil society together with Government. The NESC Council meets regularly, usually on a monthly basis.

The Council also works at international level with the national economic and social councils of other EU member states. It is a member of AICESIS, the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Annex 7 of NAPinclusion for an outline of the consultation process employed to develop the plan – see: [www.socialinclusion.ie/nationalactionplan2007.html](http://www.socialinclusion.ie/nationalactionplan2007.html)