

**An Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta
ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas**

**National Consultative Committee
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**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
National Report of Ireland**

**Comments from the National Consultative Committee on Racism and
Interculturalism (NCCRI)**

December 2004

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child National Report of Ireland

Comments from the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) is an independent expert body that seeks to provide advice and to develop initiatives against racism and to work towards a more inclusive and intercultural society in Ireland (www.nccri.ie).

NCCRI has been active in a number of policy areas that directly impact on children, including some of the initiatives outlined in the draft report from Ireland on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The forthcoming issue of our periodical 'Spectrum' (December 2004) focuses on the family and is attached for background information.

As cultural diversity in Ireland continues to broaden, there are both challenges and opportunities to ensure that these significant changes are negotiated successfully as the Government seeks combat racism through building a more inclusive, intercultural society. The forthcoming National Action Plan against Racism will set out Government strategy through a coherent and strategic approach. If possible, Ireland's Report on Children should include specific reference to the principles and relevant content in the National Action Plan Against Racism.

Cognisant of the brief period available to those involved in the drafting of Ireland's Report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the comments from NCCRI aim to be brief and specific as possible.

General Comments

1. The report would benefit from an introduction that would give contextual information about the major demographic and socio-economic changes that have taken place in recent years, including the significant expansion in cultural diversity that has been a key outcome of increased inward migration into Ireland, (see NCCRI website and the 2002 Census for more information. Some of this information is provided on p211, but rather than appearing as an annex, references to cultural diversity should be tracked and made more visible throughout the report.
2. The concerns of the NGO's, in particular the Children's Rights Alliance as set out in their comments of 24 November, should be summarised in an annex at the end of the report and where possible the main body of the report should reflect the concerns highlighted. In particular the report should be more robust in acknowledging where there has been slow progress or weaknesses in policy development.

Specific Comments

1. Consistent with Ireland's first report on the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (CERD) Convention, the work and contribution of the National Consultative committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) should be acknowledged and included in a separate indent in Chapter III. There is recent information on all aspects our work in our 'Progress and Plans Report' (November, 2004), available on the NCCRI website www.nccri.ie.

For example The NCCRI played a central role in the development of a number of the initiatives highlighted in this chapter including the Government's National Action Plan Against Racism and the drawing up of the strategy that lead to 'Know Racism'. The NCCRI has also focussed on the opportunities and challenges related to family diversity and children in Ireland and developing an intercultural dimension to the education system.

2. There is significant information about refugees and asylum seekers and Travellers through many sections of the report but very little information about labour migrants and their families (see for example 393, p211. Useful reference could be made to the Irish Human Right's Commission/NCCRI report 'Safeguarding the Rights of Migrant workers and their Families, available on www.nccri.ie
3. Under point 112, p71 Traveller accommodation no mention is made of the lack of progress made in relation to Traveller site provision and the impact on children. (See the First report of the Government Monitoring Committee on the Task Force of the Traveller Community) www.justice.ie
4. Data issues (throughout the report). The report rightly points to Government commitments to develop a statistical strategy that provides a greater range of data, better use of existing data and greater data disaggregation. The NCCRI contends that even where data is disaggregated, the models of disaggregation used are often weak and ill thought out. For example, enrolment data for schools provides information on nationality but not ethnicity, thus excluding key marginalised groups such as the Roma in Ireland.
5. Reference should be made in the appropriate places to the aim and commitments outlined in Objective K of the National Children's Strategy and point 5.3, page 47 in the National Childcare Strategy, concerning interculturalism and diversity.
6. Interculturalism is briefly mentioned (though spelt in a different way than is normally used in Ireland) on page 181. Consistent with the forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism (see Diverse Voices,

www.justice.ie) and numerous other Government publications interculturalism should be a fundamental principle in Chapter III and more fully elaborated and explained and not reduced just to a set of guidelines as per 337, p181. The definition in the forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism is framed as follows, and may be usefully quoted in Ireland's Report on the Rights of the Child:

‘Developing a more inclusive, intercultural society

Developing a more inclusive and intercultural society is about inclusion by design, not as an add-on or afterthought. It is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect. In taking this approach we embrace the concept that ‘one size does not fit all’, and that by planning for and accommodating cultural and ethnic diversity, everyone will benefit from the process. The intercultural framework underpinning this Plan includes the five objectives of Protection; Inclusion; Provision; Recognition and Participation’.

- 7 The report might usefully refer to the process of naturalisation and citizenship opportunities for minors of ‘non nationals’ as set out in the Citizenship Bill, 2004. NCCRI concerns about the position of the 11,000 people affected by the L and O judgement and subsequent referendum has been clearly set out in our Advocacy Paper 2: International perspectives relating to the future of Irish Born Children and their Non-National Parents in Ireland. Further concerns are articulated in NCCRI Advocacy Paper Three (www.nccri.ie).