

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRELAND



UPR Info Pre-sessions

Overview

- This statement is delivered on behalf of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties - two of Ireland's oldest independent human rights organisations. It will cover:
 - ▣ (1) Civil Legal Aid
 - ▣ (2) Access to the Courts
 - ▣ (3) Equality and Non-Discrimination
 - ▣ (4) Traveller and Roma Rights.

(1) Civil Legal Aid

- Ireland supported four recommendations it received at the previous UPR about civil legal aid, including:
 - A recommendation to review its civil legal aid system from **Switzerland**
 - A recommendation to ensure that vulnerable groups such as Travellers and Roma have access to information about their rights from the **Netherlands**.
- Ireland undertook a comprehensive and independent review of its civil legal aid system but **it has not yet introduced any substantive reforms to the system** since the review was completed in April 2025.
- The **chronically under-funded system of civil legal aid is now at crisis-point and at risk of collapse.**

Recommendations – Civil Legal Aid

- The State should **provide a timeline for comprehensive reform of the system of civil legal aid.**
- **Legal aid should be treated as an essential public service** and the system should be transformed to target disadvantaged groups. To achieve this, the State should:
 - commit to providing **legal representation in the areas of law which most impact disadvantaged and marginalised groups,**
 - providing **targeted and community law centres** for those groups, and
 - providing **information** to those groups about their rights.

(2) Access to the Courts

- **The State has proposed reforms to the system of judicial review which may block disadvantaged groups from access the courts** and from taking judicial review cases about access to basic public services like housing or social security.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment has stated that “*recent proposals for judicial review contained in the General Scheme of the Civil Law Reform Bill 2025 may be **regressive...[and] reduce access to justice...***”

Recommendations – Access to the Courts

- **The State should not to proceed with the proposals concerning access to judicial review** in their current form.
- The State should **commit to undertake research about the impact of any changes to judicial review**, and to engage in consultation with groups who are likely to be impacted by any such changes.
- It should also **commit to ensuring that any changes to judicial review do not block or limit access to the courts**, including for disadvantaged groups.

(3) Equality & Non-Discrimination

- Ireland has **completed a comprehensive review of its anti-discrimination legislation** and published draft reforming legislation.
- It remains the case that:
 - Ireland's **anti-discrimination laws do not adequately apply to the State and Public Bodies.**
 - The **obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities under the Equal Status Acts is limited** and not consistent with the UNCPRD.
 - The **remedies for breaches of equality law are not effective or proportionate.**
 - The **process for making a discrimination complaint is inaccessible.**

Recommendations – Equality & Non-Discrimination

- Ireland should **urgently advance the legislation to reform its anti-discrimination laws and provide a timeline for reform.**
- Ireland should amend the Equal Status Acts to ensure that:
 - the **legislation prohibits discrimination by the State and public bodies,**
 - the **obligations to provide reasonable accommodation are brought into compliance with the UNCRPD,**
 - **compensation levels are significantly raised, and**
 - **the complaint process is made more accessible.**

(4) Traveller & Roma Rights

- There remain **major barriers to Travellers and Roma accessing housing and social security.**
- A ‘**habitual residence condition**’ in **social security law** continues to have a disproportionate impact on members of the Roma community. Legislation has been passed which introduces similar residence conditions for access to social housing and emergency homelessness accommodation.
- A 2019 independent expert review identified an “***extremely high rate of Traveller homelessness***” in Ireland and called for comprehensive reform of the laws concerning Traveller Accommodation and evictions.

Recommendations – Traveller & Roma Rights

- Ireland should be asked to **remove the ‘habitual residence condition’ as a criterion for access to emergency homelessness accommodation and for the ‘safety-net’ Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment.**
- Ireland should be asked to provide a **timeline for the implementation of the law reform recommendations arising from the Traveller Accommodation Expert Review.**