

Towards a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland Public Consultation 2021

Introduction

Anti-Racism Committee and Interim Report

The National Anti-Racism Committee is an independent Committee established by the Government in 2020 to draw up a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland. You can see our membership and full Terms of Reference [here](#).

In accordance with our Terms of Reference, we submitted our **Interim Report** to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in November 2020. The report sets out our initial ideas and plans for developing the National Action Plan Against Racism. You can access the Interim Report [here](#).

Consulting with stakeholder organisations and members of the public is an important part of our work. This consultation gives everyone an opportunity to have their say about how we can effectively tackle racism in all its forms in Ireland today.

We have prepared this consultation document to explain what the consultation is about and to highlight some areas that we would especially welcome views and suggestions on.

Your views are important in helping us to develop effective ways to tackle racism in Ireland.

What is Racism?

In our Interim Report, we outlined the following understanding of racism to guide our work:

[racism is]... the power dynamics present in those structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on their identity, as outlined in Article 1 of the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which provides:

*'...the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.'*¹

¹ Anti-Racism Committee Interim Report, 2020, 3.

We recognise the intersectionality between racism and other forms of oppression based on gender, sexuality, gender identity, disability and socio-economic circumstances – and that women, children and men experience dimensions of racism differently.

The understanding we have adopted is a living one, building on international legal concepts and obligations as well as EU and Irish legislation.

Racism is a systemic problem which manifests in many areas of society and affects many aspects of people's lives. Racism is embedded in structures; reflected and reproduced in institutions, practices, policies and cultural norms; and through them has the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on their race or ethnicity (including nationality and membership of the Traveller community).

Racism is a reality in Ireland. We need a comprehensive and effective National Action Plan to tackle it.

Racism is a reality in Ireland. Ongoing and well-documented evidence shows that it is embedded at every level of society and experienced by a variety of groups. Racism has been further exposed by COVID – with differential effects for migrants and other groups who are the targets of racial discrimination.

Accepting the weight of evidence in recent years that racism exists, we recognise that we must move now to take action. Since the previous National Action Plan Against Racism ended in 2008, civil society organisations have been seeking a renewed national focus, a recommendation which was also repeated in the last review of Ireland by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2019. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has also called for the development of a new Action Plan. Racial discrimination is currently prohibited in Ireland by law and racist hate speech is also illegal. All Irish public bodies have a duty to take active steps to eliminate discrimination (including on grounds of race) in the course of their work. The promotion of equality and inclusion for ethnic minorities is a named objective within numerous government and public policy strategies. Measures to combat racism are included within the Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. Several reforms currently underway will be important in strengthening people's legal protections against racism. These include proposed hate crime legislation and online media regulation. Reforms such as these send a strong signal that Irish society will not tolerate minorities being subjected to racism in any form.

However, racism and racial discrimination persist in Ireland despite legal prohibitions. Current provisions and policy initiatives are not enough and considerable gaps remain. The National Action Plan will provide a means to situate existing measures and laws in a wider framework of concrete actions to enhance their effectiveness. It will also introduce new actions and initiatives to address existing and emerging concerns. In developing these new

actions and initiatives, we will be mindful of the fact that racism intersects with other inequalities and discrimination on other grounds, for example gender and disability.

Having good equality data is important in tackling racism

Ethnic equality monitoring is a key tool in uncovering the prevalence of racial discrimination and its impact on lives. It is essential to the development of effective counter-measures. International Human Rights reviews have repeatedly called on Ireland to adopt a consistent approach to the collection of ethnically disaggregated data by public service providers and others. Our Interim Report identifies this as a priority recommendation. The National Action Plan will further highlight gaps in data gathering and use, and consider what changes could help us make better use of data in the fight against racism.

Towards a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland

It is important that the Plan is rooted in a commitment to human rights values, democracy and the rule of law. These values must characterise the approach and inform the actions of Irish society in combating racism.

As stated in our Interim Report, our work is guided by best practice on the structure and content of National Action Plans Against Racism as set out in the [Practical Guide to Developing National Action Plans Against Racial Discrimination](#) published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights.

Our work is also informed by the [EU Action Plan Against Racism \(2020-25\)](#), which itself reflects the UN Guide.

In accordance with the UN Guide, we intend to develop a National Action Plan Against Racism that is:

- *Based on human rights standards*
- *Comprehensive in scope*
- *A national undertaking*
- *Action oriented*
- *A public document*
- *A continuing process*
- *Inclusive of international dimensions.*²

At this stage, we would like to hear your views

Building on the understanding of racism and areas of concern outlined in our Interim Report, and informed by inputs from this consultation, the National Action Plan will contain

² *Developing National Action Plans Against Racial Discrimination: A Practical Guide*, UN OHCHR 2014, 3.

actions addressed to all government departments and agencies, authorities, institutions and organisations – in the public, private and voluntary sectors - which have a remit or responsibility to address racism or whose engagement is essential. The National Action Plan will also focus on the media, both traditional and new forms. It will contain actions to promote rights and equality for all who live in Ireland.

To help us to organise our consultation, we have suggested some themes which reflect issues identified in our interim report. Please be assured that we have not selected these themes because we think that these are the only areas where racism occurs, or that these are the only themes that need to be addressed in the National Action Plan. They are simply suggested in order to stimulate discussion and help organise the consultation. We are also eager to hear your views on any other issues that you feel we should consider in developing the Plan.

We have provided some questions on each theme to help stimulate discussion. You might find the questions below helpful to structure your input to the consultation. But please feel free to give your views on these issues without reference to the questions, and / or to give your views on other issues not mentioned in this document. We also recognise that there can be a lot of overlap between these themes.

Theme 1: Access to justice

Theme 2: All forms of media and communications, including new technologies

Theme 3: Employment, education, health, and accommodation

Theme 4: Inclusion and participation

1. Access to Justice

This theme includes countering discrimination by law enforcement authorities, including issues of complaints mechanisms, under-reporting and forms of redress.

- What supports would you like to see in place for victims of racism?
- What actions would be effective in removing barriers to justice for victims of racism?
- What actions could be adopted to counter discrimination by law enforcement?
- Do you think racism impacts on arrested or accused people in the criminal justice system, and if so, how could it be addressed?
- Do you think racism impacts on convicted or imprisoned people in the criminal justice system, and if so, how could it be addressed?
- Do you think racism impacts on legal adjudication and the courts, and if so, what actions need to be taken?
- Are there particular issues connected with racism and gender and access to justice?

2. All forms of media and communications, including new technologies

This theme includes print and traditional media and broadcasting, as well as social media and new technologies.

- What actions would you suggest to tackle racism in new and more traditional forms of media?
- What actions do you think would help to make broadcast media and the press more representative at all levels of everyone living in Ireland?
- What are the challenges posed by new technologies in terms of racism?
- Are there any opportunities offered by new technologies to strengthen the fight against racism?
- What actions should be taken by tech companies to help combat racism?
- What role can the regulation of tech companies play in combating racism?

3. Employment, Education, Health, and Accommodation

These are key areas of economic and social life where measures are required to support full inclusion and participation by groups experiencing racism in society and the economy. This could include tackling racism in the workplace; ensuring that public services are designed and delivered inclusively of all; and measures to address racial inequalities in access to, participation in and outcomes from education, health, and accommodation services.

- How would you like to see racism tackled in the education sector?
- How can we ensure the equality of all children in terms of access to services?
- What actions would you like to see taken in the health sector to address health inequalities based on ethnicity?
- What measures would help to address racism in access to accommodation?
- What initiatives and actions would you like to see undertaken to combat racism in access to employment?
- Are there particular sectors of the labour force where action needs to be prioritised to combat racism?
- What training and additional supports could help to combat racism in the workplace?
- What measures could be introduced to promote employment and labour market inclusion, as well as addressing the underlying causes of discrimination?

4. Inclusion and Participation

This theme includes the role that education and awareness raising can play at all levels in combating racist attitudes and behaviours. This could include measures to enhance learning about diversity and discrimination in formal curricula, reframing of history to include groups and dimensions currently ignored, as well as public awareness raising initiatives.

Under this theme we will also seek to address the barriers to people from ethnic minorities participating in democratic politics and standing in local and national elections. We will also consider the rights of access to any place or service intended for use by the public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres, sporting facilities, parks and recreational amenities.

- What initiatives do you think could raise the public awareness of racial discrimination and help to combat racist stereotypes?
- How can we remove barriers to the social inclusion and participation of under-represented and disadvantaged groups?
- How can we ensure that those who are most marginalised are specifically included?
- What initiatives would help to ensure public policy takes account of the systemic racism experienced by racialised communities?
- What actions would you suggest to increase the numbers of people from minority ethnic groups participating and standing in local and national elections?
- What actions are needed to ensure that political procedures, processes and participation are anti-racist?
- What action needs to be taken to address racism in sport? What positive actions could enhance this?
- What action needs to be taken to raise awareness of and address racism in arts and culture? What positive actions could enhance this?
- What action needs to be taken to promote intercultural engagement and community participation?

You are welcome to give us your views on anything you feel is relevant to the development of a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland. The general questions below may be helpful.

General Questions

- What do you see as the most important problems facing minorities?
- What initiatives do you think would address gaps in data gathering and use?
- How would you measure how well the plan is working? Who do you think needs to be involved in the implementation and monitoring actions recommended in the Plan?
- Recognising that the Action Plan will cover many issues, what are the two areas that you feel should be prioritised for early action?
- What is going to make the biggest difference in the longer term?
- Does the experience of racism change depending on the person's gender, age, sexual orientation or family or civil status?
- How does the experience of racism interact with disability?

**Ireland is developing a National Action Plan Against Racism.
Your views will help to shape this Plan.
Thank you for being part of this important work.**