

United Nations Human Rights Council

Universal Periodic Review

UPR for Ireland 53rd Session November 2026

Dedicated to the Memory of Brother Dónal Leader



In 2007 Dónal established Edmund Rice International, an NGO devoted to advocacy for the rights of children, based in Geneva. As a dedicated teacher at all levels, he was a hugely positive influence in the lives of many people.

Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

(1948 – 2025)

United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review- UPR for Ireland 53rd Session
November 2026

Submitting Organisation



Edmund Rice International

[Edmund Rice International \(ERI\)](#) is an international non-governmental organisation, founded in 2005 and with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since 2012. ERI is supported by two Catholic Religious Congregations, the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers. It works with networks of like-minded organisations and in the countries where the two Congregations are present. ERI has a special interest in the rights of the child, the right to education and in eco-justice. Website: <http://www.edmundriceinternational.org/> Email: Executive Director Brian Bond bpbond@edmundrice.org

Endorsing Organisations



Act to Prevent Trafficking in Ireland.

[Act to Prevent Trafficking In Ireland:](#) Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT) Ireland is a faith-based organisation founded in 2005 to combat human trafficking through awareness, education, and prevention. It focuses on protecting vulnerable groups, especially women and children, by running campaigns in schools, parishes, and communities to highlight trafficking risks. APT also delivers educational programmes and collaborates with professionals and NGOs to address trafficking issues in Ireland, while advocating for stronger responses to sexual exploitation and forced labour. Website: www.aptireland.ie Email: annekelleher61@gmail.com



MECPATHS

[MECPATHS](#) (MECPATHS is a non-profit organisation which focuses specifically on the issue of Child Trafficking, in Ireland. Established in 2013, it advocates for child safeguarding from trafficking through collaborative action, awareness raising and education. It does so by facilitating workshops for frontline and emerging professionals across many disciplines including Social Work, Healthcare, Education and Hospitality.

You can find out more about MECPATHS when you download the MECPATHS Brochure [HERE](#) or when you visit their website: <https://mecpaths.com/>
Address: 13/14 Moyle Park, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland.
Email: info@mecpaths.ie



Cork Life Centre

[Cork Life Centre](#): The Cork Life Centre is a voluntary organisation founded in 2000, providing alternative education for young people unable to engage with mainstream schooling, including early school leavers and those with social or mental health challenges. Using a holistic, student-centred approach, it offers small classes, academic learning, life skills, and supports like counselling to help students progress. Despite its success, it lacks full state recognition and relies on limited, insecure funding, highlighting gaps in Ireland's education system. Website: <https://www.corklifecentre.ie/> Email: info@corklifecentre.ie



International Presentation Association

The [International Presentation Association](https://www.ipango.org/) is a global organisation of Presentation Sisters and Presentation People from across the world, who believe in the universal value of human rights and speak and act in partnership with others for global justice. We have been accredited with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) (now UN Department of Global Communications) since 1997 and with a special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2000. We advocate for systemic change on a global scale, working to influence policies and decisions that align with our mission to uphold human rights, promote social and environmental justice, and address the needs of marginalised communities.” Website: <https://www.ipango.org/> Email: Lané Ferreira, Admin & Comms Assistant info@ipango.org



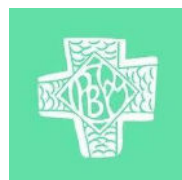
Franciscans International

[Franciscans International](https://www.ipango.org/) addresses the root causes of injustices by bringing cases of discrimination and violence committed against individuals and groups living on the margins to the attention of the international community. We work to influence UN decisions and standard-setting processes. Using a rights-based approach, we advocate at the UN for the protection of human dignity and environmental justice in order to: Bring attention to underreported or urgent situations, hold governments accountable and demand changes in policies and practices, and strengthen the work of Franciscans and other partners at the grassroots.



Community After Schools Project

[Community After Schools Project](https://www.caspr.ie/) (Ireland) was established in 1995 to assist children and their families to counter educational disadvantage in the North East Inner City of Dublin. CASPr also assists and supports parents and families in the provision of training and personal support towards achieving their full potential as parents, employees and citizens. Website: <https://www.caspr.ie/> Address: 1 Portland Square, Dublin 1, Ireland. Email: info@caspr.ie



Presentation Sisters in the Southwest Province of Ireland

The [Presentation Sisters South West Province](https://www.presentation.org/) is part of the wider **Presentation Sisters**, a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to education, social justice, and support for

marginalised communities. The congregation was originally founded in **1775** in Cork by **Nano Nagle**, whose mission focused on providing education and assistance to those experiencing poverty and exclusion. The South West Province of the Presentation Sisters continues this legacy through a range of educational, social, and community initiatives across the region. Its activities include supporting projects that promote access to education, advocating for social justice, and providing practical support to vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, children, and families facing disadvantage. Through partnerships with community organisations and initiatives such as migrant support, community development, and educational outreach, the Province contributes to efforts aimed at promoting human dignity, inclusion, and the protection of human rights in Ireland. Website:

<http://presentationsisterssw.ie/> Email: presprovsw@gmail.com



Presentation Sisters in the North East Province of Ireland.

The **Presentation Sisters North East Province** is part of the **Presentation Sisters**, a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to education, social justice, and support for marginalised communities. The congregation was founded in **1775** in Cork, Ireland by **Nano Nagle**, whose mission focused on providing education and assistance to people experiencing poverty and exclusion. The **North East Province (Ireland North East Unit)** was formally established on **1 January 2015** through the merger of the former Northern Province and South East Province in Ireland. Today, the North East Province continues this legacy through a range of ministries and social initiatives across Ireland. Its activities include involvement in education, pastoral and parish outreach, support for vulnerable communities, home visitation, engagement with older persons in nursing homes, community development initiatives, and the teaching of English and other supports for migrants and foreign nationals. The Province also collaborates with community organisations and voluntary groups to promote social inclusion, human dignity, and the protection of human rights, particularly for people experiencing poverty, marginalisation, or social exclusion. Through these activities, the Province contributes to community-based responses addressing inequality, education access, and the wellbeing of vulnerable groups in Ireland. Website <https://presentationsistersne.ie/> Email: secretary@presprone.com



European Province of the Christian Brothers

European Province of the Christian Brothers is a charitable trust that supports the mission and ministry of the Christian Brothers in Ireland. The promotion of social justice and human rights is a core element of corporate social responsibility and is expressed, in particular, in supporting integration and inclusion initiatives for migrants and refugees in Ireland. Website: <http://www.edmundrice.eu/> Address: Griffith Avenue, Marino, Dublin D09 X98, Ireland. Email: info@edmundrice.eu



Cork Migrant Centre

The [Cork Migrant Centre](https://www.corkmigrantcentre.ie/) founded in 2006, is a community-based initiative in Cork, Ireland, established to provide psychosocial support to asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant communities, alongside free, confidential, and up-to-date information on access to services and immigration matters. The Centre works to support and advocate for refugees, asylum seekers, migrant children, families, and communities, helping them navigate daily challenges and access the services and protections necessary for their wellbeing and integration. Through its direct engagement with migrant communities, the Centre promotes empowerment at both individual and community levels while highlighting barriers that affect access to rights and services. The Cork Migrant Centre operates as a project of **Nano Nagle Place**, a local charity located on Evergreen Street, off Barrack Street, Cork, Ireland.

Website: <https://www.corkmigrantcentre.ie/> Email Dr. Naomi Masheti, Programme Coordinator at CMC, naomi@nanonagleplace.ie



Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland.

AMRI: The **Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland**, founded in 2016 is a representative membership organisation that brings together the leadership of missionary and religious congregations in Ireland, including lay missionaries. A faith-based organisation, AMRI through its justice desk, works to promote active collaboration among its members to support shared responses to social, humanitarian, and environmental challenges in Ireland and internationally. Guided by a mission to respond with courage and confidence to both existing and emerging realities, AMRI advocates for and supports initiatives addressing the needs of people experiencing poverty, marginalisation, and social exclusion, while also promoting care for the environment and the protection of the planet. Through coordination, advocacy, and partnership with civil society and other faith-based organisations, AMRI contributes to efforts aimed at advancing human dignity, social justice, and sustainable development. AMRI is based at Kimmage Manor, Kimmage, Dublin, Ireland. Website: <https://www.amri.ie/> Contact Dr. Toni Pyke AMRI Justice justice@amri.ie.



RENATE Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation

RENATE Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation was established by a group of religious representing several different congregations working against human trafficking in Europe. RENATE also collaborates with many other networks within and outside Europe. Website: <https://www.renate-europe.net/> Address: RENATE Foundation, Den Bosch, Netherlands. Email: akelleher61@gmail.com

iScoil

iScoil

iScoil is the largest and only national provision for early school leavers under 16. The non-profit service supports more than 500 learners in 26 counties each year, all of whom are referred by Tusla, Educational Welfare Officers. It is an online learning intervention that provides a vital pathway for young people aged 13–16 who have been out of the mainstream system for a significant period of time. The iScoil model proves that when barriers are removed, disengaged students can, and do, re-engage with education and progress within the education system. By utilising digital technologies, iScoil provides a safe, personalised environment where students can work at their own pace and build confidence. More than 80% of students achieve QQI awards, providing them with a passport to return to school, or to progress to further education, training, apprenticeships or employment. Dr Eemer Eivers' independent research commissioned by the Department of Education, found that *“the iScoil intervention can be described as extremely successful in terms of student engagement and student outcomes”*. In 2023, the Department of Education's Inspectorate carried out an evaluation of iScoil in School Completion Programme settings. The evaluation highlighted many positive perspectives on iScoil, and many parents/grandparents used the term *“life-changing”* to describe the service. Website: <https://iscoil.ie/> Email Brian Fitzsimons CEO brian@iscoil.ie.



Presentation Brothers

Presentation Brothers: The Institute of the Presentation Brothers is a Catholic Congregation of Religious Brothers working in several countries around the world. United by our faith we dedicate ourselves to helping young people develop a personal relationship with Christ. The Institute of the Presentation Brothers is a Catholic Congregation of Religious Brothers working in several countries around the world. United by our faith we dedicate ourselves to helping young people develop a personal relationship with Christ.

Website: <https://presentationbrothers.org/> Contact Br. Barry Noel FPM barrynoel@pbclt.com



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles Ireland

Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, Irish Province (Ireland) is a group of Religious Sisters living in international communities, they strive to be examples of 'Women in Communion'. The OLA Sisters continue to fulfil the intense missionary dream of their founder Fr. Augustine Planque, to be of service to the Gospel particularly with the people of Africa. Their priority is for the poor and marginalized, especially for women and children. In solidarity with like-minded people, the OLA Sisters engage in nonviolent action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation Website: <http://www.olaireland.ie/> Address: Provincialate, Ardfoyle Convent, Ballintemple, Cork, Ireland. Email: info@olaireland.ie



Medical Missionaries of Mary

The Medical Missionaries of Mary, were founded in 1937 by Mother Mary Martin. Professionally qualified Sisters and teams provide healthcare and services in sustainable human development. We work in both urban and rural areas in eight countries of Africa and in Brazil. www.mmmworldwide.org Involvement in combatting human trafficking has been among our priorities over the past twenty years in Ireland, USA, Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria. We have networked with several like-minded organisations in this task. The importance of inter-faith collaboration in this vital ministry is particularly highlighted in our Nairobi-based work with the Counter Human Trafficking Trust East Africa - www.chtrust-eastafrika.org Contact: Sr. Isabelle Smyth isabelle.mmm@gmail.com



St. Patrick's Missionary Society

[St. Patrick's Missionary Society](http://www.spms.org/st-) works in countries where people are trafficked from and to. Our members have been actively involved especially in Kenya, Nigeria and Ireland in working to combat Human Trafficking and promote human rights. Website: <https://www.spms.org/st->

[patrick](mailto:patrick.regionalireland@spms.ie) Address: St. Patrick's, Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow. Contact Email: Fr. Pat Murphy [regionalireland@spms.ie](mailto:patrick.regionalireland@spms.ie)



Jesuit Centre for Faith & Justice

Established in 1980, the [Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice \(JCFJ\)](https://www.jcfj.ie/) is a work of the Irish Jesuit Province. The JCFJ is dedicated particularly to undertaking social analysis and theological reflection in relation to issues of social justice, including housing and homelessness, penal policy, environmental justice, and economic ethics. Informed by Ignatian Spirituality and drawing on Catholic Social teaching and the wider Christian tradition, the Centre has a long history of solidarity with those who experience poverty, discrimination and exclusion. Website: <https://www.jcfj.ie/> Email Contact Niall Leahy, SJ" nleahy@jcfj.ie.

HSCEHT

The Health and Social Care Education and Human Trafficking Group

The Health and Social Care Education and Human Trafficking Group (HSCEHT) was established in 2023 to promote awareness of the role of health and social care professionals in the identification and support of victims of human trafficking. The group meets monthly and brings together individuals with expertise and experience across a range of sectors, including statutory services, regulatory bodies, voluntary organisations, academia, research institutions and faith-based organisations. The primary objective of HSCEHT is to strengthen awareness within the health and social care workforce of indicators of human trafficking and to advocate for the inclusion of human trafficking education within undergraduate health and social care programmes. The group recognises that while some educational initiatives exist—such as online training programmes being developed within the health service and various ad hoc training opportunities—awareness among health and care professionals remains uneven. Without a foundational understanding of human trafficking, many professionals may not seek out or access available training independently. HSCEHT operates as a voluntary collaborative network and does not receive dedicated funding. Its activities are supported through the goodwill and contributions of participating individuals and organisations. The group focuses on knowledge sharing, advocacy, and collaborative initiatives aimed at strengthening professional awareness and education in relation to human trafficking. HSCEHT also collaborates with civil society organisations engaged in awareness-raising and advocacy on human trafficking. Members of the group have contributed to public awareness initiatives and events organised by partner organisations, including collaborations with Soroptimists Ireland on educational and awareness-raising activities related to human trafficking. Contact: Antonetta Kennedy antonetta.kennedy@outlook.com



Brigidine Community in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Brigidine Sisters IR-UK: The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Brigid (Brigidines) was founded in 1807 by Bishop Daniel Delany in Tullow, Ireland, to renew faith through education. As a global congregation the focus is on education, social justice, peace, and environmental care, notably sponsoring projects at the Solas Bhride Centre in Kildare and Teach Bhride in Tullow. Beyond Ireland, the congregation established schools and ministries in Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Kenya and the United States. The sisters are actively involved in UNANIMA and the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Programme in Australia (BASP) and environmental sustainability. Website: <https://brigidine.org.au> Contact: Sr. Theresa Kilmurray theresakil@hotmail.com



AkiDwA

AkiDwA (Akina Dada wa Africa) is the national network of migrant women in Ireland, established to promote equality, justice, and full participation for migrant women across Irish society. Grounded in a vision of a just and inclusive society, AkiDwA works to address structural inequalities affecting migrant women, including barriers linked to immigration status, racism, gender based violence, and socio economic exclusion. Through a combination of direct support services, advocacy, research, and capacity building, AkiDwA empowers migrant women to access their rights, amplify their voices, and engage in decision making processes at local, national, and international levels. The organisation also works closely with frontline service providers and policymakers to promote culturally responsive systems and influence policy reform, ensuring that the lived experiences of migrant women inform more equitable and effective responses across sectors. Website: <https://akidwa.ie/> Contact: Human Rights Coordinator: Salome@akidwa.ie



Unanima International

[UNANIMA International](https://unanima-international.org/) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Founded in 2002, we now represent 23 Congregations of Women Religious, comprising over 25,000 people in 100 countries. We advocate on behalf of women and children experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness/ displacement, migrants and refugees, victims of human trafficking, and environmental issues at the United Nations, with the aim to educate and influence policymakers at the global level. We work to occupy spaces of power on behalf of those who can't be present, in order to infuse the conversation with the perspectives, experiences, and needs that would otherwise be absent. Website: <https://unanima-international.org/> Contact: Email: info@unanima-international.org



Passionists International

[Passionists International](https://passionistsinternational.org/) is a non-governmental organization advocating at the United Nations for the human rights and dignity of all people, especially those most marginalized and vulnerable. Steeped in the social justice tradition and our Passion for Life, we strive to amplify the voices of those affected by all forms of poverty, inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and violence. We are committed to the care of all creation, the equality and empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of peace and reconciliation, and the building of socially just and resilient communities. The Passionist Family is a network of religious communities and partners serving on all continents and in 60 countries.

Website: <https://passionistsinternational.org/>



Mercy International Association

[Mercy International Association](http://www.mercyworld.org) is an organisation of the leaders of Mercy Congregations, Institutes, and Federations throughout the world, founded to serve the Sisters of Mercy, their associates, and partners in ministry. Founded in Dublin, Ireland, the Sisters of Mercy have a presence in 40 countries worldwide and enjoy consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the Department of Global Communications. Mercy International Association seeks ways to change unjust systems and respond to the unmet needs of marginalized women, men, and children from diverse economic, social, and cultural contexts, to address the priority concerns of the displacement of persons and the degradation of Earth. Website: www.mercyworld.org. Email: mercyrep@mercyinternational.ie.



Congregation of the Mission

[The Congregation of the Mission](https://congregationmissionis.org/en/) (Vincentians) is a Roman Catholic society of apostolic life founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 1625 in France. Comprising more than 4,000 priests and brothers in 86 countries, the community is dedicated to evangelizing the poor, especially the most abandoned, and forming clergy. They operate globally, focusing on education, missions, socio-economic services, and systemic change. As an accredited NGO at the United Nations, we bring the voices from the grassroots and work for a better world in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor. Website: <https://congregationmissionis.org/en/> Email: Ferdinand Labitag, NGO Representative at the UN congregationofthemissionun@gmail.com



Vivat International

VIVAT International–Ireland is the national network of [VIVAT International](https://congregationmissionis.org/en/), a faith-based non-governmental organization founded in 2000, with more than 17,000 members from 12 Catholic religious congregations working in 121 countries. It promotes human rights and human dignity through advocacy at both local and international levels, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities in global decision-making spaces. VIVAT International holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, is associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and is accredited with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, strengthening its commitment to justice, peace, and sustainable development worldwide. Contact: Congregatio Missionis Via dei Capasso, 30, 00164 Rome, Italy [Tel: +39 06 661 30 61](tel:+39066613061)

Appendix 1
Summary of Recommendations

Part 1 Human Trafficking

CONCERN 1 - Institutional and Legal Framework

Recommendations

#10 We recommend that Ireland publishes and implements a revised costed, time-bound implementation framework for the NAP3 (2023–2027), to ensure full, effective and transparent delivery, and this should be developed in meaningful consultation with civil society and survivors.ⁱ We further recommend that IHREC engages its authority as Rapporteur to ensure full monitoring.

#11 We recommend that Ireland strengthens national coordination through a dedicated, specialised anti-trafficking coordination function within the Department of Justice (re-established or functionally replicated), with a clear mandate with full engagement from stakeholders which has been absent for 3 years.

#13 We recommend that Ireland ratifies without further delay the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC), and publish a child-rights-based implementation plan that includes clear child-specific identification and safeguarding procedures,ⁱⁱ and further that an enquiry into its delay is expedited.

CONCERN 2 - Identification of Victims and the NRM

Recommendations

#18 We recommend that Ireland urgently operationalise the revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and establish clear procedures, resourcing, and oversight mechanisms to ensure its effective, full and consistent implementation including, an expansion of the number of agencies who can identify victims of trafficking.

#19 Notwithstanding the fact that the state currently fails to recognise child trafficking as an operational challenge, we recommend that Ireland provides comprehensive and mandatory training on trafficking indicators and referral procedures for all frontline professionals, including AGS, social workers, Tusla staff, healthcare professionals, labour inspectors, IPAS/IPO staff, NGO personnel and staff working in the hospitality sector, with dedicated modules on child trafficking and ICT-facilitated exploitation.

Concern 3 - Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation and the “Nordic Model”

Recommendations

#23 We recommend that Ireland strengthen implementation of the equality model by adopting a more explicit demand-reduction approach, including the use of on-the-spot fines for purchasers of sex. This should be accompanied by measures to address evidential challenges, particularly where transactions occur online and data is held outside the State.

#24 We recommend that Ireland address the online facilitation of prostitution and trafficking by regulating or, where necessary, prohibiting platforms that profit from sexual exploitation, in line with obligations under the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on

Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, with adequate resourcing to support effective enforcement.

#25 We recommend that Ireland develops statutory, adequately resourced exit programmes for persons in prostitution, designed and delivered in partnership with NGOs and survivors, and providing tailored supports in housing, income, immigration status, health care and education.

Concern 4 Labour Exploitation Recommendations

#29 We recommend that Ireland and in particular the Department of Children, strengthen labour inspection by expanding WRC inspections in high-risk sectors, introducing systematic trafficking screening, and ensuring safe, confidential reporting channels for all workers regardless of immigration status, including consideration of strengthened regulatory oversight mechanisms similar to those in the UK.

#30 We recommend that Ireland addresses vulnerabilities in labour-migration schemes by reviewing work-permit systems and atypical work arrangements to reduce power imbalances and prevent exploitation or dependency.

#31 We recommend that Ireland ensure victims of trafficking have access to remedies, including employment, social protection, and pathways to regularisation, in line with international standards, and that accessible, language-appropriate information is provided to ensure awareness of their rights.

Concern 5 - Access to Supports and Accommodation for Victims of Trafficking

Recommendations

#34 We recommend that Ireland should establish a clear statutory framework guaranteeing accessible supports for both presumed and identified victims of trafficking, independent of immigration status or cooperation with law enforcement, and ensure its recognition by the DoJ.

#35 We recommend that Ireland ensures the provision of sufficient, safe, appropriate and specialised accommodation for victims of trafficking, tailored to their individual needs and consistent with international human rights standards as has previously been afforded to victims by many religious orders in Ireland.

Concern 6 Justice, Accountability and Data

Recommendations

#40 We recommend that Ireland prioritises prosecuting trafficking offences directly, rather than relying on lesser charges, and ensure that penalties are effective, proportionate, and act as a deterrent in line with international standards.

#41 We recommend that Ireland develops a comprehensive, publicly accessible trafficking data system—working with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission—that provides

disaggregated data (e.g. by gender, age, nationality, exploitation type, sector, and case outcomes) in line with relevant SDG targets.

Concern 7 - Identification of Child Victims of Human Trafficking

Recommendations

#48 We recommend that Ireland ensures systematic, mandatory training on child trafficking indicators for the Department of Children and all professionals working directly with children, including Tusla staff, foster-care and residential-care workers, Gardaí, teachers, youth workers, social workers, healthcare professionals, asylum officials and staff working in the hospitality sector.

#49 Ireland should strengthen its response to human trafficking by integrating training on identifying trafficking indicators across the health and social care sector, including embedding content in undergraduate curricula for relevant professions within a human rights-based framework. It should also ensure ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) for the workforce, including those at senior policy and advocacy levels within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs, Migration and The Department of Children, to support early identification, effective referrals, and victim-sensitive responses, improving protection and support for all victims of human trafficking.

#50 We recommend that Ireland should establish a child-specific strand of the NRM with mandatory screening, risk assessments, and child-friendly, trauma-informed procedures, while reviewing the 1998 and 2013 Acts to consolidate all forms of child trafficking under a single legal framework and reduce misidentification.

#51 We recommend that Ireland and in particular the Department of Children, should strengthen its response to child trafficking by introducing mandatory multi-agency risk assessments for children missing from care, investing in targeted prevention and specialised placements, adequately resourcing Tusla with trained staff and interpreters, and reviewing Children First legislation to recognise child trafficking as a serious form of child abuse.

#52 We recommend that Ireland should ensure that the Minister for Children and the Minister for Justice engage with MECPATHS and respond to its repeated requests for an on-the-record meeting.

#53 We recommend that Ireland should ensure that the Department of Justice acknowledges and addresses all issues relating to child trafficking in Ireland.

Part 2

Access to Alternative Post-Primary Education and the Right to Education

Concerns: Structural Exclusion from Education

Recommendations

#68 We recommend that Ireland publishes without further delay the findings and recommendations of the national review and working group on out-of-school and alternative education provision.

#69 We recommend that Ireland formally recognises alternative post-primary education as a distinct, legitimate education pathway within the national education system.

#70 We recommend that Ireland creates a new legal entity category for alternative post-primary education centres with proportionate regulatory requirements reflecting: small group and one-to-one teaching models, flexible timetables and shorter instructional days where appropriate, adapted school year structures, multidisciplinary staffing models including qualified teachers, tutors, and specialist support staff.

#71 We recommend that Ireland establishes a dedicated statutory and regulatory framework for alternative post-primary education providers, separate from primary and mainstream post-primary school models.

#72 We recommend that Ireland provides sustainable, multi-annual public funding for alternative education providers to ensure continuity, quality, and staff retention.

#73 We recommend that Ireland strengthens cross-departmental coordination between education, youth, mental health, housing, and social protection services to support learners with complex needs.

#74 We recommend that Ireland develops accredited progression pathways from alternative education to further education, training, apprenticeships, and higher education.

#75 We recommend that Ireland ensures equitable geographic access by developing a national strategy for alternative post-primary provision based on assessed need rather than location.

#76 We recommend that Ireland embeds children and young people's participation rights by requiring meaningful involvement of affected learners in decisions regarding placement, programme design, and policy development.

#77 We recommend that Ireland monitors and reports disaggregated data on educational exclusion and alternative education participation to support accountability under UNCRC and ICESCR obligations.

United Nations Human Rights Council

Universal Periodic Review - UPR for Ireland 53rd Session November 2026

INTRODUCTION

- 1) We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the 4th Cycle of Ireland's Universal Periodic Review. This joint submission is supported by various local grassroots groups and national and international civil society and non-governmental organisations.
- 2) We acknowledge Ireland's progress in promoting and protecting human rights, including steps taken and commitments fulfilled since previous UPR cycles. However, further attention is needed in several areas. This submission therefore focuses on key issues: human trafficking in Ireland and access to education for young people excluded from mainstream schooling.

CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY

- 3) This joint submission was developed with faith-based and civil society groups working to promote and protect human rights. It draws on consultations with community representatives and organisations monitoring justice and equality issues.
- 4) The sources for this submission were primarily drawn from key papers, policy documents, official publications, and reports from the Irish government, the United Nations, independent bodies, NGOs, and civil society. The research focused on monitoring progress since the 3rd UPR cycle, particularly on specific recommendations, with an emphasis on recent, relevant, and context-specific information.

Part 1 Human Trafficking

- 5) Human trafficking remains a serious human rights concern in Ireland, affecting men, women, and children across multiple sectors. According to the 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report, Ireland remains a Tier 2 country, indicating that while efforts are being made, minimum standards under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act are not yet fully met. Although reporting and responses to trafficking **into, within, and out of the country** have improved, progress is uneven. Significant gaps persist, particularly in identifying and supporting child victims and in effectively prosecuting traffickers. Structural and systemic challenges continue to impede timely victim identification, protection, and access to justice.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 6) We commend Ireland for the publication of its Third National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in October 2023 (NAP3)^{iv}, which represents a meaningful step toward strengthening national coordination and prevention strategies, setting out a comprehensive framework to guide Ireland's anti-trafficking efforts in the coming years.
- 7) Ireland has reaffirmed its commitment to children's rights through ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. However, as of 2026, limited public information is available on its concrete impact. Effective implementation requires stronger monitoring and reporting, adequate resources, robust accountability, and a victim-centred approach ensuring protection, support, and

access to remedies. Sustained, coordinated efforts are also needed to prevent and combat trafficking and other forms of child exploitation.

CONCERN 1 - Institutional and Legal Framework

Introduction:

- 8) There continue to be deficits in implementation and in mile-stone / timeline indicators which have been repeatedly called for by international monitoring groups relevant to the government's ability to deliver on all aspects of the Third NAP3 on Human Trafficking^v
- 9) Ireland is a country of origin, transit, and destination for trafficking, which remains a serious and under-addressed human rights issue. NAP3 (2023–2027) is a positive step, but past plans showed weak implementation, lacking clear accountability, timelines, and reporting. Ongoing concerns include weaknesses in victim identification, coordination, and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Ireland has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, despite repeated commitments. While legislative progress has been noted: Ireland is the first EU member state to legislate for the NRM and the new mechanism has been passed into law in 2024. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) stress the need for stronger implementation, particularly in ensuring victims' access to justice.^{vi}

We recommend that:

- 10) **Ireland publishes and implements a revised costed, time-bound implementation framework for the NAP3 (2023–2027), to ensure full, effective and transparent delivery, and this should be developed in meaningful consultation with civil society and survivors.^{vii} We further recommend that IHREC engages it's authority as Rapporteur to ensure full monitoring.**
- 11) **Ireland strengthens national coordination through a dedicated, specialised anti-trafficking coordination function within the Department of Justice (re-established or functionally replicated), with a clear mandate with full engagement from stakeholders which has been absent for 3 years.^{viii}**
- 12) **Ireland ratifies without further delay the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC), and publish a child-rights-based implementation plan that includes clear child-specific identification and safeguarding procedures,^{ix} and further that an enquiry into its delay is expedited.**

CONCERN 2 - Identification of Victims and the NRM

Introduction

- 13) Effective victim identification is central to Ireland’s human rights and EU obligations, yet significant under-identification persists, particularly among children and victims of non-sexual exploitation. International bodies, including UNODC and the OSCE, highlight that actual trafficking levels are far higher than detected and criticise the lack of proactive, systematic identification, including inadequate child screening. Concerns also remain that, despite IHREC’s role as National Rapporteur, its evaluation powers are limited and insufficiently considered by the State.^x
- 14) Recent reforms, including Ireland’s NAP3 and legislative amendments to the NRM, reflect increased policy attention to these challenges. Nevertheless, the US Department of State 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report continues to identify ‘chronic deficiencies in victim identification’^{xi} and referral procedures highlighting that persistent contrast between policy and paradigm^{xii}.
- 15) On 6 November 2023, Ireland published NAP3.^{xiii} introducing a revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to improve victim identification and protection. The framework expands competent authorities beyond An Garda Síochána and designates NGOs as “trusted partners” for referrals, in line with GRETA’s call for a broader, multi-agency approach. While this may improve identification and access to support, concerns remain regarding coordination, including tensions within the Department of Justice, and the need to address victims’ lack of trust in police services.^{xiv}
- 16) The TIP Report 2024 acknowledges progress – new NAP3, a first specialised trafficking shelter for women^{xv}, increased funding for victim assistance and training, and the first prosecutions for labour trafficking – but still notes “chronic deficiencies in victim identification”^{xvi}, as also highlighted in previous years especially when it comes to children.^{xvii} Notably, the process for providing this service raised questions about accountability and transparency within the DoJ.
- 17) Under the current system, AGS alone has formal authority to identify victims^{xviii}, even though potential victims may first present to NGOs, health services, social workers, labour inspectors, or within the international protection system.

We recommend that:

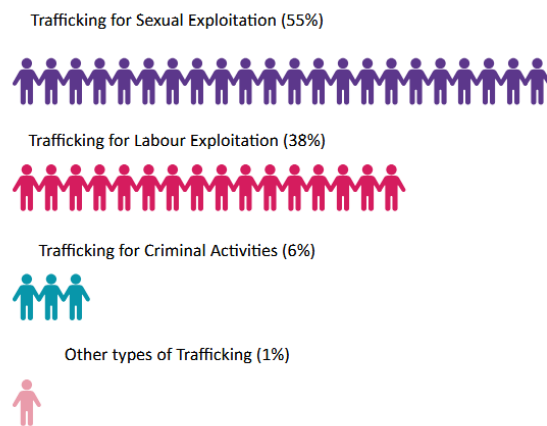
- 18) Ireland urgently operationalise the revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and establish clear procedures, resourcing, and oversight mechanisms to ensure its effective, full and consistent implementation including, an expansion of the number of agencies who can identify victims of trafficking.** ^{xix}
- 19) Notwithstanding the fact that the state currently fails to recognise child trafficking as an operational challenge, we recommend that Ireland provides comprehensive and mandatory training on trafficking indicators and referral procedures for all frontline**

professionals, including AGS, social workers, Tusla staff, health-care professionals, labour inspectors, IPAS/IPO staff, NGO personnel and staff working in the hospitality sector, with dedicated modules on child trafficking and ICT-facilitated exploitation.^{xx}

Concern 3 - Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation and the “Nordic Model”

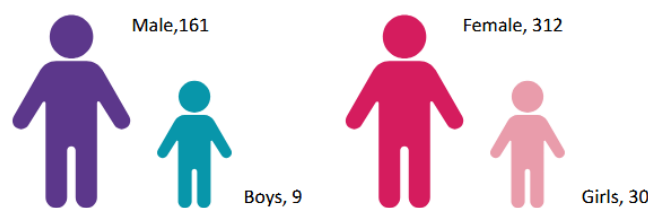
20) Sexual exploitation remains the most commonly identified form of human trafficking in Ireland. However, while it is most frequently reported, evidence suggests that labour exploitation may now be on a par with it. Between 2013 and 2023^{xxi}, approximately half of all officially identified victims of trafficking were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation^{xxii}, the majority being women and girls^{xxiii}. See below.

— Victims of Human Trafficking 2013-2022



And by Gender

— Victims of Trafficking by Gender and age, 2013—2022



21) Ireland adopted the “Nordic” model through Part IV of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017^{xxiv}. It decriminalises those who sell sex, criminalises the purchase of sexual services, and targets third-party exploitation and profiteering. Grounded in principles of gender equality and Ireland’s obligations under instruments such as the Palermo Protocol, the model has also been criticised for increasing risks to women’s safety, as the criminalisation of buyers can push the trade further underground. Notably, loopholes

remain—most prominently the potential prosecution of two women sharing premises for safety as “brothel keepers.”

22) Civil society organisations working directly with women affected by prostitution and trafficking, including Ruhama^{xxv}, support the Nordic model and emphasise that trafficking for sexual exploitation cannot be separated from the wider prostitution system, which generates the demand exploited by traffickers. Ruhama reports a 75% increase in demand for its support services in 2024^{xxvi}. These figures underscore the scale, persistence, and urgency of the problem in Ireland. Despite the progressive legislative framework, implementation and enforcement of the equality model remain inconsistent and limited. Significant gaps persist in the proactive targeting of buyers, in addressing online prostitution-advertising platforms that facilitate sexual exploitation and trafficking, and in the availability of adequately resourced, state-funded exit pathways^{xxvii}. Survivors continue to face barriers to safe exit, including lack of access to secure housing, income supports, immigration regularisation, health care, education, and employment opportunities.^{xxviii}

We recommend that:

23) Ireland strengthen implementation of the equality model by adopting a more explicit demand-reduction approach, including the use of on-the-spot fines for purchasers of sex. This should be accompanied by measures to address evidential challenges, particularly where transactions occur online and data is held outside the State.

24) Ireland address the online facilitation of prostitution and trafficking by regulating or, where necessary, prohibiting platforms that profit from sexual exploitation, in line with obligations under the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, with adequate resourcing to support effective enforcement.

25) Ireland develops statutory, adequately resourced exit programmes for persons in prostitution, designed and delivered in partnership with NGOs and survivors, and providing tailored supports in housing, income, immigration status, health care, education, and employment.

Concern 4 Labour Exploitation

Introduction

26) Trafficking for labour exploitation remains a serious and growing human rights concern in Ireland. While historically under-identified^{xxix}, recent official data and international monitoring mechanisms indicate a rise in detected cases alongside significant and persistent under-detection^{xxx}, particularly in sectors characterised by precarious work, subcontracting, and a high proportion of migrant workers. Structural gaps in labour inspection, weak

protections for workers with insecure immigration status, and the lack of effective firewalls between labour enforcement and immigration control undermine prevention, identification, and access to remedies for victims. These deficiencies raise concerns about Ireland's compliance with the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, compounded by the State's continued failure to address these shortcomings.

- 27) Trafficking for labour exploitation has become increasingly prominent in Ireland, particularly in agriculture, fisheries, construction, domestic work, hospitality, and “au pair” arrangements. Data from Irish authorities and evaluations by GRETA indicate rising identification^{xxxii} alongside persistent under-detection in migrant-dominated and informal sectors. IHREC notes that the true scale is likely significantly higher, while past regulatory gaps^{xxxiii}—especially in the fisheries sector—have heightened risks of exploitation.
- 28) The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) has taken steps to strengthen labour inspection and compliance mechanisms. However, GRETA and IHREC^{xxxiii} have raised concerns regarding limited inspection coverage in high-risk sectors and the lack of a structural firewall between labour inspection and immigration enforcement. These gaps may deter undocumented or precarious workers from reporting exploitation or cooperating with authorities, thereby increasing vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour

We recommend that:

- 29) Ireland strengthen labour inspection by expanding WRC inspections in high-risk sectors, introducing systematic trafficking screening, and ensuring safe, confidential reporting channels for all workers regardless of immigration status, including consideration of strengthened regulatory oversight mechanisms similar to those in the UK^{xxxiv}.**
- 30) Ireland addresses vulnerabilities in labour-migration schemes by reviewing work-permit systems and atypical work arrangements to reduce power imbalances and prevent exploitation or dependency.**
- 31) Ireland ensure victims of trafficking have access to remedies, including employment, social protection, and pathways to regularisation, in line with international standards, and that accessible, language-appropriate information is provided to ensure awareness of their rights.^{xxxv}**

Concern 5 - Access to Supports and Accommodation for Victims of Trafficking

- 32) IHREC has raised concerns about unclear access to supports for trafficking victims, particularly the lack of safe, adequate, and appropriate accommodation, creating protection gaps and undermining recovery and reintegration. These concerns are especially acute for

male victims, who may remain in Direct Provision with accommodation contingent on engagement in investigations—an approach that is neither practical nor conducive to effective protection.^{xxxvi}

- 33) In Ireland, however, access to supports for presumed and formally identified victims lacks sufficient legal clarity, resulting in inconsistent practices and uncertainty for both victims and service providers.^{xxxvii} Rosa’s Place opened in November 2023 as a dedicated unit for women who have been identified as potential victims of human trafficking. This is a pilot project, one that has already shown a somewhat positive impact on its clients and the government is to be commended for funding this initiative.^{xxxviii} However the absence of a clear statutory entitlement to specialised, safe accommodation remains a longstanding concern. IHREC said that while it is very positive to see a bespoke accommodation facility, it is inadequate to meet demand.^{xxxix} There is also the need for specialised accommodation for male victims of human trafficking. This has yet to be addressed.^{xl}

We recommend that:

- 34) Ireland establish a clear statutory framework guaranteeing accessible supports for both presumed and identified victims of trafficking, independent of immigration status or cooperation with law enforcement, and ensure its recognition by the DoJ.**
- 35) Ireland ensures the provision of sufficient, safe, appropriate and specialised accommodation for victims of trafficking, tailored to their individual needs and consistent with international human rights standards as has previously been afforded to victims by many religious orders in Ireland.**

Concern 6 Justice, Accountability and Data

- 36) Despite longstanding anti-trafficking legislation, Ireland has recorded very low conviction rates, even with significant numbers of identified victims. Although investigations and prosecutions have increased, convictions remain rare, highlighting the need for greater training of the DPP, AGS, and the judiciary.
- 37) The absence of a comprehensive, publicly accessible, disaggregated data system undermines transparency, oversight, and evidence-based policymaking, compounded by poor data-sharing across state agencies.
- 38) For many years, Ireland recorded no trafficking convictions despite hundreds of identified victims. Although investigations and prosecutions have increased, conviction rates remain low. GRETA has warned this creates impunity and discourages victims from testifying.^{xxli}
- 39) In Ireland, data remains fragmented with no public system tracking cases from identification to outcome, limiting accountability and prevention. No Blueblindfold annual report has been published since 2022.^{xxlii}

We recommend that:

- 40) Ireland prioritises prosecuting trafficking offences directly, rather than relying on lesser charges, and ensure that penalties are effective, proportionate, and act as a deterrent in line with international standards.**
- 41) Ireland develops a comprehensive, publicly accessible trafficking data system—working with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission—that provides disaggregated data (e.g. by gender, age, nationality, exploitation type, sector, and case outcomes) in line with relevant SDG targets.**

Concern 7 - Identification of Child Victims of Human Trafficking

- 42) Ireland continues to significantly under-identify children who are victims of trafficking, a concern repeatedly raised by the MECPATHS^{xliii}, GRETA and the IHREC, in its role as National Rapporteur.^{xliv} This does not reflect the real situation and is indicative of systemic weaknesses in proactive identification, particularly for: Irish and EU national children; children in criminal exploitation; children in marginalised communities, including Traveller and Roma children; and children who go missing from care.^{xlv}
- 43) In 2020 & 2021 no minor victims were officially identified; yet UNODC data for 2021–23 suggest at least 10 children were trafficked in Ireland in that period, again pointing to under-detection.^{xlvi}
- 44) The revised NRM envisaged under NAP3 has not been fully operationalised, leading to ongoing inconsistencies and delays in identifying and protecting child victims, despite repeated calls by MECPATHS and IHREC for a child-centred NRM to be developed.^{xlvii}
- 45) The 2018 reclassification of DoJ statistics has distorted data on child trafficking. We support IHREC’s call for a single legislative framework covering all forms of child trafficking, addressing gaps in recognising sexual and criminal exploitation, and ensuring clear, consistent definitions. Notably, UK data identifies 6–8 Irish child victims annually, while Ireland fails to adequately recognise such cases.

Accommodation, Care and Long-Term Support for Child Victims:

- 46) Child victims require stable, specialised care arrangements, yet there is limited availability of trauma-informed foster care or small, specialised residential placements tailored to the needs of trafficked children.^{xlviii}
- 47) Children who are also within the international protection system may experience prolonged stays in unsuitable accommodation, further compounding trauma and insecurity and increasing their risk of exploitation and trafficking or indeed re-trafficking.^{xlix}

We recommend that:

- 48) Ireland ensures systematic, mandatory training on child trafficking indicators for the Department of Children and all professionals working directly with children, including Tusla staff, foster-care and residential-care workers, Gardaí, teachers, youth workers, social workers, healthcare professionals, asylum officials and staff working in the hospitality sector.
- 49) Ireland strengthen its response to human trafficking by integrating training on identifying trafficking indicators across the health and social care sector, including embedding content in undergraduate curricula for relevant professions within a human rights-based framework. It should also ensure ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) for the workforce, including those at senior policy and advocacy levels within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs, Migration and The Department of Children, to support early identification, effective referrals, and victim-sensitive responses, improving protection and support for all victims of human trafficking.
- 50) Ireland establish a child-specific strand of the NRM with mandatory screening, risk assessments, and child-friendly, trauma-informed procedures, while reviewing the 1998 and 2013 Acts to consolidate all forms of child trafficking under a single legal framework and reduce misidentification.
- 51) Ireland strengthen its response to child trafficking by introducing mandatory multi-agency risk assessments for children missing from care, investing in targeted prevention and specialised placements, adequately resourcing Tusla with trained staff and interpreters, and reviewing Children First legislation to recognise child trafficking as a serious form of child abuse.
- 52) Ireland ensure that the Minister for Children and the Minister for Justice engage with MECPATHS and respond to its repeated requests for an on-the-record meeting.¹
- 53) Ireland ensure that the Department of Justice acknowledges and addresses all issues relating to child trafficking in Ireland.

PART 2 Access to Alternative Post-Primary Education and the Right to Education

Introduction

- 54) This submission addresses gaps in the realisation of the right to education in Ireland for children and young people who cannot remain in mainstream post-primary education settings and who require alternative education pathways. It draws on over twenty-five years of frontline practice delivering alternative post-primary education to marginalised young people outside the mainstream system.^{li}

- 55) Ireland reports high overall post-primary completion rates.^{lii} However, this aggregate measure obscures a persistent cohort of young people who are effectively excluded from meaningful access to education due to structural barriers, inflexible school models, trauma, poverty, discrimination, care experience, homelessness, and mental ill-health^{liii}. Alternative education provision remains marginal, fragmented, and structurally under-supported by the State.
- 56) This submission aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), which promotes inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning. The exclusion of some young people from mainstream post-primary education in Ireland highlights gaps in access, completion, and inclusion. Structural barriers—including poverty, discrimination, trauma, disability, and housing instability—also engage SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 1 (No Poverty), as educational exclusion reflects and reinforces inequality. The need for coordinated, multi-agency supports links to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), emphasising participation and accountability. Establishing a properly resourced statutory framework for alternative post-primary education would help ensure marginalised learners are not left behind.

Normative and Human Rights Framework

- 57) The issues raised engage Ireland’s obligations under: **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** — Articles 2 and 13 (right to education; progressive realisation using maximum available resources) **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** — Articles: Article 2 — non-discrimination, Article 3 — best interests of the child Article 12 — right of the child to be heard and Article 28 — right to education. The current absence of a coherent, sustainable, rights-based alternative post-primary education framework raises concerns regarding compliance with these obligations.^{liv}

Context: Alternative Education in Ireland

- 58) Alternative education provision in Ireland has largely developed as an ad hoc response to unmet need rather than through strategic State planning. Existing models such as Youthreach and Youth Encounter Projects provide important supports but are limited in scale, unevenly distributed geographically, and not suitable for all young people who cannot remain in mainstream schooling.
- 59) Provision outside these models is frequently dependent on voluntary or philanthropic funding and short-term arrangements. Alternative education is still framed in policy as temporary or transitional, with reintegration to mainstream schooling assumed to be the preferred outcome. Evidence from frontline practice indicates that for many young people, reintegration is neither realistic nor in their best interests.

60) In 2022, the Department of Education published its Review of Out-of-School Educational Provision (sometimes known as alternative education). The Review found that despite Ireland having a high retention rate to Leaving Certificate, there is a small group of students whose individual needs cannot be met by the mainstream system.^{lv}

Concerns

Structural Exclusion from Education

61) A cohort of children and young people is effectively excluded from post-primary education due to poverty and socioeconomic inequality, trauma and adverse childhood experiences, mental health challenges, care experience and placement instability, homelessness and housing insecurity, discrimination affecting Traveller, Roma, migrant and racialised young people, rigid disciplinary systems and exclusionary school culture and inflexible curriculum and assessment structures. Mainstream school models are not adaptable enough to meet the needs of all learners. For some young people, remaining in school becomes impossible due to structural misalignment rather than individual deficit.^{lvi}

Lack of a Coherent State-Supported Alternative Education Pathway

62) Ireland has not established alternative post-primary education as a fully recognised, rights-compliant pathway within the national education system. Current gaps include: absence of a statutory framework for alternative post-primary education, no dedicated legal entity category suitable for alternative post-primary centres, regulatory frameworks designed for primary schools being applied to adolescent alternative settings, inappropriate requirements regarding staffing ratios, school day/year length, inspection models, and staffing structures and a lack of multi-annual, sustainable public funding. Many providers operate in chronic uncertainty, undermining programme quality, staff retention, and continuity of provision. This raises concerns regarding the obligation to realise the right to education using maximum available resources. This is the experience of the Cork Life Centre.^{lvii}

Unequal Access and Geographic Disparities

63) Access to alternative education is uneven and often opaque. Referral pathways vary by location, places are limited, and eligibility criteria may exclude young people with complex needs. Access frequently depends more on geography than on assessed need, raising equality and non-discrimination concerns. Indeed, although opportunities for young people to engage in alternatives are slim, they are primarily more accessible to those living in urban areas.^{lviii}

Insufficient Recognition of Young People's Voices

64) Young people who exit mainstream education report that: they are frequently not meaningfully involved in decisions about exclusion, referral, or placement,^{lix} their opposition to returning to mainstream settings is often disregarded, consultation mechanisms tend to exclude those already outside the system and policy language frames them as “out-of-school,” reinforcing deficit narratives. This indicates weak implementation of UNCRC Article 12 in education decision-making affecting the most marginalised learners.^{lx} ‘The final conclusion from the working group (in the review of out of school provision) is that education provision for students, both in school and out-of-school, is best delivered by ensuring the voice of the child or young person is at its heart. This review has shown the diverse range of individual needs of students continue to change. The State, from policy makers to school staff, can only provide for those needs, now and into the future, by listening to students.’^{lxi}

Governance and Transparency Gaps

65) A government review of out-of-school education identified significant gaps and a working group completed its recommendations in May 2025, but these remain unpublished. The delay undermines transparency, accountability, and evidence-based planning in a fragile sector. Publication is critical, as the report is expected to shape the future structure, governance, and funding of alternative education. A key shift is also needed at State level to recognise alternative education as a viable pathway, rather than solely a temporary route back to mainstream education.

Consequences of Non-Completion

66) Failure to complete second-level education is strongly associated with, unemployment and insecure work, poorer physical and mental health, overrepresentation in the criminal justice system and intergenerational educational disadvantage. Despite this, responsibility for young people over 16 outside mainstream education is limited in practice beyond referral to Youthreach, leaving significant numbers without suitable pathways. This represents a systemic protection gap in the right to education.^{lxii}

Evidence on Effective Practice

67) Evidence shows that marginalised young people re-engage with education when provision is relational, flexible, learner-centred, and supported by small settings, low staff ratios, wellbeing supports, and clear progression pathways. Effective models adapt to learners’ needs rather than replicate mainstream structures. Providers in Ireland, including Cork Life Centre and iScoil, support this approach.

We recommend that:

- 68) Ireland publishes without further delay the findings and recommendations of the national review and working group on out-of-school and alternative education provision.**
- 69) Ireland formally recognises alternative post-primary education as a distinct, legitimate education pathway within the national education system.**
- 70) Ireland creates a new legal entity category for alternative post-primary education centres with proportionate regulatory requirements reflecting: small group and one-to-one teaching models, flexible timetables and shorter instructional days where appropriate, adapted school year structures, multidisciplinary staffing models including qualified teachers, tutors, and specialist support staff.**
- 71) Ireland establishes a dedicated statutory and regulatory framework for alternative post-primary education providers, separate from primary and mainstream post-primary school models.**
- 72) Ireland provides sustainable, multi-annual public funding for alternative education providers to ensure continuity, quality, and staff retention.**
- 73) Ireland strengthens cross-departmental coordination between education, youth, mental health, housing, and social protection services to support learners with complex needs.**
- 74) Ireland develops accredited progression pathways from alternative education to further education, training, apprenticeships, and higher education.**
- 75) Ireland ensures equitable geographic access by developing a national strategy for alternative post-primary provision based on assessed need rather than location.**
- 76) Ireland embeds children and young people’s participation rights by requiring meaningful involvement of affected learners in decisions regarding placement, programme design, and policy development.**
- 77) Ireland monitors and reports disaggregated data on educational exclusion and alternative education participation to support accountability under UNCRC and ICESCR obligations.**

ⁱ Minister for Justice Helen McEntee launches Third National Action Plan to prevent and combat human trafficking From: [Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration](#) Published on: 6 November 2023: Last updated on: 29 December 2023

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-justice-home-affairs-and-migration/press-releases/minister-for-justice-helen-mcentee-launches-third-national-action-plan-to-prevent-and-combat-human-trafficking/>

ⁱⁱ Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2023/09/Trafficking-in-Human-Beings-in-Ireland-2023_FA_web-Final.pdf Page 8. Published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in 2023

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- ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of State. 2025 [Trafficking in Persons Report](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2025.
- ^{iv} Department of Justice. [Third National Action Plan to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking](#). Published 6 November 2023.
- ^v Follow up to the Recommendations of the Committee of the Parties of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human beings by Ireland. <https://rm.coe.int/report-submitted-by-the-authorities-of-ireland-on-measures-taken-to-co/1680b2bd6d?> Page 31 Published on 27 November 2024
- ^{vi} Evaluation Report – Ireland: Third Evaluation Round <https://rm.coe.int/greta-third-evaluation-report-on-ireland/1680a84332> Published by GRETA on 28 September 2022
- ^{vii} Minister for Justice Helen McEntee launches Third National Action Plan to prevent and combat human trafficking From: [Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration](#) Published on: 6 November 2023: Last updated on: 29 December 2023 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-justice-home-affairs-and-migration/press-releases/minister-for-justice-helen-mcentee-launches-third-national-action-plan-to-prevent-and-combat-human-trafficking/>
- ^{viii} Evaluation Report – Ireland: Third Evaluation Round <https://rm.coe.int/greta-third-evaluation-report-on-ireland/1680a84332> Published by GRETA on 28 September 2022 PAGE 35 and Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, Article 19.
- ^{ix} Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2023/09/Trafficking-in-Human-Beings-in-Ireland-2023_FA_web-Final.pdf Page 8. Published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in 2023
- ^x OSCE anti-trafficking expert points at areas of concern in Ireland country report <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/news/osce-anti-trafficking-expert-points-areas-concern-ireland-country-report> Published by the Immigrant Council of Ireland on 6th April 2020.
- ^{xi} National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings says Ireland must do more to meet minimum standards <https://www.ihrec.ie/news-press/ireland-remains-at-tier-2-in-important-2024-trafficking-in-persons-report> Published by Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on 25 June 2024
- ^{xii} Policy versus paradigm: Highlighting the gap that continues to exist between what is reported and what is actually happening on the ground as is evidenced by those working on the frontline.
- ^{xiii} Department of Justice. [Third National Action Plan to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking](#). Published 6 November 2023.
- ^{xiv} European Migration Network <https://emn.ie/third-national-action-plan-to-combat-human-trafficking-launched/> Published in November 2023
- ^{xv} Depaul <https://ie.depaulcharity.org/what-we-do/services-in-republic-of-ireland/rosasplace/> Published in November 2023.
- ^{xvi} United States Department of State. 2025 [Trafficking in Persons Report](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2025.
- ^{xvii} The Journal <https://www.thejournal.ie/child-trafficking-ireland-5016343-Feb2020/> Source <https://cthb.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/6/a/472305.pdf> Published in 2020
- ^{xviii} New legislation on sexual offences and human trafficking passed by Oireachtas From: [Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration](#) Published on: 10 July 2024 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-justice-home-affairs-and-migration/press-releases/new-legislation-on-sexual-offences-and-human-trafficking-passed-by-oireachtas/> Published on: 10 July 2024 Last updated on: 12 April 2025
- ^{xix} As recommended by TIP 2024 and 2025 United States Department of State. 2025 [Trafficking in Persons Report](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2025.
- ^{xx} Department of Justice. [Third National Action Plan to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking](#). Pages 3 & 10, Published 6 November 2023.
- ^{xxi} Irish Times Sept 18th 2024 <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2024/09/18/human-trafficking-53-victims-identified-in-ireland-stark-increase-in-female-victims-in-2023/>
- ^{xxii} Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2023/09/Trafficking-in-Human-Beings-in-Ireland-2023_FA_web-Final.pdf Page 5 & 6. Published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in 2023
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- xxiii Ibid Page 6
- xxiv #MeToo, consent and prostitution – The Irish law reform experience <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277539521000212> Published by Ivana Bacik, Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology, Law School, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland in [Women's Studies International Forum Volume 86](#), Page 1 May–June 2021, 102457
- xxv Ruhama Website <https://www.ruhama.ie/>
- xxvi Ruhama Press Release and report summary <https://www.ruhama.ie/report-shows-staggering-75-percent-rise-in-demand-for-support-services-in-ireland-by-women-impacted-by-prostitution-and-trafficking-for-sexual-exploitation/>, Published on 9 October 9 2025
- xxvii #MeToo, consent and prostitution – The Irish law reform experience <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277539521000212> Published by Ivana Bacik, Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology, Law School, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland in [Women's Studies International Forum Volume 86](#), Page 3 May–June 2021, 102457
- xxviii Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre - [Submission by Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to inform the National Strategy for Women and Girls](#) Page 14 Published 14 October 2024
- xxix Council of Europe Statement on the publication of GRETA's third report on Ireland <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/greta-publishes-its-third-report-on-ireland> Published on 28 September 2022.
- xxx Ibid.
- xxxi Ibid
- xxxii Ireland's work permit system has historically tied migrant workers to a single employer, limiting mobility and increasing vulnerability to exploitation. <https://www.mrci.ie/2024/06/19/employment-permits-bill-to-pass-today/>
- xxxiii Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2023/09/Trafficking-in-Human-Beings-in-Ireland-2023_FA_web-Final.pdf Page 101. Published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in 2023
- xxxiv Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act: [Final Report \(accessible version\)](#) December 31st 2021
- xxxv Evaluation Report – Ireland: Third Evaluation Round <https://rm.coe.int/greta-third-evaluation-report-on-ireland/1680a84332>, Page 6, Published by GRETA on 28 September 2022
- xxxvi The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Press Release <https://www.ihrec.ie/news-press/commission-welcomes-council-of-europes-group-of-experts-on-action-against-trafficking-in-human-beings> Published on 1 December 2025.
- xxxvii The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Press Release <https://www.ihrec.ie/news-press/commission-raises-serious-concerns-over-protection-of-human-trafficking-victims-ahead-of-justice-committee-scrutiny> Published on 20 Jan 2026
- xxxviii Depaul Charity on Rosa's place: <https://ie.depaulcharity.org/what-we-do/services-in-republic-of-ireland/rosasplace/> Published November 2023
- xxxix The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on the lack of services for victims of Human Trafficking and the lack of an operational National Referral Mechanism as reported on RTE Radio ! <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2025/0521/1514097-human-trafficking-ireland/> Published on Wednesday, 21 May 2025 14:20
- xl Ibid
- xli Council of Europe News: Publication of GRETA's second report on Ireland <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/publication-of-greta-s-second-report-on-ireland> Published in Strasbourg 20/09/2017
- xlii Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in Ireland <https://www.blueblindfold.ie/about-blueblindfold-and-for-further-information/>
- xliiii MECPATHS <https://mecpaths.com/about-us/>
- xliiv Evaluation Report – Ireland: Third Evaluation Round <https://rm.coe.int/greta-third-evaluation-report-on-ireland/1680a84332>, Published by GRETA on 28 September 2022, Page 48
- xli v Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Press Release [Commission warns rise in number of trafficking victims detected still underestimates true figures](#) Published on 28 Aug 2025
- xli vi Identifying victims of human trafficking across the island of Ireland: Who counts? Who's counting? Who wants to be counted? <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17488958241252955> Research

article - First published by Amy Erbe Healy, Department of Sociology, University of Limerick on May 6, 2024

^{xlvii} Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Press Release [Commission Raises Serious Concerns over Protection of Human Trafficking Victims Ahead of Justice Committee Scrutiny](#) Press Release 20 Jan 2026

^{xlviii} *ibid*

^{xlix} *ibid*

^l Requests for On-The-Record Meeting request with The Department of Children have been refused at every instance since 2018.

^{li} Commenting on the experience of the Cork Life Centre as prepared in their paper entitled [CLC - Submission to ERI re UN UPR 2026 - SON - 08.01.2026.pdf](#) Published in Nov 2025

^{lii} Question:

97. Deputy John Clendennen asked the Minister for Education and Youth the latest figures for school completion rates; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30703/25]

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-06-12/97/> Early School Leavers

Dáil Éireann Debate, held on Thursday - 12 June 2025

^{liii} Central Statistics Office based on the most recent state census. [Ireland, the EU and Educational Attainment](#) CSO statistical release, 13 November 2024, 11am

^{liv} Children's Rights Alliance – [Final Report Card 2025](#) Published in 2025 Page 5

^{lv} Children's Rights Alliance [Child-Poverty-Monitor-2025-Spotlight-Solutions-Alternative-Education-Pathways](#) Published in 2025

^{lvi} *ibid*

^{lvii} Student Participation in Education [Overview Published Department of Education and Youth on 10 October 2024](#)

^{lviii} Education June 2021 [Review of Out-of-School Education Provision](#) Published by the Social Inclusion Unit Department of Education Version 2 - October 2022 Page 45

^{lix} Education June 2021 [Review of Out-of-School Education Provision](#) Published by the Social Inclusion Unit Department of Education Version 2 - October 2022 Page 64

^{lx} Commissioned by the Ombudsman for Children [Barriers to the Realisation of Children's Rights in Ireland](#) by Dr Ursula Kilkelly, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University College Cork, 29 August 2007. Page 68

^{lxi} Education June 2021 [Review of Out-of-School Education Provision](#) Published by the Social Inclusion Unit Department of Education Version 2 - October 2022 Page 84


^{lxii} Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills [Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education](#) May 2019 Page 184

Appendix 2


Glossary

NAP3	3 rd National Action Plan.
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
OPSC	Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC)
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Service (in Ireland)
IPO	International Protection Office (in Ireland)
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation.
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
Tusla	Irish Child and Family Agency
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
AGS	An Garda Síochána – (The Irish Police - Gardai)
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings
DoJ	Department of Justice (Ireland)
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
TIP Report	US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report

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