



Right to Education

Despite increasing diversity in Irish society, legislation such as the Education Act 1998 and Equal Status Act 2000 still permits schools to discriminate against potential students during the enrolment procedure in order to uphold the religious “ethos” of the school.

Draft legislation intended to tackle this problem had not been enacted by the end of the term in office of the Government (February 2016).

International Human Rights Treaty bodies, including the UN Human Rights Committee, have acknowledged the apparent reluctance of state-funded schools to desist from giving preferential treatment to children of Catholic families. Religious instruction in the Catholic faith permeates the curriculum, neglecting the needs of minority faith and non-faith children.

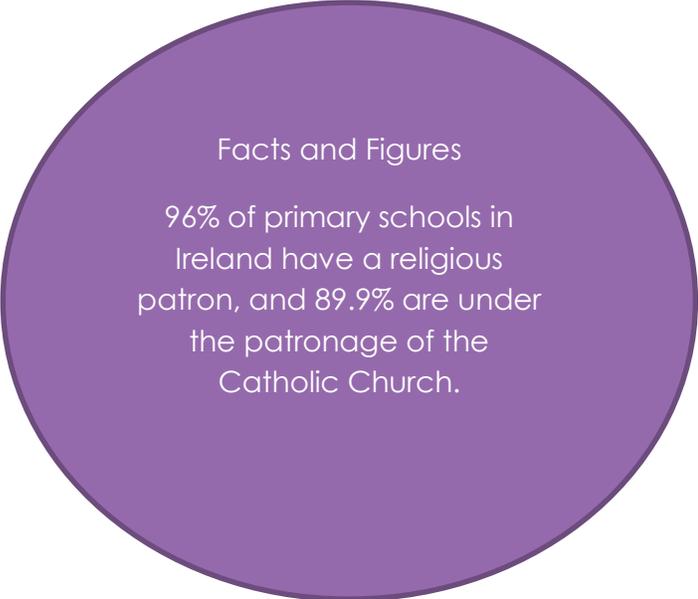
Recommendations

Amend Section 15 of the Education Act 1998, Section 7(3) (c) of the Equal Status Act 2000, and Section 37(1) of the Employment Equality Act 1998 to oblige publicly funded schools to deliver educational services, including employment, state curriculum and enrolment, in an objective and pluralistic manner

Accelerate the divestment programme for primary and post-primary schools and ensure the widest possible availability of multi and non-denominational schools

While a number of reforms were implemented since UPR 1, including a right of access to education by those with disabilities and some budgetary increases, Ireland has yet to eliminate religious discrimination in access to education.

Section 15 of the Education Act 1998, Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000 and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998 permit parents to allow their children to 'opt-out' of religious instruction, but no alternative program has been established for such children.



Facts and Figures

96% of primary schools in Ireland have a religious patron, and 89.9% are under the patronage of the Catholic Church.

About Your Rights. Right Now

Your Rights. Right Now is a coalition of 17 Irish NGOs, trade unions and civil society groups established by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in 2010 to coordinate the civil society response to Ireland's first examination under the Universal Periodic Review. This group was re-convened in 2015 in advance of Ireland's second examination. The coalition conducted a number of general and thematic consultations and invited written submissions to inform its report which was submitted to the UN in September 2015.

Members of the coalition are:

- Age Action
- Educate Together
- Free Legal Advice Centres
- Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Irish Family Planning Association
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Mercy Law Resource Centre
- NUI Galway, Centre for Disability Law and Policy
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland
- Union of Students in Ireland
- Disability Federation of Ireland

For more information see www.rightsnow.ie