

Minutes
IHREC 55th Ordinary Meeting
10 March 2022
1.30pm – 5.00pm
Online

Present:

- Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner (SG)
- Heydi Foster Breslin (HFB)
- Jim Clarken (JC)
- Prof Caroline Fennell (CF)
- Michael Finucane (MF)
- Tony Geoghegan (TG)
- Adam Harris (AH)
- Dr Salome Mbugua (SM)
- Dr Rosaleen McDonagh (RMCD)
- Dr Lucy Michael (LM)
- Prof Ray Murphy (RM)
- Colm O'Dwyer SC (COD)

Apologies:

- Dr Frank Conaty (FC)
- Prof Kathleen Lynch (KL)
- Sunniva McDonagh (SMcD)

In attendance:

- Laurence Bond (LB), Director
- Dr Iris Elliott, Head of Policy and Research – Items 4.1, 6.1
- Kieran Timmons, Policy and Research Officer –Item 4.1
- Naomi Kennan, Senior Policy and Research Officer – Item 6.1
- Michael O' Neill, Head of Legal – Items 3.1, 7.1
- Muireann Ní Thuairisg, Minute Taker

The 55th Ordinary Plenary Meeting of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission took place between 1:30pm - 5:00pm on 10 March 2022 by video conference.

1.1 Apologies, Quorum and Declaration of Interest

Apologies were noted from FC, KL and SMcD. CF declared an interest regarding *Agenda Item 6.1 CERD Follow Up*. The meeting was quorate.

1.2 Closed session for Members

There were no actions arising from the closed session.

1.3 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The draft minutes of the ordinary Commission meeting of 27 January were approved, proposed by RM and seconded by COD.

1.4 Matters arising, not otherwise dealt with on the Agenda

A number of Commission members requested to have a discussion on the conflict in Ukraine.

HFB requested a discussion on the membership of the Audit and Risk Committee. SG noted that the ARC would be discussed under *Agenda Item 2.1 Committee Updates*.

1.5 Discussion on conflict in Ukraine

Commission members voiced their concern with the escalating conflict in Ukraine and following a discussion agreed to issue a public statement on the matter as soon as possible.

CF noted ENNHRI has issued a public statement on ensuring that humanitarian law and human rights are respected and protected in the context of the armed attack on Ukraine.

Members also agreed to establish an ad hoc sub- group to discuss the matter in more detail, in particular focussing on the protection of human rights and equality of Ukrainians travelling to Ireland, the risks to disabled and other people living in institutions in Ukraine, the rights of asylum seekers currently awaiting international protection, the need for vulnerability assessments and the introduction of the EU temporary protection directive. Members were requested to contact MNT directly if they wished to become members of the sub- group.

1.6 Director's Report

The Director's Report was taken as read.

Members noted some concerns about the delay experienced by the Anti Human Trafficking team in receiving data from a number of bodies. LB indicated that these matters are being followed up. A specific work-plan for the Anti Trafficking Rapporteur function is in preparation and it is hoped to have a presentation on AHT at the next Commission meeting.

1.7 Chief Commissioner Update

The Chief Commissioner report was taken as read.

SG confirmed that the Ways of Working Group have finalised a revised code of conduct for commission members and some of the content of the Commission handbook. These items will be tabled for discussion at the April and June Commission meetings.

It is hoped that it might be possible to have the next Commission meeting in a hybrid format. However SG noted that work is still underway on the facilities side to enable successful running of hybrid meetings. SG noted her intention to hold an in person Commission meeting on 2 June.

2.1 Committee Updates

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

b) Casework Committee

An update note on the Casework Committee meetings of 20 January and 4 February 2022 were taken as read.

c) Policy & Research Committee

An update note on the Policy and Research Committee meeting of 22 February was taken as read.

d) Worker Employer Advisory Committee

An update note on the Ad hoc meeting of the Commission members of the Worker and Employer Advisory Committee, the Director and staff on 14 February was taken as read.

TG confirmed that they have received views from both Ibec and ICTU on the role and composition of WEAC and a further ad hoc meeting will take place before the next WEAC meeting.

Any changes to the Terms of Reference of WEAC will be tabled for decision at a future Commission meeting.

3.1 Update on Rights of Families at Inquest Paper

Members discussed the Minister for Justice’s response to the Chief Commissioner’s letter regarding the draft Code of Practice on the Rights of Families at Inquests.

It was agreed the Chief Commissioner would write again to the Minister to inform her that the Commission intends to publish the draft Code of Practice as an IHREC Information Note.

4.1 Legislative Observations on Garda Síochána (Digital Recording) Bill

Members welcomed the draft submission, which had been considered at the PRC meeting on 22 February, and suggested a number of additions for incorporation.

The draft submission will be finalised taking account of the feedback from the Commission and will be submitted as soon as possible.

5.1 2022 Draft Budget and Work Plan

Members discussed and gave feedback on the draft work plan and the memo on the 2022 budget.

LB noted that the draft work-plan is organised to address the specific priorities set out in the new Strategic Statement 2022-2024 and includes work already in progress as well as new actions arising in 2022. Members welcomed the work plan as clearly transposing the strategic plan into a set of specific actions, while noting too that the plan was a living document and not all the ongoing activity of the organisation can be captured within it. Members noted the need to follow up on the constitutional right to housing and also to strengthen engagement with rights holders, particularly those at risk in relation to housing and homelessness. Members also suggested that the work-plan should specify actions on sexual and domestic violence and on direct provision.

LB noted that the budget memo sets out the provisions for meeting our operational costs and for the estimated resource requirement to deliver on our planned activities in this year. In response to queries it was clarified that the total funding we are allocating is that which we received in our 2022 vote. This was set through the process leading up to the publication of the 2022 estimates in October of 2021. We had engaged in that process last year and secured an increase of 8.6% on our 2021 allocation.

6.1 CERD Follow Up

Members discussed the draft submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the follow-up procedure to Ireland’s combined 5th to 9th periodic reports.

The draft submission will be finalised taking account of the feedback from the Commission and will be submitted to the UN Committee.

7.1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8.1 AOB

There being no other business, the meeting concluded.