



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Minutes

69th Ordinary Commission Meeting

7 December 2023 | 10:00am – 2:00pm

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 16-22 Green St., Dublin 7

Present:

- Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner (SG)
- Noeline Blackwell (NB)
- Michael Finucane (MF)
- Dr Andrew Forde (AF)
- Adam Harris (AH) (remotely)
- Prof Colin Harvey (CH)
- Prof Kathleen Lynch (KL)
- Dr Salome Mbugua (SM)
- Dr Rosaleen McDonagh (RMD) (remotely)
- Sunniva McDonagh, SC, (SMD)
- Prof Ray Murphy (RM)
- Eoin Ronayne (ER)

Apologies:

- Jim Clarken (JC)
- Caoilfhionn Gallagher, KC, (CG)
- Dr Lucy Michael (LM)

In attendance:

- Deirdre Malone, Director (DM)
- Dr Iris Elliott, Head of Policy and Research, item 3.1
- Naomi Kennan, Policy and Research, item 3.1
- Roisin Putti, Policy and Research, item 3.1
- Barry Price, Office of the Director, item 5.1
- Louise Moloney (minute-taker)

The 69th Ordinary meeting of the Commission took place on 7 December 2023 from 10:00am – 2:00pm in the IHREC Offices, 16 -22 Green Street, Dublin 7.



1.1 Apologies, Quorum and Declaration of Interest

Apologies were noted from JC, CG and LM. The meeting was quorate and there were no declarations of interest.

1.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 68th Ordinary Commission meeting were circulated in advance and approved, proposed by AF and seconded by ER.

1.3 Matters arising, not otherwise dealt with on the Agenda

Engagement with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to organise a date for all Commission members to formally receive their Warrants of Appointment continues. It was intended to tie this to an event to thank the members whose terms concluded earlier this year, however given the long delay, SG proposed that this event would now be organised early in 2024.

SG thanked members for their patience over the last few months with the new IT set up. Members can send any feedback via email to the Office of the Director and the team would also be available for a call if preferable.

1.4 Director's Report and Risk Register

The Director's Report was circulated in advance and taken as read.

DM updated the Commission on the supplementary budget and revised estimates processes. Some of the additional funding allocated to the Commission for 2024 will be used to establish the Commission's new function as the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

DM also noted that she has had positive engagement with the National Treasury Management Agency in relation to state indemnity insurance for the Commission and will update the Commission further in the new year.

The policy on research procurement will be circulated to members.

1.5 Chief Commissioner Update

The Chief Commissioner report was taken as read.

SG spoke with several parliamentary parties over the previous weeks and it is hoped that this will strengthen the Commission's engagement with the Oireachtas, particularly in light of upcoming elections.



2.1 Committee Updates and Membership

a) Audit and Risk Committee

The note of the previous Audit and Risk Committee meeting was taken as read.

Lawrence Dunne was appointed as the independent chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Budgetary information on legal casework will be shared with the Casework Committee to inform prudent decisions.

b) Disability Advisory Committee

The note of the previous meeting of the Disability Advisory Committee was taken as read.

c) Worker and Employer Advisory Committee

The note of the previous Worker and Employer Advisory Committee was taken as read.

The Commission wished JC a speedy recovery.

d) Commission Reform Working Group

The note of the last meeting of the Commission Reform Working Group was taken as read.

The Terms of Reference have now been finalised following the Commission's feedback at the previous Plenary meeting.

e) Policy and Research Committee

A note of the Policy and Research Committee meeting of 4 December was circulated to members in the meeting.

f) Casework Committee

The Casework Committee also met on 4 December and a note will be circulated to the Commission.

g) Memo on Committee Memberships

Commission members whose term commenced this year were invited to attend Committee meetings in an observer capacity over the last few months. These members were then invited to express their interest in the committees they would like to join.

The committee memberships of the Commission members whose term commenced this year were confirmed. ER and RMcD joined the Audit and Risk Committee. NB, AF, CH and SM joined the Policy and Research Committee. CH joined the Casework Committee and ER and SM joined the Worker and Employer Advisory Committee. (See Appendix)

In addition, AH has stepped down from ARC and RMcD from PRC.



SG asked that existing members now reflect on any changes they would like to make to their committee membership, and that each committee consider its Chair and Terms of Reference as appropriate as soon as possible in the new year.

3.1 ICESCR Parallel Report

The Commission thanked the Policy and Research Team for the excellent draft report.

The report was approved for submission, subject to some minor changes.

SG and DM will have a further discussion with the Strategic Engagement team regarding the formatting of reports more generally.

4.1 Work Plan 2024

The first draft of the 2024 work plan was circulated to members in advance for information. DM noted that this was a working draft and a revised plan will be sent to the members ahead of the February meeting.

Next year will see the 10 year anniversary of the Commission's establishment. DM will bring a proposal to the February meeting outlining the options for events to mark this.

5.1 Commission Handbook

A revised draft of the Commission Handbook was circulated to members in advance.

SG thanked Commission and staff for their work on this to date.

The Handbook was approved subject to some minor amendments.

6.1 Traveller Rights

A paper outlining the Commission's work on Traveller Rights so far this year was circulated in advance, following a discussion at the September meeting.

The members discussed the work carried out to date and future initiatives that may be explored. The Commission agreed to discuss this further in the context of strategic planning.



7.1 Nomination to SHRAC

Following the October Commission meeting, members were invited to send expressions of interest for nomination to the An Garda Síochána Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee (SHRAC). NB and MF expressed interest.

NB withdrew her expression of interest and MF was nominated as the Commission's representative on SHRAC. MF thanked members for the nomination.

8.1 Code of Practice on Public Sector Duty

The draft Code of Practice on Public Sector Duty was circulated in advance and approved for submission to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Members noted that it may be useful to have a guidance note as an accompaniment to the Code of Practice when it is published.

9.1 AOB

The Commission discussed the referendum recently announced by government, which is to take place on 8 March 2024. The Commission has laid out its relevant positions in previous legislative observations and SG noted that they would have little time to make further comment, as pre-legislative scrutiny has been waived. Members would welcome guidance on the position of the Commission and if and how the referendum impacts on their own communications.

The Commission discussed the potential for the Irish Government to initiate an interstate case in the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. Legal advice will be shared with Commission members and information will be sought regarding the State's intentions in relation to the potential interstate case.

The meeting closed at 2pm.

The Commission was invited to stay for an informal social engagement with the staff team.



Appendix: Committee Membership following Commission Meeting on 7 December

ARC <i>(Independent Chair, Lawrence Dunne, other independent member Aisling McKeon)</i>	Jim Clarken Eoin Ronayne Rosaleen McDonagh
PRC	Lucy Michael Sinéad Gibney Andrew Forde Noeline Blackwell Salomé Mbugua Colin Harvey
CWC	Michael Finucane Ray Murphy Sunniva McDonagh Sinéad Gibney Colin Harvey
DAC	Rosaleen McDonagh Adam Harris Sinéad Gibney
WEAC	Jim Clarken Kathleen Lynch Sinéad Gibney Eoin Ronayne Salomé Mbugua



**Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas**
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission