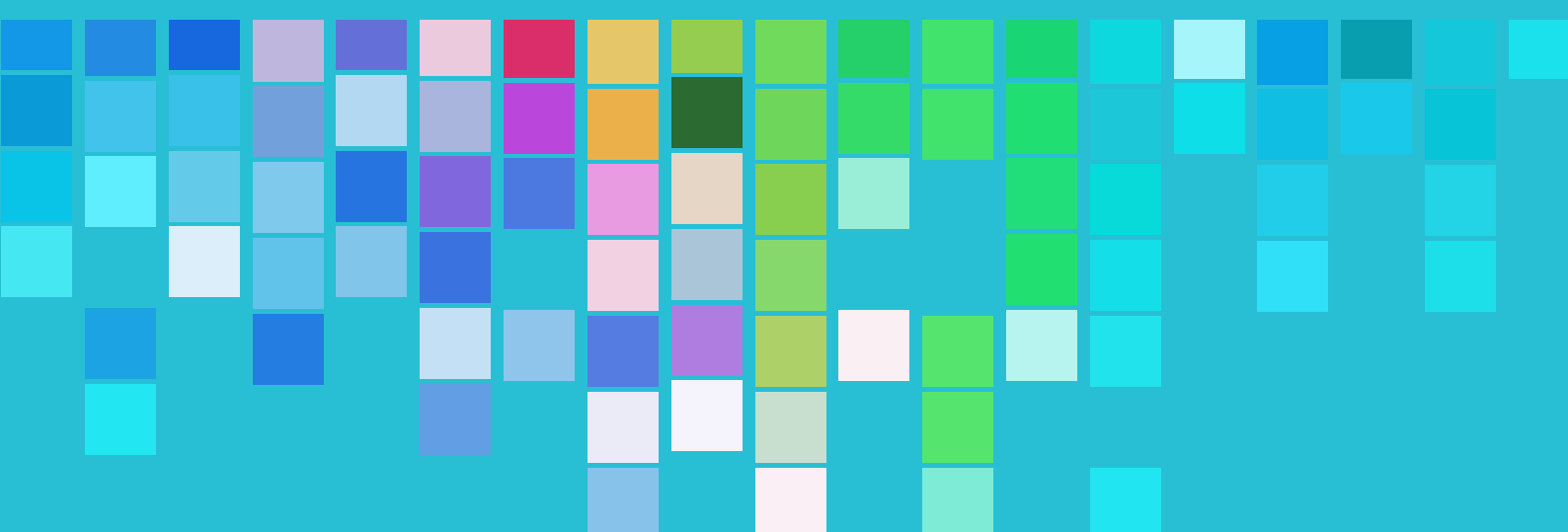




Irish Council for  
**Civil Liberties**

**IRISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2017-2020**



DEFENDING RIGHTS AT A CRITICAL MOMENT

# OVERVIEW

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties is the foremost civil liberties organisation in Ireland with a long and successful track record of defending human rights and civil liberties, including at times when the political climate was often hostile to their protection. Fully independent of government and fearless in our advocacy for human rights, we have been at the forefront of all the key human rights debates in Irish society, making a significant impact on law, policy and public opinion. Ireland is a freer and more equal society today because of ICCL's work.

Now, Ireland is at a critical moment for the protection of human rights. Global political developments present grave new risks to rights and freedoms. Concerns about migration and terrorism, and the potential for populist exploitation of those concerns, are also not confined by national borders. The BREXIT vote in the United Kingdom and attacks on the UK Human Rights Act pose very direct threats to the protection of human rights on the island of Ireland. New dangers are also emerging with the potential of new technologies to compromise individual rights.

This is a moment when defence of our hard-fought human rights protections is more important than ever, and it is essential that a strong ICCL is in place to defend individual rights and vulnerable and marginalised communities. We have a strong record in using our expertise in human rights law and our standing in political and public debate to achieve real change in the protection of human rights in Ireland. We believe that ICCL has an essential role to play in shaping the future of Ireland and in ensuring that human rights are central to political and public discourse, and we have identified a number of key issues on which ICCL will be able to deliver important reforms over the coming years.

We believe in the importance of a rich and vibrant civil society to the health of our democracy and to the protection and enjoyment of human rights, and we will focus on ICCL's role as an independent non-governmental organisation and as a fearless voice defending and promoting human rights in Irish society. There is a pressing need for a strong and independent ICCL and the Board of ICCL recognises its responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of ICCL as an independent non-governmental organisation. Over the period of this Plan, ICCL will increase and expand our influence and capacity, both through growing as an organisation and by strengthening our alliances, our strategic relationships and our support base.

## **Background and achievements:**

- Founded in 1976, ICCL has tirelessly worked to defend and strengthen constitutional rights protections and to ensure the full implementation of international human rights standards.
- The ICCL draws on the tradition of civil liberties activism in many countries, including the civil rights movements in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States. It has developed strong partnerships with civil society organisations in Ireland and networks and alliances with similar organisations internationally.
- Domestically focused and internationally informed, ICCL has played a leading role in some of Ireland's most important human rights campaigns.
- These have included the campaigns for legal divorce, decriminalisation of homosexuality and for marriage equality; working for equality legislation and institutions; resistance to emergency legislation and the removal of constitutional due process protections; and consistent advocacy for women's rights, including reproductive rights.

## **The environment for our work**

- The nature of the contemporary landscape for the protection of human rights in Ireland and internationally.
- The institutional structures and dynamics for achieving change in the political and legal systems in Ireland
- The remit, capacity and strategic focus of our peer organisations working in the area of human rights and in related areas in Ireland
- The relevant statutory institutions in the area of human rights, their powers, capacity and remit. In particular, we recognise the important role played by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the various ombudsman and oversight and accountability agencies.

## **Purpose:**

- We understand the distinct and special role of ICCL as an independent non-governmental organisation.
- We recognise that ICCL has a duty to defend and speak for the human rights of everyone, regardless of status or popularity, and to act as an essential bulwark against discrimination and human rights violations.
- We are focussed on achieving significant and strategic changes to law and policy which will strengthen the protection of human rights in Ireland
- We inform and lead public discourse – acting as a focus for certain key human rights issues, including in the areas of justice, liberty and equality.
- We seek to be consistently effective in influencing policy and working as a collaborative partner in advancing human rights and civil liberties in Ireland.

## **What do we do?**

- We conduct original research and bring forward policy proposals across a broad range of human rights and civil liberties issues.
- We run campaigns to raise public and political awareness, and lead public discourse on, human rights and civil liberties.
- We work in solidarity with civil society in Ireland and internationally, and with other stakeholders, to achieve our strategic goals.

## **Vision:**

ICCL is committed to an Ireland that is more just, more free, and where human rights and civil liberties are enjoyed by everyone.

## **Mission Statement:**

The ICCL acts as an essential defender of human rights and civil liberties and as an effective champion for the advancement of justice and freedom in Irish society.

## **Values:**

- Respect for human rights
- Respect for diversity and equality
- The full enjoyment of women's rights and gender equality;
- Tolerance, inclusiveness, pluralism and secularism
- Impartiality and integrity in our defence of the rights of everyone
- Speaking truth to power even when it is unpopular or difficult
- Solidarity with defenders and promoters of human rights in Ireland and internationally
- Respect for individual privacy
- Excellence and professionalism in our work
- Transparency and accountability
- Sustainability of ICCL as an independent organisation

# STRATEGIC THEMES

We identify three strategic thematic policy areas where ICCL will lead important achievements in the protection of human rights over the next four years. We also set out a fourth strategic theme relating to organisational development and sustainability. Under each thematic area, we identify a list of priority issues; and specific project plans for each of the identified issues will be developed under each discrete annual Work Plan.

# 1

## DEFENDING JUSTICE:

### Driving an agenda of reform

The protection of human rights in the justice system – and particularly the criminal justice system – is a primary focus of ICCL’s work. We stand for defending universal respect for human rights of all persons engaged in the justice system, including victims of crime and suspects and accused persons.

ICCL will play a leading and decisive part in shaping justice reform initiatives on identified strategic issues, delivering important achievements to strengthen the protection of human rights.

#### **Policing**

The Garda are a key agency for the protection of rights in Ireland and ICCL has been at the centre of police reform initiatives over forty years. We are now entering a critical period for reform of policing in Ireland and ICCL will play a leadership role in ensuring that the outcome of anticipated Garda reform processes will secure a human rights compliant police service and the maximum effectiveness of police oversight bodies.

#### **Fair Trials and Due Process**

Working through Irish constitutional standards, international human rights standards and EU standards (including through the JUSTICIA network), ICCL will deliver a programme of procedural reforms in Irish law in line with the highest standards of respect for suspect and accused persons’ rights.

#### **Victims’ Rights**

ICCL will ensure the full implementation of the EU Victims Directive in Irish law, including working with others to put in place policies and processes for effective access to the rights set out under the Directive. This will be secured by successful completion of existing partnership agreements at the national and European levels.

#### **Judicial Reform**

A strong independent judiciary is a key institution for the protection of human rights and ICCL will play a leading role in public discourse on the anticipated legislation for judicial appointments and judicial accountability. We will ensure the strongest possible level of independence of the Irish judiciary, in line with the recommendations set out in ICCL’s “Justice Matters” report of 2007.

# 2

## PROMOTING EQUALITY:

### Expanding protections against discrimination

ICCL is committed to working in solidarity with all groups affected by discrimination and inequality in Irish society. We will continue to work for the strongest protections against discrimination in all its forms. We have identified a number of priority areas where ICCL will contribute to strengthening of law and policy towards identified groups in Irish society over the period of the Strategic Plan.

#### **Women's rights including reproductive rights**

ICCL will play a significant role in the national debate on the issue of abortion, focussing on the human rights and legal dimensions to the issue, and working to achieve full respect for women's rights in Irish law.

#### **Racism and intolerance**

ICCL will make a valuable contribution to the development of law, policy and practice in relation to hate crime at the national and European levels. ICCL will continue to show leadership in combatting racism in Ireland, including discrimination against Travellers and Roma.

#### **Deepening equality**

Working in partnership with civil society, ICCL will continue to advance a broad equality agenda in Ireland, including working for specific policy outcomes for the LGBT community, persons with disability and all minority communities in Irish society.

# 3

## STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS: Leadership and innovation

ICCL will show leadership in identifying emerging threats to human rights in Ireland and target opportunities to ensure the greatest possible impact of our work on the broad human rights agenda. Committed to the international system of human rights law as an instrument of change, while also retaining a commitment to domestic rights standards, ICCL will work with others to strengthen systems and policies for the protection of human rights in Ireland, through work with partners in Ireland and internationally.

### **Privacy and Information Rights**

Technological advances and state surveillance measures present significant and fast evolving threats to privacy rights. ICCL will seek to identify and address key human rights issues in relation to surveillance and technology. ICCL will establish itself as a primary advocate for privacy and information rights in Ireland, by growing its expertise and capacity in this area.

### **Human rights law**

ICCL will advocate for the ratification by Ireland of human rights treaties – including the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – and for enhancing the status of human rights treaties in Irish law and will continue to contribute to international human rights processes support participation by others in international human rights processes.

### **BREXIT and international threats to rights**

ICCL will play a leading role in highlighting the human rights consequences of BREXIT, and in addressing wider European and regional developments which may present threats to the protection of human rights in Ireland.

### **Innovation in the protection of human rights**

ICCL will support innovative new thinking and applications in the practice of human rights in Ireland. Building on our work in defining social issues in human rights terms (e.g. with regard to historical abuse of women and children), ICCL will support new collaborations with academics and communities and community activists, particularly around issues affecting civil society space and the free operation of NGOs.



# 4 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

As a professional civil society organisation, ICCL needs a strong and resilient structure in which its activities can be executed.

## **Leadership and Governance**

ICCL will engage in Board renewal to attract and retain a strong, diverse and engaged Board to lead the organisation, reflecting a wide range of skills and experiences suited to support the achievement of its strategic goals. ICCL is committed to achieving the highest standards of governance and will review its structures, policies and processes, and amend them where necessary, to meet the strategic needs of the organisation.

## **Membership, Information and capacity building**

ICCL is a membership organisation and recognises its base of loyal supporters as a key resource for ICCL's campaigning work and as an important asset in our fundraising strategy. Building on our Know Your Rights publications, ICCL will continue to provide information on and raise awareness of human rights issues and standards.

## **Human resources**

The ICCL will continue to operate as a professional organisation, with its staff as its key resource in delivering its work. ICCL maintains and continually improves all policies and procedures to remain a sector leading organisation and to encouraging a healthy and productive staff culture, with good systems of internal communication and accountability. We are committed to innovation in building our capacity through collaboration with others. We value the input of volunteers, interns, and fellows and will develop our structures and processes for the greater use of these resources.

## **Financial controls and compliance**

ICCL will continue to ensure the highest standards of financial management and controls, in line with best practice internationally. Operating in a complex regulatory environment, and committed to the highest standards of accountability, ICCL will ensure full compliance with all relevant legal and financial standards in every aspect of its work, including compliance with the Governance Code for charities.

## **Sustainability**

ICCL is committed to ensuring its financial health and sustainability and will have in place a robust fundraising strategy to underpin this strategic plan. The ICCL has identified the need to diversify its income streams and will work towards achieving a sustainable funding base with a balanced spread of funding sources include (i) Trusts and Foundations; (ii) Grants; and (iii) Major Gifts and Donations. Our fundraising strategy will provide for an appropriate and sustainable balance between core and restricted funding.



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