



ICCL: Monitoring rights during the pandemic 20-26 June

Covid-19-related advocacy work

Letter to the Garda Commissioner regarding the use of spit hoods

We wrote, together with Amnesty International Ireland, to Commissioner Harris expressing our concern at the ongoing deployment of spit hoods by An Garda Síochána (AGS) in the context of COVID-19 infection and transmission, in particular following information that emerged about their ineffectiveness in preventing infection.

In a previous letter sent on 30 March 2020), we, the ICCL, had previously urged An Garda Síochána not to use spit hoods as part of the protective equipment offered to its members, given the human rights concerns they raise.

We reiterated the need to ensure that regulation and oversight are in place for all Garda equipment, taking full account of the principles of necessity and proportionality, and a clear understanding of the risks of their misuse, particularly against at-risk population groups or health-impaired individuals.

We urged the Commissioner to immediately end the use of spit hoods, pending information on any technical and scientific evidence of the efficacy of the spit hoods procured by An Garda Síochána in preventing COVID-19 infection of AGS members and the wider public, and confirming they do not risk harm to the health of arrested persons.

We requested that this information, if available, be shared as soon as possible.

We noted that the use of spit hoods is due to be reviewed in September, and that the Minister for Justice and Equality has said publicly that he wants to see an end to their use at that stage.

Publication of information on covid-19 tracker app

The HSE announced this week that the app is ready for launch.

The app's source code and data protection impact assessment (DPIA) were published on Friday, 26 June, along with other information pertaining to its privacy and technical settings (all documents available [here](#)).

We have made numerous calls for this information to be published *in advance of the app's launch*, and had received assurances to this effect from the Minister of Health (assuring publication 6-7 days in advance) to enable an independent expert review of the app's compliance with privacy and data protection laws.

We have also requested details regarding Data Protection Commissioner (DPC) Dixon's 20-page report on the app's DPIA, which has been sent to the HSE and Department of Health.

School meals programme extended for the summer months

We [welcomed](#) the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection's announcement that the funding for the School Meals programme has been extended for summer 2020. The programme provides funding towards the provision of food to over 1,500 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children.

We, together with colleagues from our Covid-19 NGO group, had written to the Minister on 9 June calling for this extension in a joint letter.

Restrictions on Freedom of Religion set to be eased

We have welcomed [reports](#) that places of worship are likely to be exempt from the 50-person indoor event limit, a limit which is set to come into effect on 29 June under the next phase of easing the restriction measures.

We have called for a similar proportionate response to restrictions on the right to protest.

EVENTS

Webinar: Ireland's Contact Tracing App

We organised an [webinar](#) to discuss Ireland's technical response to COVID-19, together with the Digital Repository of Ireland and Coffee & Circumvention.

Elizabeth Farries, our Director of Information Rights, spoke on our calls for open transparency around the app and the publication of our 9 principles to guide the app's development in a privacy and data protection compliant manner.

Webinar: Protest and structural discrimination during the pandemic

Our umbrella international civil liberties organisation, INCLO, hosted its third public webinar in the series on human rights during the pandemic. This session was focused on protest and structural discrimination.

....

REFERENCES IN THE DÁIL

Special Oireachtas Committee on covid-19 response: testing & tracing session

Department of Health Assistant Secretary (of the research and development and health analytics division), Muiris O Connor, [expressly referred](#) to how our framework of 9 principles “contributed substantially” to work aimed at maximising the app’s privacy.

This framework of principles, to ensure that the app’s design and deployment is in compliance with human rights law, was developed collaboratively with Digital Rights Ireland, academics, and data protection experts. The framework can be viewed [here](#).

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT & COVERAGE

Our Policy Officer, Olga Cronin, who works on our joint Information Rights Programme with INCLO, spoke to the *Mail on Sunday* newspaper regarding the app for an article entitled “HSE: Still no launch date for virus tracing app”.

Our concerns regarding the app are referenced in a *Sunday Business Post* article available [here](#).