

# Restrictions on Community and Non-Profit Advocacy in Ireland



## Freedom to Advocate:

### A Survey on the Restrictions Placed on the Voices of Community, Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organisations.

Thank you for taking the time to be part of this important research.

Across the world, the space for community, voluntary and non-government organisations to work freely is shrinking at an alarming rate. Governments are finding ways to shut down oppositional and critical voices.

While in Ireland we have not seen severe restrictions on the sector's ability to speak out, concerning issues with respect to funding being put at risk have been reported.

The voices from the sector are critical for the state and government in the design and implementation of services and to better understand the work of those "at the coalface".

In this survey, we will seek to capture how you advocate and get your messages across and what restrictions funding risks, if any, you have faced in the course of that work.

We estimate that the survey should take about 20 mins to complete, almost all of the answers are single click with some space for written responses.

We are very grateful again for your time.

We at ICCL are champions of the right to privacy. All data gathered in this survey will be strictly anonymous, confidential and secure.

[Learn how your personal data are used and protected by ICCL.](#)

Before we begin, please confirm that you are happy to share these responses with ICCL for this research.

☐ I'm happy to participate and share my data

# Part One: About Your Organisation

In this section, we'll ask you about your organization and the type of activates you carry out to promote your work, campaign and conduct advocacy.

# Part One: About Your Organization

How would you describe the *main* field(s) in which your organization works? (You can select more than one answer) \*

You can select a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3.

<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation/Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Law/Justice/Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Welfare (e.g. poverty alleviation)
<input type="checkbox"/> Social justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth services/issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness/Housing issues/services
<input type="checkbox"/> Family issues/services	<input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQIA issues/services	<input type="checkbox"/> Drugs issues/services
<input type="checkbox"/> Older persons issues/services	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Immigration/Refugee/Asylum issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Overseas aid/development	<input type="checkbox"/> Traveller/Roma issues/services
<input type="checkbox"/> Women's issues/services	<input type="checkbox"/> Student welfare/education	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability issues/services
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/religious groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety and Protection
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports and recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Antiracism/discrimination
<input type="checkbox"/> Men's issues/services	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic and/or Gender Based Violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's rights/services
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify)

What kinds of activities does your organization engage in? \*

Please select all that apply.

☐ Service Provision

☐ Research

☐ Advocacy (on behalf of individuals or service users)

☐ Lobbying or campaigning to change policy or legislation

☐ Education/Public Awareness Raising

☐ Community Development (i.e. working with marginalized groups to build voice and/or capacity)

☐ Media work

☐ Other (Please Specify)

Thinking of the work you selected above, please indicate the rating of importance that each of the applicable activities is to your organization’s work. Activities you do not engage in can be ignored.

Service Provision

Least important

Most Important

Research

Least important

Most Important

Advocacy

Least important

Most Important

Lobbying/Campaigning



Education/Public Awareness Raising



Community Development



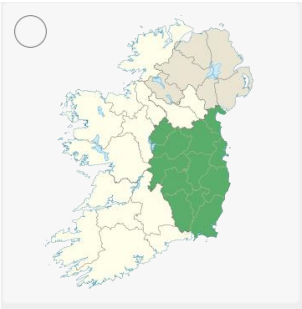
Media Work



Would you say that most of the above work takes place at a local or national level?

Please choose... ▼

Where does your organization primarily operate/what area does it serve?



Leinster (Excluding County Dublin)



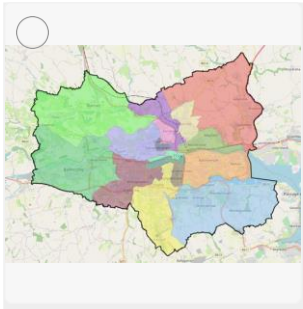
Ulster



Connaught



Munster (Excluding Cork City)



Cork City



Dublin



Nationally/on an all-island basis



Outside of Ireland

Other, e.g. Regionally in Ireland, CHO area, etc.

## Part Two: Funding

In this section we will ask some questions about how your organization is funded and limitations this may place on advocacy.



Does your organization currently receive any government funding for core operations or individual projects?

Please choose...

▼

If you answered yes to any of the above, can you specify the type of contract(s) your organization is currently party to:

If applicable, do any of the contracts your organization is party to restrict your ability to make public comment on government policy?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What are these restrictions?

In the last 10 years, has your organization’s government funding been cut significantly, or grown significant?

Please choose...

▼

If significant funding was lost, what reasons were given for this if any? Do you think the reasons given were genuine?

If significant funding was awarded, did it come with conditions attached to your advocacy? If yes, what were these restrictions?

Have you ever curtailed advocacy, campaigning or communications for fear of risk to your organization's funding?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you ever felt that your organization's funding was put at risk because of commentary, campaigning or advocacy that you engaged in?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How did this risk present itself? For example an implicit or explicit threats, hostile environments for your organization's work? Please elaborate.

Is your organization a registered charity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, is there a specific reason why you've chosen to not register if eligible?

On balance, would you say that your charitable status is crucial for your organization's financial wellbeing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Are you concerned that the way in which you engage in policy debate/advocacy/campaigning may affect your charitable status?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Can you describe the activities which you believe may make you vulnerable?

Does consideration/anxiety regarding you organization’s charitable status impact on decisions as to whether or not you engage in policy debate, campaigning and/or advocacy?

NeverAlways

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Why/Why Not?

If there are any other specific instances of where you believe your organization has faced pressure (overt or covert) in terms of your ability to advocate or speak out, please feel free to share here:

## Part Three: Your organization and Stakeholder Engagement

In this section, we'll ask you about your organization's engagement with consultations and other forms of stakeholder engagements.

Have you been involved in a stakeholder engagement process? e.g. Making a submission, attending a stakeholder meeting, filling out a questionnaire etc. If no, please skip the next section and move to Part 3. \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

What form did this stakeholder engagement take? (Select as many as apply)

You can select multiple options.

☐ Written Submission

☐ Individual Meeting with a government agency/department at a national level

☐ Individual Meeting with a government agency/department at a local level

☐ Engagement with an existing forum at a local level, e.g. monitoring committee, stakeholder group etc.

☐ Structured Engagement (e.g. roundtable with other organisations, survey response)

☐ Appearance at an Oireachtas committee hearing

☐

Other

In general, at what stage are you invited to take part in the consultation process?

Please choose...

▼

What resources did your organization need in order to be able to effectively participate in the consultation process? e.g. undertaking research, consultation with members, the use of a consultant, travel funds, etc.

Were any resources provided by the organization running the stakeholder engagement in order to assist you to cover costs?

Please choose...

▼

Thinking back on the stakeholder engagements you've taken part in, please rank how, most frequently, your organization came to be involved in them.

Invitation to participate from government/state agency specifically to your organization

Own initiative

Responded to a general call for submissions

Invited to participate through a network of other organisations you are involved in, e.g. a coalition or similar.

Other (please specify)

>

1.

Other ways in which you came to be involved in a consultation process.

Overall, do you find it difficult to keep track of new policies/legislation of relevance to your organization which is being developed?

Not difficult at all

Extremely difficult

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Have you ever missed contributing inputs to policy/legislation of relevance to your organization because you found out about it too late?

☐ Yes

☐ No



Please rank below, how you would describe your experiences of taking part in state/agency stakeholder engagements over the past 5 years.

Resource Neutral

Resource Intensive

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Resulted in No Policy Shifts

Resulted in Large Policy Shifts

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Harmed Relationship With Funder

Improved Relationship With Funder

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Effort outweighed Benefits

Benefits outweighed Efforts

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Not Enthusiastic About Future Engagements

Very Enthusiastic About Future Engagements

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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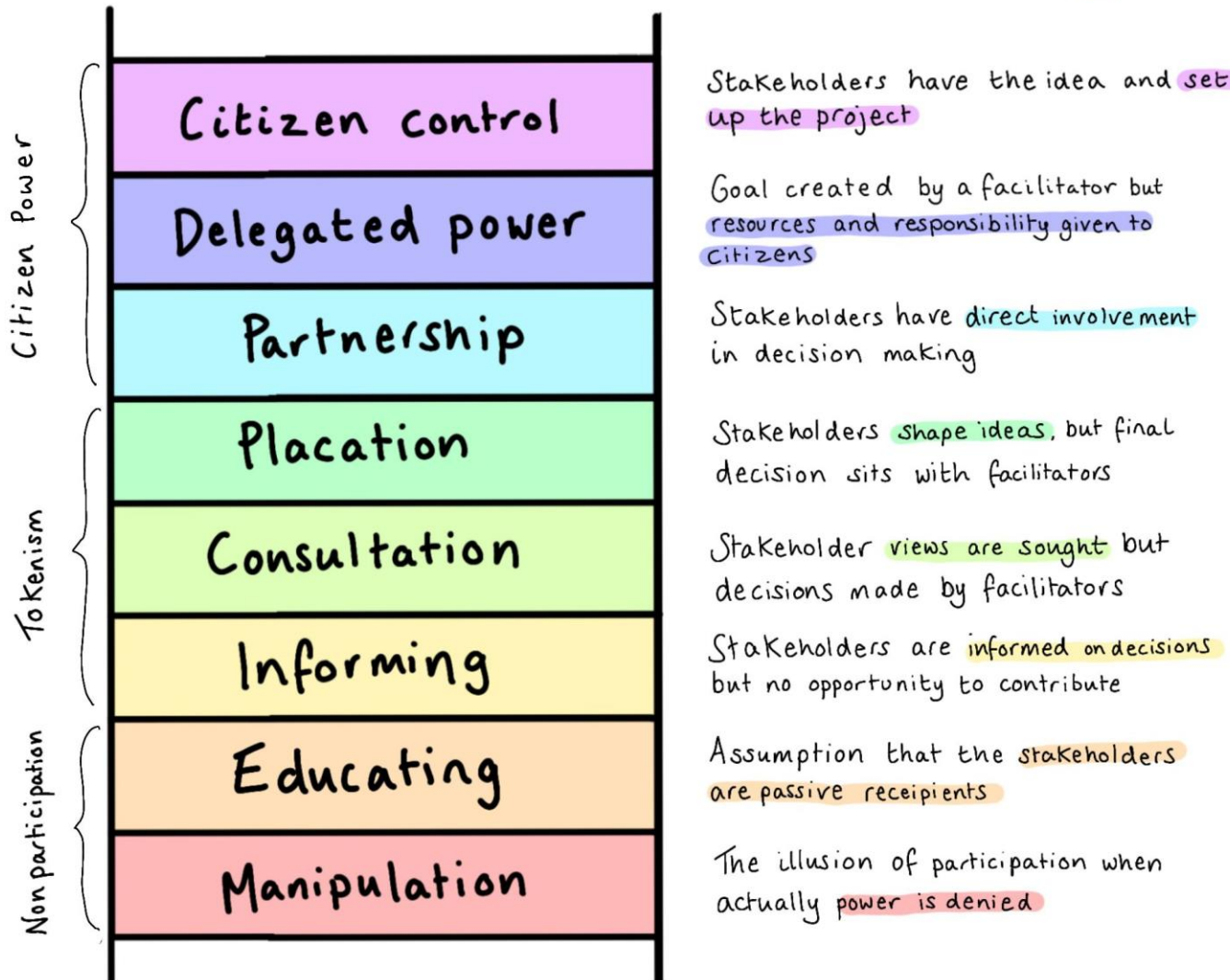
In general, are the issues you raise during stakeholder engagements taken on board?

Please choose...▼

If you answered yes, can you describe how issues are addressed? E.g. big policy shifts, technical changes, new topics taken on board.

# Ladder of Participation

(Arnstein, 1969)



@creative.clinical.psychologist

Drawn by Juliet Yong

The "ladder of participation" is a visual designed by Sherry Arnstein to understand the level of citizen involvement in decision-making.

Based on your experiences, where do you see the level of participation for your organization now?

Please choose...



At what level would you like to see your organization in an ideal world?

Please choose...



If you have any other thoughts to share on issues you have experienced with stakeholder engagements, please feel free to input below:

## Part Four: Government Attitude to Policy Debates

In this section, we will explore what your view is on the government's attitude to policy debates in Ireland and some questions on how you conduct your advocacy work.

In your organization's policy areas, what do you think the state's attitude to stakeholder engagement is?

Tokenistic Engagement

Actively silencing

Contributions satisfactorily taken on board.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

If you work across multiple policy areas, or have different experiences in engaging with a multitude of agencies, departments etc. please add more detail here.

Please select your response to each of the following questions from the drop-down menu:

In general, current Irish political culture encourages the inclusion of the voice of organisations such as mine in policy formation.

Please choose...

Economic power and strong vested interests are major drivers of government policy

Please choose...

In my experience NGOs/CSOs/CVOs face pressure to tailor public statements to be in line with government policy

Please choose...

The Irish media fosters an accurate view of the NGO/CSO/CVO Sector and the work we do.

Please choose...

Organisations that dissent from current government policy are valued in the policy formation process.

Please choose...

The government values NGOs/CSOs/CVOs and respects our work as part of policy development process.

Please choose...

▼

Organisations which dissent from government policy risk having their funding cut

Please choose...

▼

The government values the expertise and knowledge we bring to the table as experts in our sector

Please choose...

▼

Organisations which dissent from government policy risk having their charitable status withdrawn

Please choose...

▼

The Charities Regulator is of great benefit to the sector

Please choose...

▼

The government would prefer if we engaged in no advocacy and only in service delivery.

Please choose...

▼

Do you have any further comments?

What methods does your organization use to get your key policy messages across?

What methods does your organization use to get your key messages across to policymakers/decisionmakers? Please answer all rows.

	Never	Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently
Communications with members (e.g. emails and newsletters)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protests (organizing/attending)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend meetings with Ministers/Departmental officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engagement on state/government forums, e.g. monitoring committees at local or national level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campaigning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media/Press Releases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Publication of research/data/reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Submissions (e.g., consultations, submissions to Oireachtas committees etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Letters to the editor/op-eds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other



Which of the following audiences would you consider to be key targets for your policy messages?

	Never	Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently
Opposition spokespersons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government Ministers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Departmental/agency officials at a national level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Departmental/agency officials at a local/regional level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
County/City Councils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non-governmental funders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local TDs/Councilors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other TDs/Councilors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
European Commission/EU Agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other international orgs besides EU agencies (e.g. UN, OECD etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media Organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

0 / 500

Thinking about the last 12 months, how successful do you feel your organization has been in having your key messages heard by policymakers/decisionmakers?

Not successful at all

Extremely successful

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How can you tell?

0 / 500

What do you think are the main barriers to having your organization's message heard and acted upon by funders ?

	Never	Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently
Media (local and national) not interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General public not interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of networks with key decision makers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opposition from vested interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absence of structures and/or processes for meaningful collaboration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internal (management/board) pressure to do things quietly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competition from organisations working on similar issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Funding agreements restrict commentary on government policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of organizational capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of media networks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

# Part Five: About You

In this final section we will ask some questions about you. As we previously outlined, this information will be strictly confidential, GDPR compliant and will not be used to identify you or associate you with the answers you provided above in any way.

What position do you hold in your organization?

Please choose...▼

How long have you been in this role?

Please choose...▼

How large is your organization? (Number of Employees)

Please choose...▼

How do you identify your gender?

Please choose...▼

What is your age group?

Please choose...▼

What is the name of your organization? (Optional and Confidential)

Any final comments on any issue raised in the survey you wish to add?

Thank you for contributing to this research!

The anonymized results will be made public by ICCL and our partners in due course. If you wish to be contacted directly with the results, please enter your email below.

Please enter your email address: