

Engagement between civil society and national equality and human rights bodies (ERA members survey)

Equality and Rights Alliance disseminated an online survey to member organisations working on equality and human rights. The survey aimed to get a snapshot of the level and nature of engagement between civil society and the Equality Authority (EA) and Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC).

Summary of findings

The survey was disseminated to 62 organisations. 34 responses were received (survey questions at appendix A).

It is probable that organisations with a history of engaging with these bodies were more likely to respond, given that only six organisations noted no engagement of any kind with *either* the IHRC or the EA.

Twenty-five respondents had engaged with the EA, nineteen on several occasions. Nine respondents noted no history of engagement with the EA. Twelve respondents had engaged with the IHRC, six on several occasions. Eighteen respondents noted no history of engagement with the IHRC.

Budget cuts, both to the national bodies and to civil society organisations, were noted by a number of respondents as having had a negative impact in terms of diminishing the levels of engagement in recent years.

Overall, respondents were positive about their engagement with the EA and the IHRC. A particular benefit noted was the ability of these bodies to bring together different stakeholders on issues of mutual concern; a number of respondents noted that this was not something that civil society groups had the capacity, or in some instances, the "authority", to do as effectively as a national body.

Some of the engagement, however, was funding led rather than strategic in nature. The most commonly noted reason for engagement with the EA was a request for funding from the EA (sixteen respondents)¹. The survey replies also indicate that the EA has been more likely to seek

¹ The Equality Authority has been a conduit for EU funding streams for NGOs working to address issues for groups protected under equality legislation

collaboration with civil society groups than the reverse. Thirteen organisations noted that the EA asked them to collaborate on initiatives, compared to six civil society organisations who noted that they had been proactive in seeking such collaboration. Of the twelve respondents that had engaged with the IHRC, four stated that the IHRC had sought their collaboration on an initiative, while three respondents had approached the IHRC to collaborate on an initiative.

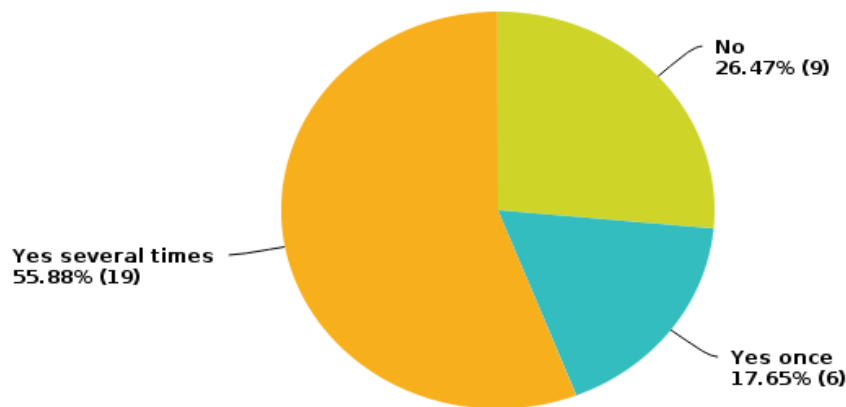
Negative outcomes of engagement with the EA and the IHRC noted were largely in relation to requests to take a legal case and/or conduct an inquiry which were not granted. Six respondents had requested the EA to take a case and/or conduct an inquiry and two respondents had requested the IHRC to take a case/conduct an inquiry.

Results in Full

The Equality Authority

Q2 Has your organisation strategically engaged with the Equality Authority?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



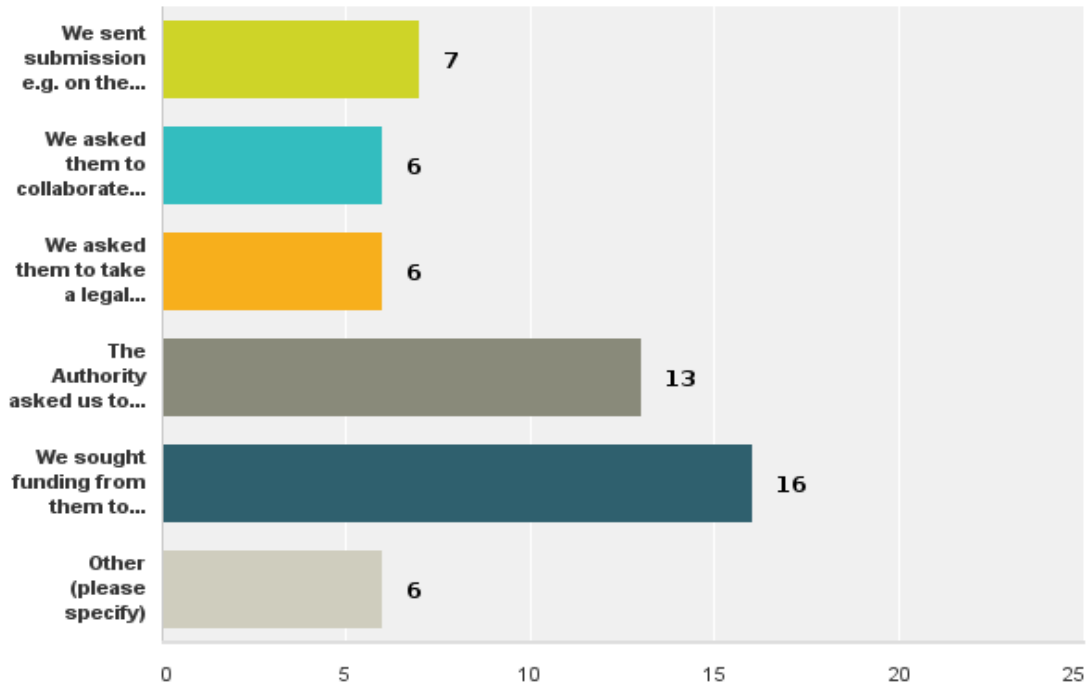
Q3. If, No, can you briefly note why your organisation has not engaged with the Equality Authority?

- Main issues we deal with don't fall within the remit of the EA (two respondents),
- Engaged in the past but not since the budget cuts to the EA in 2009 (two respondents)

- Do not have the capacity/resources to engage (three respondents)
- Leave engagement to national organisation we are affiliated to (one respondent)
- Have not seen reason/opportunity to engage (two respondents)

Q4 If yes, can you briefly note the nature of your engagement with the Equality Authority (tick all that apply)

Answered: 25 Skipped: 9



Engagement noted under 'Other': shared information; attended meetings/conferences x 2; collaborated on an EA project x 3

Q5. Can you briefly note the outcome of this engagement with the EA (e.g. benefits, outputs)?

25 responses received.

Outcomes noted:

- Provision of technical support (e.g. workplace initiatives)
- Mutual exchange of specialised legal knowledge
- Mutual referral of people (for legal assistance/advice/support)
- Collaborative work on: employment equality issues, issues for migrant workers, gender pay-gap, reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, embedding equality into school development, equality for carers, issues for transgender people,

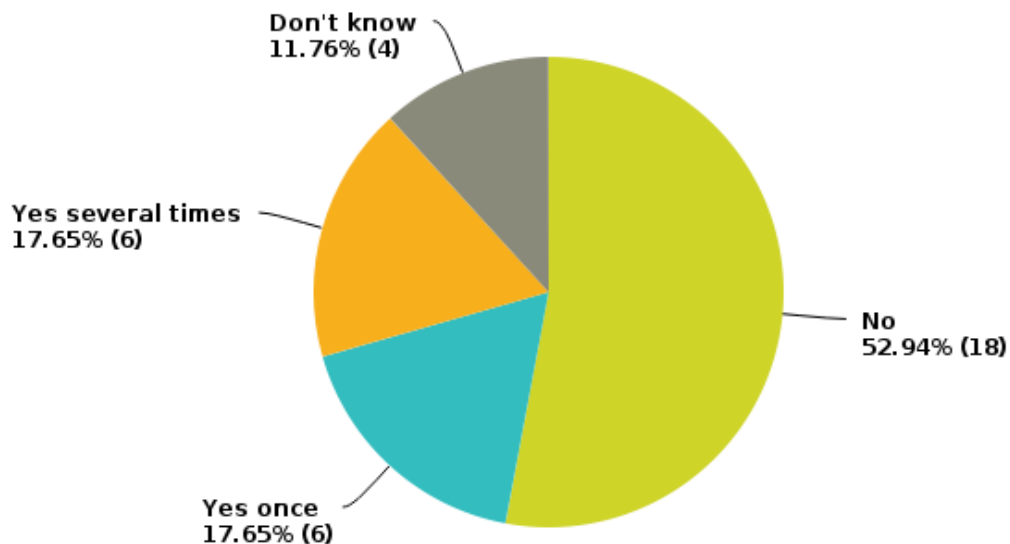
issues for Travellers and Roma, say no to ageism campaign, family diversity.

- Part of working group (set up by EA)
- EA provided us with networking opportunities (with other stakeholders)
- EA contributed to our resource material
- Very little engagement since their funding cuts in 2009

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC)

Q6 Has your organisation strategically engaged with the Human Rights Commission (HRC)?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 0

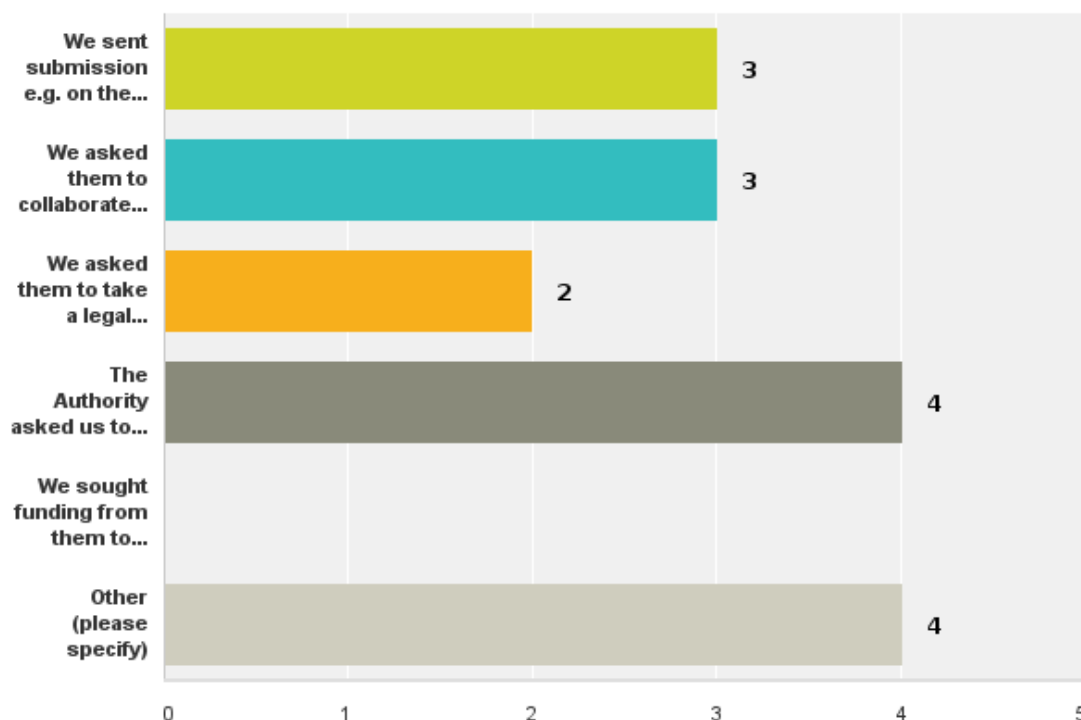


Q7. If, No, can you briefly note why your organisation has not engaged with the IHRC?

- Have not seen reason/opportunity to engage (seven respondents)
- Do not have the capacity/resources to engage (five respondents)
- Do not believe the IHRC focusing on areas of concern where we want to engage (three respondents, one working on LGBT issues, one on socio-economic rights and one on Bill of Rights))
- Leave engagement to national organisation we are affiliated to (one respondent)
- Main issues we deal with fall more within remit of the EA (two respondents)

Q8 If yes, can you briefly note the nature of your engagement with the Human Rights Commission (tick all that apply)

Answered: 12 Skipped: 22



Other (4 respondents): attendance at meetings x 2; IHRC Chair launched a publication of ours; they disseminated information on our behalf.

Q9. Can you briefly note the outcome of this engagement with the IHRC (e.g. benefits, outputs)?

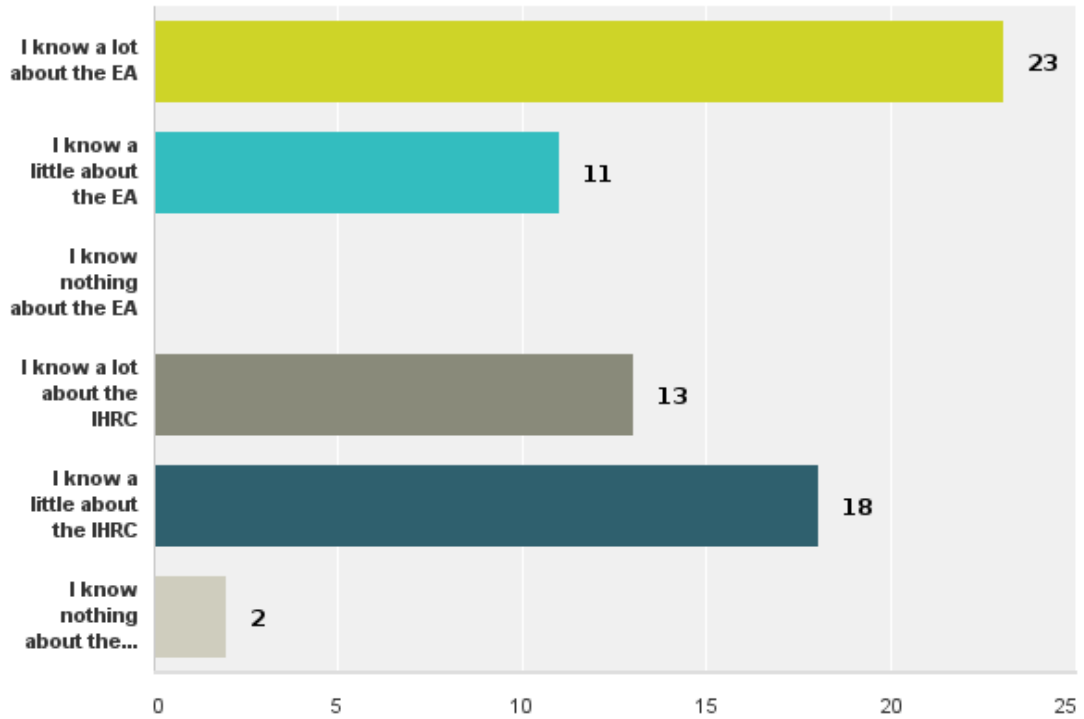
12 responses received.

Outcomes noted:

- Mutual exchange of knowledge and information
- Brought state and civil society stakeholders together (to discuss the system of direct provision for asylum seekers) which provided a very useful forum
- Collaborative work on issues : Habitual Residence Condition; issues for older people; CADIC campaign

Q10 How would you rate your own understanding of the powers and functions of the Equality Authority and Human Rights Commission?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



Appendix A

Survey questions :

1. Organisation name
2. Has your organisation engaged with the Equality Authority?
3. If, No, can you briefly note why your organisation has not engaged with the Equality Authority
4. If yes, can you briefly note the nature of your engagement with the Equality Authority
 - a. we sent submission (e.g. on the dev of their strategic plan)
 - b. we asked them to collaborative on an initiative
 - c. we asked them to take a legal case/cunduct inquiry
 - d. they asked us to engage (e.g. working group, event, action)
 - e. we sought funding from them
 - f. Other (please explain)
5. If yes, can you briefly note the outcome of this engagement (e.g. benefits, outputs)
6. Has your organisation engaged with the IHRC?
7. If, No, can you briefly note why your organisation has not engaged with the IHRC
8. If yes, can you briefly note the nature of your engagement with the IHRC
 - g. we sent submission (e.g. on the dev of their strategic plan)
 - h. we asked them to collaborative on an initiative
 - i. we asked them to take a legal case/cunduct inquiry
 - j. they asked us to engage (e.g. working group, event, action)
 - k. we sought funding from them
 - l. Other (please explain)
9. If yes, can you briefly note the outcome of this engagement (e.g. benefits, outputs)
10. How would you rate your own understanding of the powers and functions of the Equality Authority and Human Rights Commission?
 - m. I know a lot about the EA
 - n. I know a little about the EA
 - o. I know nothing about the EA
 - p. I know a lot about the IHRC
 - q. I know a little about the IHRC
 - r. I know nothing about the IHRC