

September
2013

EQUALITY & RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Seminar: A New Departure for Equality and Human Rights

Seminar aims:

- Explore the potential of a merged Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, what is needed to realise this potential, and the issues that it should be addressing.
- Examine how people experiencing inequality, discrimination and human rights abuses and their organisations might best work with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
- Build an agenda for consideration by the IHREC.

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Advancing Rights in a Context of Crisis.

Opening address by Emily O'Reilly,
Ombudsman.

Ms O'Reilly spoke about the work of her office to tackle discriminatory decisions by public services (citing her findings regarding the mobility allowance for people with disabilities as a key example). She was critical of Government [hiding behind the Troika](#) to justify what she described as political choices, in terms of where spending cuts would be meted out.

O'Reilly also spoke about her role as Chair of the independent panel appointed by Minister for Justice, Alan Shatter, to oversee the appointments to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. She referred to [“significant disagreement”](#) between the panel and the Department of Justice in attempting to deliver on this process, which culminated in the Department [taking control](#) of the process and standing down the independent panel

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Session One: The Issues



“Implications of the Current Socio-Economic Context for an equality and human rights agenda”

Professor Peadar Kirby, (University of Limerick)

To read Peadar’s presentation click [Here](#)



“The potential of a merged human rights and equality commission”

Niall Crowley
(Chair, ERA)

To Read Niall’s presentation click [Here](#)

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*“The IHREC
needs to bring
the discussion
forward on
economic rights
to reflect a new
and changed
reality for our
country as it
deals with
austerity”*

Session 1.

Facilitated roundtable discussion
Questions:

Q1. What are the priority issues for the IHREC to address?

Q2: What principles should guide the IHREC in prioritising between issues?

To read a summary of the feedback from participants click [Here](#)

Session Two: Strategic Engagement



“The prospects for the merged IHREC”

Input by Theresa Blake
(Interim Chair, IHREC)

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“Developing a strategic engagement between the IHREC and civil society”

Rachel Mullen
(Coordinator, ERA)

To read Rachel’s presentation click [Here](#)

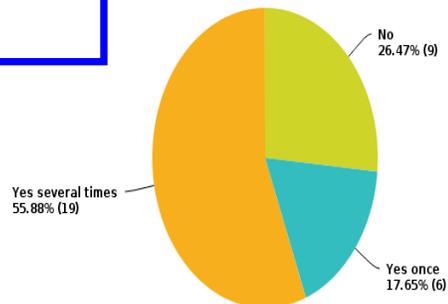
ERA members’ survey:

Engagement between civil society & national bodies

To read survey results click [Here](#)

organisation strategically engaged with the Equality Authority?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



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Session two:
Facilitated roundtable discussion
Questions:

Q 1: How can the IHREC engage in a strategic way
with civil society organisations?

Q 2: How can civil society engage in a strategic way
with the IHREC?

To read a summary of the feedback from
participants click [Here](#)

*“Meaningful engagement will require
linking to peoples lived experience.
Participation requires linkage of human
rights standards to the lived experience
of inequality”*

ERA paper:
**“Creating a Strategic Engagement between Civil
Society and the Irish Human Rights and Equality
Commission” Aug 2013**

To read click [Here](#)

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Session three: Under-reporting of discrimination and human rights abuses

“Under-reporting of
discrimination and human
rights abuses”

Judy Walsh
(UCD School of Social Justice)

To read Judy’s presentation
Click [Here](#)

*“NGOs are
important as a
trusted
interlocutor to
empower people
to report
discrimination”*

Session three:
Facilitated roundtable discussion
Questions:

Q 1: What are the key barriers for group(s) you work with to reporting discrimination and human rights issues?

Q 2: How should the IHREC respond to the challenge of under-reporting?

To read a summary of the feedback from participants
click [Here](#)

ERA paper:
“Access to Justice and Under-Reporting of
Discrimination and Human Rights Abuses” Sept 2013

To read click [Here](#)