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Referendum Tops Order of Business



The need for a children's rights referendum remains firmly on the political and media agenda. In the run-up to the summer recess, Oireachtas debates were peppered with passionate calls for Government to bring in constitutional and other reforms for children. Displaying rare solidarity, the Opposition party leaders and spokespeople have repeatedly put the referendum question to the Taoiseach, seeking a commitment to a date, including a Labour/Sinn Fein Motion. Indeed, even members of the governing parties have expressed their personal conviction to the issue, most notably Deputy Mary O'Rourke who chaired the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children.

The Opposition have judged the public mood perfectly. Accounts of abuse and untimely child deaths have exposed an Ireland that allows children to be neglected, their voices silenced and their rights ignored - this has angered many. Such is the depth of feeling, that it is not a matter of 'if' the Referendum will happen, but 'when'. In my day-to-day discussions with people - be it with those in high office or friends and family - the majority are now clear in their thinking: Irish law, in particular the Constitution, must be changed to adequately protect and promote the rights of children.

As part of the preparation for the holding of a referendum, the Cabinet requested senior officials in each relevant department and the Attorney General to review the potential impact of the referendum on their work. Their advice is now being echoed in the comments made by the Taoiseach and Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews TD. The concerns raised in relation to the Joint Committee's wording, I believe, can be overcome and must not be used to block necessary and progressive reform for children.

With the Cabinet not meeting again until 1 September and the Independent Referendum Commission requiring 12 weeks notice, the earliest date that a referendum could now be held is December. But this time-frame must not dampen our role as advocates; we must stand firm in our belief that it is possible to deliver a referendum that will benefit children and families in Ireland.

The Alliance remains focused on this issue and is using new technology to engage with new audiences. Most recently, we launched our first ever blog, with the opening entry exploring whether Ireland's laws value its children. We also completed a special podcast series interviewing four members of the Joint Committee, which reached all-party consensus on wording for a referendum.

With your support, we believe we can make the referendum a reality and make a positive difference to the lives of children.

Jillian van Turnhout
Chief Executive

Saving Childhood Ryan

On 20 May 2010, one year on from the publication of the Ryan Report, eight organisations came together to launch the *Saving Childhood Ryan* campaign. The organisations have joined together to insist that Government implements key policy changes promised after the publication of the Ryan Report.



Key commitments include placing the Children First child protection guidelines on a statutory footing; introducing legislation for the right of children's voices to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them; the statutory provision for aftercare; and numerous reforms in the provision of services for children in the care of the State. Interestingly, the campaign conducted a poll in June, which found that if a referendum on children's rights were to be held now, 62% of adults would vote in favour of it, 1% would vote against it and 37% said they did not know how they would vote. Clearly, the time is ripe for a referendum on children's rights! For more details, go to: www.savingchildhoodryan.ie



New Online
Poll Question

Will Government
Honour its
Commitments in
the Ryan Report
Implementation
Plan?

Vote Today!

Member Focus



The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) is Ireland's leading non-governmental organisation campaigning for the respect of rights in the penal system and the progressive reform of Irish penal policy. We believe that penal reform is necessary, urgent and achievable, and will lead to a safer society for all.

We work towards progressive change through: advocacy based on research and evidence-led policies; raising awareness of penal reform issues; and working constructively with others. The three core areas of our work are: human rights in prison; imprisonment used only as a measure of last resort; and youth justice, with particular emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

To this end, in 2010 we are working with Barnardos and IAYPIC on making the case for a shift of justice resources to prevention and early intervention. We believe that resources should be diverted away from white elephant prison-building programmes, and instead invested in disadvantaged communities.

The project includes a research study, conference and a public awareness campaign, which will promote examples of evaluated and successful interventions, whilst dispelling the myths about young offenders and pathways into crime. **We will be seeking everyone's help from September 2010 in sharing information about great initiatives, and spreading the positive message out wide and far!**

We work directly with the Children's Rights Alliance on issues surrounding the detention of children in St Patrick's Institution; IPRT is also a member of the Children's Mental Health Coalition, with particular emphasis on children who come in contact with the criminal justice system.

For more information about our work, visit www.iprt.ie and join the debate on www.facebook.com/irishpenalreformtrust

Children's Mental Health Coalition Update



For the last few months, the Children's Mental Health Coalition, jointly established by the Children's Rights Alliance and Amnesty International, has been working on the next phase of its lobbying strategy for children's mental health. A number of meetings have been held with key individuals working in the sectors relating to the four targets of the manifesto: mental health services, education, youth justice and care systems. Meetings have

taken place with senior civil servants in the following departments: Department of Education and Skills; Office of Disability and Mental Health at the Department of Health and Children; Irish Youth Justice Service; and the HSE. A joint meeting of the Coalition also took place on 27 July with Minister Andrews, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs; and Minister Moloney, the Minister for Disability and Mental Health. The aim of the meeting was to promote an integrated response to child mental health.

A big thanks to those Alliance members who have attended Coalition meetings to date. New members to the Coalition include: The Mothers Union, Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland and the Irish Refugee Council.

News in Brief

- On 31 May, Chief Executive Jillian van Turnhout and Policy Officer, Emma McKinley, visited **St Wolstan's Community School**, Celbridge, Co. Kildare for the launch of their fantastic book: *The Optimism of Youth*. Launched in **collaboration with Self Help Africa**, the purpose of the book is to **raise awareness of the Second Millennium Goal on Primary Education**. Jillian, on behalf of the Alliance, contributed a piece for the book on the importance of education in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- On 6 May, the Alliance, along with member organisations, Barnardos, Irish Association of Young People in Care (IAYPIC) and the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), met with a **State delegation from Aceh province in Indonesia**, which was devastated by the Tsunami. The delegation was in Ireland as **guests of UNICEF and came to learn about our National Children's Strategy**, as they wish to develop a similar strategy.
- The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is carrying out an **audit of children and young people's participation in decision-making in Ireland**. The audit will document all participation activity currently underway in both statutory and non-statutory organisations working with children and young people up to the age of 18 years. The OMCYA is keen that organisations working with, or on behalf of children, fill in the audit questionnaire. Deadline is: **10 September 2010**. See: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/omcya_audit.
- Older and Bolder** joined the Alliance on European Day of Intergenerational Solidarity (29 April) to highlight the similar challenges facing children and older people in living their lives with dignity and the rights that they deserve. The **joint statement, outlining our six common issues**, can be found at: www.childrensrights.ie/files/OlderandBolderAllianceSTATEMENT-290410.pdf
- The Alliance welcomed **Ashley Hodges** as an Intern over June, as part of the **Summer Internship Programme with the University of Tulsa**. Ashley conducted a valuable piece of research on the use of the 'in camera rule', comparing Ireland with other jurisdictions. Thanks Ashley!
- The Carers Association want recognition for Ireland's young carers and to highlight the lack of awareness and supports for them. Maria Maher from Ballincollig, Co. Cork has provided care for her mother, Mary, since she was 12-years-old. Mary is a permanent wheelchair user following an accident. You can help promote recognition of young carers by **nominating a young carer for the Carers of the Year Awards 2010**, at www.carersireland.com

National Children's Strategy Review

Unless you have been hiding under a rock, you will know that the *National Children's Strategy 2000-2010 – Our Children Their Lives*, comes to an end this year. The Strategy, the first high-level Government document focused exclusively on children, provides a vision for children and childhood in Ireland.

In advance of the development of a second Strategy, the Alliance is conducting a review to see what has been achieved, and what has not, since the publication of the Strategy over

ten years ago. Working in collaboration with its members, the Alliance has asked organisations to provide comments in relation to the Strategy's implementation.

Reviewing progress of the last ten years is an important step to help us identify success stories, barriers to progress and what elements we feel should be included in the next strategy.

In the Autumn, the Alliance will hold a member organisation roundtable to brainstorm as to what we would like included in the next National Children's Strategy.

Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign

In August last year, the Children’s Rights Alliance teamed up with Body Shop Ireland to help launch its three-year global campaign entitled: *Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People*. The Body Shop is working alongside ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) to help mobilise international action to combat the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation. The campaign began with the launch of The Body Shop’s *Soft Hands, Kind Heart* hand cream. All profits are being donated directly to the campaign and it has proved a great success, to date.



The Body Shop’s Chris Davis, Head of Global Campaigns; Alliance Chief Executive Jillian van Turnhout; Fair City actress; Lisa Harding, RTE’s Keelin Shanley; and staff of the Grafton Street Dublin branch of The Body Shop

The campaign continued with the launch on 8 July of a global petition and ECPAT’s *Progress Card* on Ireland. Alliance Chief Executive, Jillian van Turnhout, joined Chris Davis, Head of Global Campaigns at The Body Shop launch, encouraging Irish shoppers and passers-by on Grafton Street Dublin to show their solidarity by tracing their hands in support of the petition. Celebrity supporters across the world, including Twilight’s Robert Pattinson and Yoko Ono, have done the same. In Ireland, we were supported by RTE’s Prime Time Keelin Shanley and Fair City Actress, Lisa Harding.

The Irish petition calls on Government to:

- Identify child victims and enforce laws to prosecute child traffickers;
- Provide child victims with the support they need to escape their traffickers and rebuild their lives;
- Implement the Irish Government’s National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2009-2012; and
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.



Children in The Body Shop, Grafton Street, Dublin trace their hands in support of the campaign

The *Progress Card*, developed by ECPAT International and the Alliance, report identifies Ireland’s progress in combating the sex trafficking of children and young people. Ireland was among the 53% of countries deemed to be showing ‘some progress’ in putting an end to the third largest, and fastest growing, criminal industry in the world, but Ireland continues to be a destination for child trafficking as well as a transit point for children trafficked to the UK. Child trafficking concerns have been regularly raised by the Ombudsman for Children, the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection and a range of NGOS.

Ireland has a detailed *National Action Plan* to tackle human trafficking but the Plan’s recommendations in relation to child trafficking need to become practice now, if victims are to be adequately protected.

Please show your support for the campaign by going into your local The Body Shop to sign the petition.

The Alliance in Social Partnership

The Alliance’s work within the Community and Voluntary Pillar (CV Pillar) is ongoing, despite a less energetic approach by Government to the Social Partnership Process. Three specific activities merit note:

The CV Pillar was invited to meet the Department of An Taoiseach on 8 June on the EU 2020 Strategy. The Strategy includes a commitment to reduce EU poverty, but leaves individual countries to set their own targets. The Alliance encouraged the Government to introduce a separate target for child poverty, with clear delivery timelines and accountability mechanisms.

The CV Pillar elected representatives to the National Economic and Social Committee (NESC), which is a key forum for Social Partnership, and has remained active despite lack of engagement in the process. The Alliance’s Niamh Gallagher was elected as an alternate member.

The CV Pillar undertakes a pre-budget campaign again this year, with a revised ‘5 point integrated recovery strategy’. A press conference will take place on 7 Sept, with a briefing for TDs and senators on 6 October.

For more information, go to: www.childrensrights.ie

Jillian in China



Jillian with Mrs Lu, her co-rapporteur

On 21 and 22 July, Alliance Chief Executive Jillian van Turnhout, who is a Member of the European Economic and Social Committee and rapporteur on children’s rights, outlined the EU’s perspective on children’s rights in Chongqing, China. This was the 7th Meeting of the China-EU Round

Table and the first time that China and the EU officially discussed their positions on children’s rights. It is hoped that the Conclusions emanating from the Round Table will spur representatives from the EU states and China to initiate stronger policies in the area of children’s rights. Both papers are available on request at info@childrensrights.ie

European News



The **Eurochild AGM and Policy forum** were held in Brussels on 22 and 23 June; the Alliance was represented at both by Niamh Gallagher, Research and Policy Analyst. The AGM brought significant change to the Eurochild Board as its President, and founding member, Caitriona Williams stood down, following six years as President. She is replaced by Maria Herczog, early years specialist and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (Maria spoke at the Alliance symposium in April 2009). Three other founding board members stood down, and were replaced by Kelig Puyet, SOS Kinderhof International; Pauline Leeson, Children in Northern Ireland; and Ivano Abruzzi, Albergo della Vita (Italy) - who is Eurochild's first ever male Board member! The Alliance welcomes the new Board and looks forward to working with them over the next year.

The European Commission has opened its **consultation on the Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014)**, which aims to advance the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**. The consultation focuses on four issues: child friendly justice; vulnerable groups of children; violence against children; and child poverty. The aim is to give the Commission an insight into the experiences of those working with children, and the difficulties they face in promoting and protecting children's rights. Specifically, the Commission is looking for examples of best practice. Following member consultation, the Alliance will make its submission shortly. For details, see: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0009_en.htm

Alliance AGM 2010



Elizabeth Canavan speaking at the AGM

The Alliance held its fourteenth Annual General Meeting on 8 June 2010 in European Union House, Dawson Street, Dublin 2. The AGM was well attended by members and friends, including funders. Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive, gave the AGM an overview of work in 2009, and an outline of opportunities for 2010. Professor Nóirín Hayes, former Chair and founding Board member, retired from her position as Board member. Paul Gilligan extended his sincere thanks, on behalf of the Alliance, for Nóirín's commendable work, dedication and passion in the work of the Alliance, since its inception.

Following the AGM, Paul Gilligan will continue as Chairperson of the Alliance; Margaret Burns as Vice-Chairperson; and Michael McLoughlin as Treasurer. We welcome Carmel Corrigan, Independent Consultant, to the Board of the Alliance, as do we Fergus Finlay, Chief Executive of Barnardos, who was co-opted on 9 February 2010.

Phil Garland, Assistant National Director for Children and Family Services was scheduled to address the AGM, but due to unforeseen circumstances, Mr Garland was unable to attend. Special thanks to Elizabeth Canavan, Principal Officer of the Child and Youth Service Development Unit of the OMCYA, who stepped in at the last minute to give a presentation on the work of her unit. Elizabeth talked, in particular, about their Prevention and Early Intervention models as well as the Minister's dedication to the National Children's Strategy. Highlights of Elizabeth's presentation are available on the Alliance's web site.

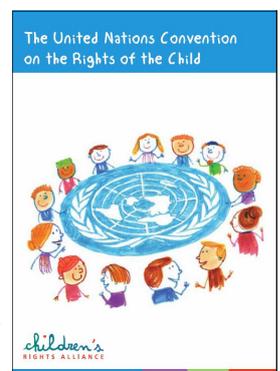
Review of Ryan Report Implementation Plan Underway

In the autumn, the Alliance will publish a review of progress made in the first year of the operation of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan. Published in July 2009, the Plan has a pledged budget of €25 million and contains 99 actions to be completed by December 2011. Overall responsibility for the Plan's delivery rests with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and we hope our review will help this delivery. **If member organisations wish to offer input, please email info@childrensrights.ie**

Alliance UNCRC Booklet

The Alliance, for the first time, has produced a bilingual Irish/English booklet that reproduces the full text of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Booklet was launched at the Alliance's AGM on 8 June 2010. This is a handy-sized, colourful booklet and an online version is also available. The Alliance is disseminating the booklet to a wide audience, including politicians and key decision makers.

Copies are limited; if you would like a copy please contact us.



If you would like to submit material for future eNewsletters, please email communications@childrensrights.ie

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