



ESC Rights Initiative

## **Implementation of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Ireland: Linguistic and Cultural Rights**

While linguistic and cultural majorities benefit from fundamental human rights protections, linguistic minorities are often faced with barriers to the enjoyment of such rights. Only a few hundred of the world's 7,000 languages are recognised as official national or international languages. Official recognition grants the right to establish, maintain and develop schools and learning institutions, and by implication the means to sustain one's culture and heritage. Linguistic and cultural rights are essential to the protection of minorities as a distinct group with individual and collective human rights that need to be promoted and protected.

### Discrimination

*Article III: The State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant.*

Discrimination against linguistic minorities has become more evident in recent years as Ireland has become a multicultural society. Providing everyone with the opportunity to enjoy their rights by a robust application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, would help to prevent this discrimination

### Economic Factors

*Article II.I: Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.*

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA) is responsible for the promotion of the Irish language and culture.

DCRGA funds two statutory organizations: Foras na Gaeilge, which is the Irish language cross border body established to promote the Irish language throughout Ireland, and Udaris na Gaeltachta, which looks after economic development in Gaeltacht areas, receiving €42 million from the DCRGA in 2014. The Gaeltacht workforce consists of 38,433 people, with 737 new full-time equivalent jobs created in 2014. Although these figures reflect well



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in terms of employment it cannot be assumed that the distinctive cultural area of the Gaeltacht is linguistically thriving.

### Education

*Part I Article 13: The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

According to the 2015 Department of Education School Census approximately 23% of schools cater for four out of five immigrant children. Ireland's emergent transformation from a traditional homogenous society to a nation of new immigrants means that the country's teachers are educating a more diverse student population. Teachers are role models and guidance for their students, so it is important that the teaching force reflects the diversity of the student population. An equally significant consideration is effective training. This training for new and current teachers should include instructional strategies and techniques that are culturally responsive. The changes put in order will effectively meet the educational needs of students with diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

### Employment

*Article 6 Part II: The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.*

Ireland have become more multicultural and in turn workforces are more culturally diverse. Workplace culture needs to embrace this diversity. For example, employers can develop workplace policies that promote cross-cultural awareness and activities, and hire culturally diverse employees. Language has close ties to culture, and employers can raise cultural awareness by encouraging minority employees to speak different languages in the workplace.