# Consultation on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Strategy Statement 2025-2027

## Invitation for Submissions

## Introduction

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (the Commission) would like to invite you to make a contribution to our consultation process for our new Strategy Statement 2025-2027. This will be our fourth Strategy Statement.

### Consultation with Individuals and Stakeholders

We are inviting submissions from people (rights-holders), civil society groups, public bodies and other stakeholders working to eliminate discrimination, and promote and protect human rights and equality. Your contributions will spotlight issues that you believe we should take into account when we are developing our strategic priorities for the next three years.

### Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 sets out our role to promote and protect human rights, equality and respect for intercultural understanding in Ireland. Our vision is of an inclusive Ireland where human rights and equality are respected.

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (the Act), the overall functions of the Commission are to:

1. protect and promote human rights and equality;
2. encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State;
3. promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality in the State;
4. encourage good practice in intercultural relations, to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the State and respect for the freedom and dignity of each person; and
5. work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

Section 42 of the Act sets out the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The Duty places a statutory obligation on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of those to whom they provide services and staff when carrying out their daily work. The Commission gives guidance to them to develop policies and good practice based on human rights and equality standards.

The Act provides the framework for the Commission’s next Strategy Statement 2025 - 2027.

### How can I make a submission?

You can use this form to make a written submission. You can send your views to us by email or post using this form.

There are four sections to complete in this form:

1. [Group or Organisation Background](#_Section_1:_Group)(only for representatives of groups or organisations)
2. [Context for the Commission’s work over the next three years](#_Section_2:_Context_1)
3. [Performance of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#_Section_3:_Performance)
4. [Achieving change](#_Section_4:_Achieving)

If you would like to make a video submission, please visit our website for information on how to submit a video.

The closing date for submissions is **Wednesday 27 March 2024.**

## How we will use your information

Your submissions will only be shared internally and with our appointed consultants to inform the development of the next Strategy Statement. Your submissions will not be circulated outside of the Commission. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose. It will be securely stored and only kept for 12 months. We appreciate your time and valuable input to this consultation process.

### Consent for use of information

[x]  **I agree** that the information I provide may be used for the purposes outlined above and in accordance with our [Data Protection Information Notice.](https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/data-protection-information-notice/)

[ ]  **I do not agree** that the information I provide may be used for the purposes outlined above and in accordance with our [Data Protection Information Notice.](https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/data-protection-information-notice/)

Please note, if you do not agree, we cannot use your information and you should not complete and submit this form.

## Section 1: Group or Organisation Background

Please only fill out this section if you are representing a group or organisation

### What is the name of your group or organisation?

LGBT Ireland

### Which category or categories does your group or organisation’s human rights and equality work relate to?

Please select one or more of the following options:

[ ]  Age

[ ]  Disability

[ ]  Civil status

[ ]  Family status (including lone parents and carers)

[x]  Gender (including a transgender person or a person who is transitioning to another gender)

[ ]  Race

[ ]  Religion

[x]  Sexual orientation

[ ]  Traveller community

[ ]  Housing Assistance

[ ]  People experiencing or at risk poverty and social exclusion

[ ]  People with a history of contact with the criminal justice system

[ ]  Other (please specify below)

Click or tap here to enter text.

## Section 2: Context for the Commission’s work over the next three years

We would like to understand your experience, or the experience of those you represent, so that it informs the human rights and equality context in which the Commission will work over the next three years.

### What is going well for you (and/or your community / constituency you represent)?

Max 200 words

Over the last 30 years, Ireland has made significant progress in terms of LGBTQI+ human rights and policy protections. This includes decriminalisation in 1993, the passage of the Equal Status Act in 2000 and marriage equality and gender recognition in 2015. In recent years, gay and lesbian in particular people have become more visible in Irish public life. Support services and Pride organisations have grown. The formation of the National LGBTI+ Strategy in 2019 was another welcome development.

### What are the challenges and barriers that you (and/or your community / constituency) face?

The LGBTQI+ community faces a number of challenges and barriers.

Ireland is currently ranked 16th in Europe in terms of LGBTQI+ human rights and policy protections (ILGA, 2023). There are still significant gaps in the law. Ireland currently lacks laws in relation to:
• assisted human reproduction
• hate crimes
• conversion therapy
• and intersex rights.

In addition, some of the existing legislative provisions need to be updated, including
• The Gender Recognition Act (to provide legal gender recognition for non-binary people and reform the legal gender recognition system for trans young people),
• The Children and Family Relationships Act (to ensure equality for children of LGBTQI+ people and ensure full legal recognition for trans parents)
• The Equal Status and the Employment Equality Acts (to provide explicit
protections for all LGBTQI+ people.)

Discrimination also needs to be addressed. According to the CSO, 33% of LGBTI+ people experienced discrimination in the previous two years—the highest of any group in Irish society (CSO, 2019 https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/ed/equalityanddiscrimination2019/).

Finally, we need a robust response to hate crimes. 582 hate crimes were reported to the Gardai in 2022, a 30% increase from 2021. Sexual orientation was the discriminatory motive in 22% of cases, the second highest after race (AGS, 2022).

### What do you (and your community/ constituency) need to thrive – to have your human rights and equality protected?

Max 200 words

In addition to the law reform outlined above, we have a number of key policy asks:

In terms of health, we want the Government to
• Fund and implement a model of gender-affirming care for young people and adults based on informed consent and international best practice (WHO and WPATH);
• End new HIV transmissions by increasing the investment and accessibility in PrEP, PEP, free condoms and rapid HIV testing and expand the in-person services provided by the Gay Men’s Health Service.
• Invest in accessible, safe, high-quality, regulated mental health services with improved access and reduced waiting times. These services must include tailored and specific supports for LGBTQI+ people.
• Ensure that LGBTQI+ older people are visible and included by providing training and support to residential care staff and homecare providers.

In terms of Justice, we want the Government to
• Introduce a holistic action plan against hate crimes that includes a reformed police response and wraparound supports for victims.
• Implement the recommendations of the ‘Believe me or not, I am who I am’ report to improve outcomes for LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers.
• Add new questions to the Census on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

## Section 3: Performance of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

We would like to understand how you perceive the Commission’s performance over the past three years. Set out below are our current strategic priorities. We also encourage you to look at the full [2022-24 Strategy Statement](https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/strategy-statement-2022-2024/) and our [Annual Report 2022](https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/annual-report-2022/).

Our Strategic Statement 2022-24 – Strategic Priorities:

1. **Economic Equality**

We will seek greater economic equality in housing, employment, income and for carers

1. **Justice**

We will defend access to justice and the rule of law in the international protection system, in the courts and in the use of public powers

1. **Respect and Recognition**

We will promote the eradication of racism, ableism, ageism and sexism through public understanding and State action

1. **Future Proofing**

We will respond to crises that threaten rights and equality, including the COVID-19 and climate change

1. **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty**

We will encourage, report on and enforce the compliance of public bodies, including engaging in consultation with rights holders directly and through civil society organisations towards the promotion of the Duty

What do you think our impact has been over the past three years?

What do you think were the successes? Were there gaps?

Where possible, please refer to a specific aspect of our work – i.e. our legal work; research; legislative and policy submissions; international reporting (e.g. to the UN); anti-human trafficking; civil society engagement; grants programme; public awareness campaigns; public communication; and promotion of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty etc.

Max. 400 words

The IHREC 2022 – 2024 Strategy Statement fails to even mention LGBTQI+ or to address the significant issues faced by the community. Disappointingly, priority three included the eradication of racism, ableism, ageism and sexism but not homophobia. This exclusion of LGBTQI+ people was unjustified and unjustifiable.

Over the last three years, there has been no significant LGBTQI+ law reform despite the gaps in the law laid out above. During the last three years, Ireland’s ranking internationally in terms of LGBTQI+ human rights and policy protections has slipped, hate crimes have increased, and discrimination lingers. The small grants were welcome.

## Section 4: Achieving Change

We would like to understand how we could work effectively to fulfil our mandate and achieve change that will lead to the realisation of an inclusive Ireland where human rights and equality are respected.

### What issues should we continue to address as a priority and build upon in our new Strategy Statement 2025-2027 and programme of work?

Max. 300 words

The next strategy must explicitly include LGBTQI+ issues. IHREC must prioritise and proactively support the advancement of LGBTQI+ human rights and policy protections. In particular, IHREC should support the advancement of the Hate Crime Bill, the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill, and the ban on conversion practices. IHREC has a significant role to play in ensuring the rights of LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers are protected.

### What emerging or other issues should we begin to address in our new Strategy Statement 2025-2027 and programme of work as a priority?

Max. 300 words

Significant work is needed in the area of intersex rights and trans healthcare. Ireland currently has one of the worst systems of gender-affirming healthcare in all of Europe. There is little to no discussion about protecting the human rights of intersex people.

### How can we work with and support the further development of civil society as key actors in addressing discrimination and human rights infringements?

Max. 200 words

IHREC can support civil society actors by ensuring the organisations are well-resourced and free to advocate. There is a significant funding gap for communications and policy staff within LGBTQI+ NGOs. In order to be effective defenders of human rights, this work must be resourced and protected.

### What impact would you like to have seen from us by 2027?

Max. 200 words

By 2027, I would like to see IHREC become a champion of LGBTQI+ rights. That starts by including LGBTQI+ issues in the next strategy, funding key policy projects and advocating for law reform.

LGBT Ireland has set an ambitious goal of ‘Making Ireland the Best Place in Europe for LGBTQI+.’ We would love to see IHREC echo this call!

Thank you!

## How do you submit this form?

Please send your submission by 27 March 2024.

You can email this form to:

consultation@ihrec.ie

Please use the subject line: “Submission to IHREC 2025-2027 Strategy Statement Consultation”.

You can also post this form to us at:

Strategy Statement Consultation

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