



Submission Towards a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland

By

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

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Introducing County Wicklow Public Participation Network

County Wicklow Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in July 2014 under the directive of the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government and in accordance with legislation in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46). Public Participation Networks were established to be an independent structure that would become the main link through which local authorities connect with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in a process to facilitate communities to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system.

Co Wicklow PPN has 376 diverse member groups, some of these groups are networks in their own right. PPN representatives serve as a voice for the community on structures including: the Local Community Development Committee; all of the Wicklow County Council Strategic Policy Committees; Wicklow County Childcare Committee; Co Wicklow Children & Young People's Services Committee; Co Wicklow Local Sports & Recreation Partnership; Wicklow County Tourism Board; Co Wicklow Volunteer Centre, County Wicklow Partnership, South East Fisheries & Local Action Group, Ring a Link and Co Wicklow Joint Policing Committee. PPN Representatives strive to ensure that the needs of the community sector are prioritised within local policy processes.

Consultation with Communities

This submission is based on our Co Wicklow PPN June Plenary consultations, additional responses through our survey, and our Vision for Community Wellbeing Consultations. It also takes some of the learnings from the Wicklow Integration Strategy and Recipe for Harmony where they mirror the more recent conversations.

Please note that there were many cross-cutting issues and suggestions in each of our thematic workshops. To honour people's contribution, we have reported the discussion from each workshop despite the resulting duplication within this submission.

The Secretariat of Co Wicklow is grateful to all those who contributed to this submission.

A County Wicklow PPN Plenary (Members Meeting) took place online using the Zoom platform on the 30th of June 2021. The theme of the meeting was "Valuing Our Ethnic Minorities". During the meeting participants were invited into breakout rooms to discuss some of the questions raised in the consultation document as follows:

Themes	Questions (from public consultation document)
1. Access to justice & All forms of media and communications, including new technologies	Q1 What supports would you like to see in place for victims of racism? Q2 What actions would be effective in removing barriers to justice for victims of racism? Q1 What actions would you suggest to tackle racism in new and more traditional forms of media? Q2 What actions do you think would help to make broadcast media & the press more representative at all levels of everyone living in Ireland?
2. Employment, education, health & accommodation	Q1 What initiatives and actions would you like to see undertaken to combat racism & discrimination in employment, education, health, and accommodation
3. Inclusion & Participation	Q1 What initiatives do you think could raise public awareness of racial discrimination and help to combat racist stereotypes? Q2 How can we remove barriers to the social inclusion and participation of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups?

These questions were also circulated in a survey document to members who were unable to attend the plenary.

Throughout, 2018, Co Wicklow PPN consulted community groups across the 5 Municipal Districts of Co Wicklow, asking them “What is your vision for community wellbeing for this and future generations?” We asked them to consider this question under the following headings:

- Environment & Sustainability
- Health (physical & mental)
- Work, Economy, & Resources
- Social & Community Development
- Participation, Democracy & Good Governance
- Values, Culture & Meaning



The responses we received were documented and are available to download from our website: www.countywicklowppn.ie . We ran 11 workshops, 5 online consultations and accepted 2 submissions in total. The consultations facilitated the development of an overarching vision for each Municipal District along with community visions and high-level goals under each heading. The county vision was developed in the same way.

In 2020 Wicklow County Council developed the Wicklow Migrant Integration Strategy which was adopted in early 2021. The Co Wicklow PPN Resource Worker engaged with the researcher and facilitated a consultation workshop which fed into the Strategy.

In October 2009, Wicklow County Council published “Recipe for Harmony – An Anti-Racism and Diversity Strategy for Co. Wicklow 2009 – 2011.” A participatory

learning in action approach was adopted to consult with Wicklow's diverse communities and the Co Wicklow PPN Resource Worker was an active member of the research team.

At the end of this submission, we have included a brief section on connecting Our Vision for Community Wellbeing to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development

Co Wicklow PPN hopes that this submission is useful to the Dept. Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Co Wicklow PPN looks forward to reading and feeding back on the first draft of the National Action Plan Against Racism

Participant Quote: "It is not enough to stay silent. You have to be actively against racism."

Access to Justice

The consensus of our Plenary was that there needs to be more awareness training so that those affected by racism and discrimination know what to do and how to report it. There was a suggestion that there should be some form of recompense for those affected by racism.

While there is legislation covering the 9 grounds of discrimination, this is often seen as being relevant to the workplace only. Awareness needs to be raised to highlight that this legislation relates to all aspects of life. The other piece of legislation mentioned was the Equal Status Act which legislates against discrimination in terms of goods/services/accommodation. Many of those affected by racism are not aware that these legal protections exist.

It is important that there is always at least one specific Garda in each station, at all times, that has been trained to handle complaints of racism.

Removing Barriers to Justice for those affected by racism.

There was significant crossover in discussions on access to justice and removing barriers to justice for those affected by racism.

It was pointed out that some ethnic minority groups have an innate fear of people in authority, thinking that engaging with some public and statutory services might result in more trouble for them. This leads to the under reporting of racism. While many statutory agencies have integration officers it is important that all staff members of public bodies undertake racism and diversity training as well as crisis intervention training. It might also be worth establishing (community) centres or other places of trust as designated places for people to report racism and receive supports.

Literacy difficulties were also highlighted as a barrier and suggestions that alternative methods of reporting and seeking help, that avoid reading and writing, and include one to one support should be made available. Language barriers is also an issue for some and more access to interpreters is needed. This was mirrored across many of the conversations and topics.

A more immediate response to allegations of discrimination and racism would be welcomed.

It was pointed out that the Immigrant Council of Ireland is working on hate-crime legislation.

All Forms of Media and Communications, Including New Technologies

Actions to reduce racism in the media.

It is important that the majority population steps up as allies for ethnic minorities and speak out loudly against abuse.

Concern was voiced about negative reporting re. the Traveller community in the media. It was pointed out that negative commentary, in texting and social media affects the whole Traveller community, not just those who are featured in media reports.

The suggestion was made that news outlets should employ monitors to remove racist commentary from their online sites.

A lot of the discussion focussed on specific incidences of racism/discrimination. Many people affected by this do not know where to go to report it in the real world. There is a sense of disconnect between complainants and the anti-racism websites. Being able to speak to somebody about it and then see follow-through on the complaint would be much better.

The restorative justice approach was suggested as a way of dealing with racism and discrimination as this includes a learning element for those who have engaged in racist and discriminatory behaviour.

More positive reporting on Travellers and other minority groups would be welcomed. One suggestion was that promotion of members of minority groups in volunteering would be really positive.

Regular media campaigns to overcome stereotypes and report the personal impact that racism has on real people is needed.

Making the media more representative

The majority of people portrayed in the media appear to be middle and upper middle class indicating a lack of class diversity. By extension this impacts on representation of ethnic minorities. While an improvement in minority representation has been noted, there is still a long way to go.

Invitations to a wider spectrum of society to participate as guests in shows and more diverse staff recruitment is needed. If you can see it, you can be it, or at least imagine being it.

Remove Barriers that face under-represented groups.

Advertisements should be based in reality, and show how diverse our communities are more.

Projects and organisations which have diversity should be showing their work online so that everyone can see people working together. Cooperation needs to be visible

Love Bray is online to try to use social media as a power for good and help combat racism

Employment, Education, Health, and Accommodation

The Citizen's Information Service was singled out as an organisation that supports ethnic minorities with access to information about all the topics covered in the different conversations and themes. Their Living in Ireland online information was highlighted as an important source for people to find out about how to access essential services However, literacy and language barriers were highlighted

as being one of the biggest impediments to accessing all services and supports including supports against racism and discrimination.

Employment

Participant Quote: “I am a teacher by profession, currently working in security but still in a Direct Provision Centre in Bray. I can teach maths, chemistry and physics”

It is not only discriminatory, but also a missed opportunity when the skills and qualifications of ethnic minorities are not recognised and put to valuable use in the workforce.

The business sector/employers need to be committed to engage with these groups and take on employees. Rewards should be made to businesses actively adopting an anti-discriminatory stance.

Unions, employers, and different agencies need to be committed to following through, not just ticking boxes.

Organisations need to invest in training and policy development.

Employer champions need to be identified who can showcase the positive experiences and examples of having a diverse workforce.

Education

Participant Quote: “We need to include (young people) authors from different backgrounds i.e. Traveller, Chinese, African etc. It is about changing the mindset. Education is key in challenging racism.”

Education was cited as being the key component of addressing racism and discrimination in all of the workshop discussions, beginning in pre-school and carrying on through to all levels of education as well as training in the workplace.

There needs to be a curriculum that includes learning about cultures, history, language, and traditions. The Yellow Flag Schools Programme was commended. This programme challenges discrimination and promotes inclusion. While some schools in Wicklow have taken part in this programme and earned their yellow flag, it is not widespread. It was suggested that funding for this programme could be a reason why it has not been rolled out more widely.

It was considered that perceptions and bias need to be challenged more. Sometimes people need to “unlearn” before they can learn and adopt a new position.

Another proposal was that teacher training needs to be updated to reflect our more diverse society.

At school level, drawing/writing competitions are seen as a good way to raise awareness and celebrate diversity.

Multi cultural days should be annual events in all schools.

Deeper curriculum integration at appropriate age levels about systemic and institutional racism is needed.

It was acknowledged and welcomed that the Dáil had recently unanimously approved legislation to ensure Traveller history and culture becomes an obligatory part of the primary and secondary school curriculum. The Bill is currently with the Education Committee for consideration.

Accommodation

The process of moving families within the Direct Provision system at very short notice needs to stop. People must start again integrating into a new area and children struggle with changing schools.

The problem of poor literacy was highlighted in relation to form filling to access accommodation and accommodation supports.

Sanctions should be imposed on local authorities that do not spend their Traveller Accommodation budget in the appropriate time frame.

Health

The Traveller Primary Care Programme was highlighted as a good model of community care. Extending the Traveller Primary Care Team model and replicating it with other ethnic groups was suggested.

Provide a community section on HSELand to allow community groups to access the valuable training that is there

Inclusion & Participation

Participant Quote: "All one community, different members of the same community (not different communities)."

Social inclusion was seen as key, from the earliest stages so that children don't feel the need to hide who they are and feel accepted by their peers and the community in which they live.

It was suggested that more support should be provided to organise informal gatherings that promote sharing of cultural traditions that would promote mutual respect and understanding. A bottom-up approach was highlighted as being very important, building connections locally in a normal easy, and safe way.

Public Sector Duty was highlighted as a good framework with which to address racism and discrimination. It is difficult to see or know where and how this is being implemented.

Participant Quote: "There is a great record of integration within the GAA clubs with Travellers and migrant people. For instance, in our club we have 12 different countries playing in one underage team."

More opportunities must be provided to convey the positive human stories that will foster mutual respect and understanding and change the preconceptions and narrative that forms the foundations of racism and discrimination. Various sectors, public and private need to take responsibility to highlight and circulate these stories.

The GAA was commended as being an inclusive organisation.

The Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation continues to actively work and run various projects to support migrant communities to network, integrate, and get their voices heard.

Discrimination was reported to have become worse not better for the Traveller community.

Focus on facts campaigns such as the one done by community development workers in Wexford and support for the places of Sanctuary initiatives for schools, and other organisations.

There is a need for more awareness and culturally appropriate training which should ideally be provided by ethnic minority groups and new communities representatives themselves.

More effort should be made to invite members of minority groups i.e. people living in Direct Provision to get involved in local initiatives (environmental projects etc.)

Start awareness building at the youngest age level, investment in Early Childhood education.

Extension of Failte Isteach or similar type programmes. These not only help with language barriers, they also promote integration and networking

Establish befriending programmes for ethnic minorities.

Develop a communications campaign by putting leaflets through doors and posters in libraries. Link this in with community groups and send out invitations for cultural exchanges. Duplicate this in social media.

How can we remove Barriers?

Participant Quote: "Irish Girl Guides had a few Majors from the Direct Provisions centre, really good with the girls, bit of a language barrier at first. Some get moved on just as they settle in."

Continuous movement of people living in direct provision create many barriers for them. They leave their families and everything familiar to them behind to start a new life in another country and then we expect them to start a new life over and over again in different communities here.

There needs to be more done at policy level. Coupled with this there needs to be more opportunities and supports for the inclusion of ethnic minority representatives on committees and structures.

Provide funding incentives by including criteria for active integration in funding streams. Fund the development of Codes of Conduct.

Fund outreach workers to help build inclusive networking.

Promote changes in attitudes and dispel stereotypical perceptions at every opportunity.

Holding voter registration sessions in Co Council offices (as done by Clare PPN) was highlighted as a way of making contact and building trust with people living in Direct Provision Centres and other hard to reach minorities, and for them to see that the local authority and other local agencies have other services and information useful to them.

There should be quotas and or targets for the inclusion of ethnic minorities, similar to gender quotas. This should manifest in terms of employment as well as in regards to representation on decision making bodies at local and national level

Participant Quote: "The word "integration" is a problem, we should use "intercultural"."

Co Wicklow Visions for Community Wellbeing

Community consultations to develop the Co Wicklow Visions for Community Wellbeing provided the clear message that Wicklow citizens want society, and Co Wicklow in particular, to be a welcoming and caring place, where difference is respected, and all people and cultures are valued and celebrated. Citizens want a society where all communities are encouraged to share their culture and use their voice, and they want community infrastructure and services to support the diverse needs of all citizens.

We list the messages under each of our Wellbeing headings below.

Values, Culture, & Meaning



- create a welcoming & caring place;
- where difference is respected; and
- all people & cultures are valued & celebrated

Specifically by:

- promoting & celebrating BOTH native & other cultures;
- encouraging all communities to share their culture & use their voice;
- providing community infrastructure & services that support the needs of all citizens

Social & Community Development



- promote the empowerment of all members of the community
- resource excellent social structures to support an inclusive caring community;
- have all citizens actively engaged in their local community;
- ensure the needs, safety & security of all citizens, particularly **the more marginalised**, are met;
- Statutory & community services meet the diverse needs of the community, particularly the **more vulnerable citizens**.

Participation, Democracy & Good Governance



- for all elements of government to be accessible & responsive to the needs of all citizens;
- everyone contributes to decision-making & development;
- structures & processes are inclusive and supportive of all citizens, who are supported to participate

Environment & Sustainability



- ensure **all** citizens are socially connected within a safe & secure community;
- **all** citizens are connected with, appreciate & work together to nurture & protect the natural & built environment

Health (Physical & Mental)



- people are connected & enjoy a good level of social & community supports;
- **all** citizens have their basic needs met, are resilient, active & enjoy a good level of physical & mental health;
- everyone has access locally to co-ordinated & high-quality statutory & community services & facilities that support good health of **all**;
- extensive, co-ordinated information, education & early intervention initiatives are an integral part of community & statutory services.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Global Goals, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are a **universal plan of action for people and planet** to be achieved by the year 2030. These 17 goals aim to end poverty, combat climate change and ensure that we p13leave peaceful, just and equal societies for future generations.

These goals are **universal** in nature, applying to developed and developing countries alike, and place sustainable development at their core.



Connecting the Local to the Global

Working towards realising our community vision for wellbeing has a direct impact on achieving Ireland’s targets for the sustainable development goals

